

## CHAPTER 5

### RELEVANCE OF GAMIT SONGS AND GAMIT FOLKTALES

The present research is the first of its kind as it is a voice from within the community. This study is distinct from the corpus of the studies undertaken earlier as the majority of the studies were carried out in the state vernacular. Moreover, the researcher has not undertaken the present study about 'exotic others' but as an attempt to bring into main stream the hitherto neglected part of the literature and the language of the Gamit tribal community.

In 21<sup>st</sup> century and in the age of science and technology, significance of folklore is as fresh as 'ever after.' When the world is turning out to be a huge melting pot of the heterogeneous cultures, need to maintain individual identity has become more than ever felt. With all our modern aspects, our cognitive identity remains the same as the humans. Folk ideas manifested through folk media are, as Dundes observes, "notions that a group of people have about the nature of humanity of the world and of life in the world." Dundes advocated that folklore study should be a body of knowledge and analysis constituting discipline.

- The present research project can be placed under the school of 'Folk Cultural Theory'. Songs and tales of Gamit community provide an opportunity to study not only these two folklore genres but also physical products of the community that can help to study the particular culture in totality. In a way, songs and tales prove the casement through which we can peep into Gamit culture and primitive culture in general.
- In the 'Introduction' of the 'Folk-tales of Mahakoshal,' (1944), Elvin has very well explained the significance of his work; he proposes, "There is a still great field for research and collection throughout middle India and though, these volumes can obviously give nothing more than samples which indicate the type of literature that exists in the mind and the lips of the folk, they will serve some purpose of illustration and preservation."

- India houses more than 645 distinct tribes and all these small traditions are of immense importance in ensuing national integrity, communal harmony and diversified cultural identity. The study of songs and tales of Gamit community serves the purpose to authorize and validate the Gamit culture's morals and values. Through the songs and tales, voice of the Gamit society gets echoed, which is a reflection of the collective conscience and creativity of the native people.
- Tribal oral literature is deep rooted into the culture, which plays important role to form the tribal psyche. The present study provides an opportunity to dive deep into tribal conscience, piercing the layers of time to study the distinct customs, traditions and rituals associated with rites of passage, their belief in supernatural and their way of living life.
- There are no historical sources available about the origin of the Gamit community. Close study of songs and tales can provide important historical and anthropological clues about this primitive society. Moreover, the present research will prove of immense importance to conduct sociological as well as ethnographical surveys, to undertake culture studies as well as it is significant from the aesthetic point of view.
- The study of folklore is essentially a study of culture. Therefore, it becomes necessary to interact with the community under study to learn from their traditional folkloric forms. Such efforts were launched by the Colonial collectors and at present, this activity has caught momentum and it offers a fertile field of researches to natives and non-natives alike.
- The primary aim of songs and tales as the expressions of folklore is to give entertainment; however it has multiple roles to perform in the life of tribal communities.
- Though, the government is trying hard for the spread of education among Adivasis, the dropout ratio of tribal children is highest. Providing literacy in state vernacular has resulted into a kind of 'cultural genocide' for the tribals. Study of folk songs and tales in Gamit dialect can help to reach out to tribal children in

their own languages. Such efforts have already been undertaken by Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, Vadodara and CIIL, Mysore.

- Folklore represented through various forms of folklore genres in general and songs and tales of Gamit tribe in particular, are the ethnographic documents of living traditions. As this unique tribal society is passing through the transition period of modernity and nativity, the very existence of this folk culture is facing constant threat of materialistic forces from the outside world and from within the community. Gamit language and Gamit culture call for serious efforts required for its promotion and conservation to the native users, acculturated, educated and leading people of the community and to the government agencies as well.
- Folk songs and folktales are two most popular genres of folklore across the world, and when it comes to a tribal community, which have their notions preserved only in orality, vitality of these forms become even more significant.
- Folk songs bear testimony of the past events like relationship of the communities, various agricultural activities, rites and rituals, belief system, moral norms and occupational behavior and the social and cultural milieu of the people that are kept alive and preserved into the form of these genres of oral tradition.
- Singing of Gamit traditional songs have provided with a new career avenues to the Gamit youth who speak Gamit language. During marriage season, the local singers', musicians' and dancers' groups are very much in demand. The Gamit people residing far from their native place insist to include such traditional singers', dancers' and musicians' performances, so that their next generation becomes aware of their cultural past.
- Folk songs are the integral part of Gamit community and we find the songs related to all activities. Gamit folk songs play the role as ethnographic documents of the culture; of the distinct group. We find the songs related to their daily chores, various agricultural activities, rites of passage, festivals, *haats* etc. suggest that songs are the most handy tools which serve the multipurpose functions in the life of the Gamit people. Stories require specific setting of time while folksongs can be whispered, can be recited, and sung aloud depending on the occasion.

- Documentation of folktales is of huge importance as it provides psychological insight into the cultural milieu of the society at a given period.
- Day-by-day, the speakers of Gamit dialect are reducing which makes existence of this oral dialect vulnerable. The present study of songs and tales will prove of great value to preserve the cultural identity of the native speakers. Exploring this field is only a drop of contribution towards the conservation of the vast sea of traditional knowledge; what is done is very small and lot more requires to be done.
- Study of folk tales of Gamit or any ethnic community in general can be useful to study various arts employed by the robbers to dig a hole through the wall. In '*Folk tales of Mahakosal*' (1944), Varrier Elvin says, "The custom of digging a hole through the wall in order to rob the house is one of the organized methods adopted by the Indian thief, and there is a regular art of the subject which has been studied by Bloomfield.No fewer than seven different names are given to the shapes of the breach in the wall such as 'Blown like a Lotus'.... (234). He notes down that Natesha Sastri has also studied such custom employed by the robbers in South India. Such study can lead to many serious researches into various allied art or the knowledge employed by the people of the region.
- Propagation of tribal art, tribal songs and tales have become instrumental to reduce the rift between the tribals and the other classes of society. Unique way of tribal life has been finding more and more recognition across the nation. Government agencies are also endorsing this tribal ethnicity under the tribal tourism and eco-tourism. Whether it is the tribal way of beautifully daubed houses, artistic food-grain containers, the world famous *varli* paintings or their traditional food preserving methods without the use of chemicals, are the new fields of interest and research presently.
- The well educated, next generation of the community and of the tribals across the nation, are trying to get true recognition to their culture through their creative writings. Their writing is diverse though it is deep-rooted in their culture. Such 'unheard voices' are very much encouraged by Sahitya Akademi, Delhi and other

State and Regional Language and literary agencies. In near future, the literary circles will be replete with such new kinds of literary genres.

- As the human beings continue to evolve as a species, it will need its folklore because folklore is the continuum of human existence. Folklore promotes the wisdom of human creativity. Man is with reason from his first existence and man has not disconnected from his past.
- There are about 7000 living and spoken languages in the world today; it is estimated that on an average, one language is dying every ten days. Somewhere in the world, ethnological studies show that 90 percent of these will have become extinct in the next four or five decades. Death of any language is a huge loss from a cultural point of view. “When a language dies, their culture and knowledge system – their architectural practices, folk tales and songs, their cuisine, their indigenous medicines are also lost forever” ( Bhatia The Times of India).
- Writers like Kunzang Choden – a Bhutanese author – who has documented folktales and also written an English fiction says, “When one moves from oral to written, one tends to lose a lot of wisdom that has been handed down since generations” (Singh Times of India).
- Another Naga tribal turned author Phejin Konyak, stressing the importance of preserving and documenting tribal culture says, “My identity is what defines me as a Naga, as a Konyak, as a tribal. Your identity is what defines you. And if we lose our identity, if we don’t have the tradition of our forefathers, then there is nothing special about it. While adapting to changing times, one has to preserve one’s traditions. The best way to do so is making audio and video recordings of the songs, sayings and festivals” (Singh Times of India).
- Out of thirteen folktales documented in the research study, many Gamit folktales are connected with national as well as their international variants. Study of the Gamit songs and tales reveals that not only the plot but even the songs and even the description of the tales are ditto. As these folktales are being brought on such a wide platform for the first time, this provides new avenues of research area, to establish new theories in the field of Anthropology, Comparative Study and Culture Study as well.

- When a researcher from the community undertakes the study of oral tradition of his/her native community, who also knows his/her language, authenticity and validity of such research increases even more. He/she also renders service to the community by taking these traditions further and also on other platforms. Simultaneously, the researcher also fulfils his/her duty as a transmitter of this invaluable treasure ahead.
- Among the tribal communities, the folk art forms like songs and tales have social missions apart from creating cultural conscience. The most important is the collective conscience they produce. They help maintain integrity of individuals and equipping them to meet social challenges.
- While conducting the study of culture and language, it is imperative that the researcher is well versed in the language of the target community. The present study of songs and tales of Gamit community is also relevant from the point of view that it has been undertaken by the researcher who is representative of Gamit community and who is well versed in Gamit language. As well as the researcher is also answerable to her community. These native people will be provided with the report, feedback and recognition received from the academic peers about their rich culture.
- Tribals across the world are becoming more and more aware about their cultural roots; they take pride for being the tribals, and Gamits are no exception to it. They parade in their traditional dresses accompanied with musical instruments, performing their dance forms in the cities and towns on the International Day of the World's Indigenous People on 9<sup>th</sup> August.
- A.K.Ramanujan has included the 'Tales about Tales' type of folk tales which speaks about the function of telling a story even to the walls. As we listen to the story, it is our duty to pass it on and circulate it. This function of folk tales refers to the psychosomatic insight.
- Lot of examples from history can be quoted here which suggest what happens when the words are suppressed. Unspoken words have the power to bring down the wall of suppressing institutions perhaps, this is why, in today's world 'freedom of expression' is encouraged and emphasized.

- These stories contain powerful necessary truth that warn the humans that if they seek to suppress the tales, that will eventually burst out; bringing down the authority when their voices become the liberating force. Ramanujan here refers to the cathartic role of telling folk tales. “Passing out the tales to another listeners makes the person, him or her aware of his/her social responsibility as well as his/her individual identity”(324).
- “Stories cry out to be told, passed on, and so kept alive. If they are not told, they take another forms and exact revenge on the one who hoards them and suffocates them. Traditions depend on being circulated, communicated to others and to future generations”(324).
- All human memory is based in stories and it affects the way we live, work, think and relate to each other. We create meaning through the stories and we tell and the stories we hear.
- Folk songs and folktales revive history. If we consider the contribution of the great scholar of Gujarat, Kanaiyalal Munshi, through his historical novels, he ignited the flames of Nationalism among the people of Gujarat that resulted into state’s separate existence from the Bombay state. Through his invaluable contribution to the filed of folklore, Zaverchand Meghani tried to awake the people from amnetia and the Nobel Laureate Ravindranath Tagore led the nation to the light from the darkness of ignorance and slavery.
- There are instrumental moments when we find confluence of art and life. The role of the story tellers and the audience is very important in transmitting the folklore tradition. While doing so, they delved deeper into the meaning of their own existence.
- In the field of both art and science, experts have long known the correlation between story telling and the way in which we communicate and learn. In the age of science and technology folklore items exist; albeit, the media through which these folklore notions are expressed, have undergone a drastic change but not the folklore items. Importance of oral histories which has been demonstrated in projects to programme computers to create stories. Huge amount of data that have been stored by human beings are memory based, exist in story format.

- Many ethnic forms of songs and dance are very popular across the nation and have reached beyond the national boundaries too. For e.g. types of songs like *timali*, *rodali*, and pyramid dance form of the people of Dang etc.
- In the age of artificial intelligence (AI), the role of stories have been proven through the research. Stories are fundamental to know people learn and organise their learning. Human memory is based in stories and this affects the way we communicate, we think and learn.
- The study of oral tradition in general and folksongs and tales in particular tends to contribute to our understanding of culture and its working in human societies. Insight provided through these folklore genres help an individual adjust socially and psychologically.
- Folktale is a powerful vehicle which conveys message to the people, that will enrich and enlighten their lives. These messages are in the form of rebukes, instructions and advices that lead the common folk in the righteousness.
- Folklore genres like folksongs and tales carry the traditional knowledge, which helps the world to cope up with serious problems. To day the environment related issues have posed serious dangers against the existence of mankind. Issues like global warming and imbalance in ecological system have caused threat to the human existence. These are more dire emergencies than the threat of war and terrorism. Our next generation is challenging the world authorities as its representative Greta Thunberg is doing for the environment related issues. Knowledge of traditional way of living can help us find the solutions of such problems. This idea is very much uphold in Gamit engagement song, ‘Nilan pataran da-a-vay giyan’. In tribal way of living there is no difference between art and life, between art and applied art. Tribal philosophy is the blend of aesthetic and utilitarian attributes. Idea of recycling existed in traditional way of living since time immemorial.
- Insight into folklore tradition conveyed through songs and tales is not only important for anthropology, but also in terms of policy formation for the government to achieve the broad goals. Such studies can help government for the formulation of special policies for minor communities.

- Close study and analysis of folksongs and tales of Gamit community reveal that these verbal forms of folklore carry unique traits of the one of the tribal communities of India. Hence, whoever wants to study Indian culture, he/she can not afford to ignore this oral tradition. Oral folk genres and non-verbal folklore blend the every aspect of Indian life.
- “Stories are used everyday to entertain, to teach a lesson, to make a psychological, religious or political point. Story telling serves different purpose to different audiences for example stories are told children to make them sleep but also to keep adults awake during works” ( Ramanujan xxi ).
- Stories does not die out very soon in the listeners minds. The social psychological messages that have been imparted through folktales might find answer and conciliation when the listener grows up. Indian tradition is such that we have ‘*Garbh Sanskar*’, and mythological tales like Krishna teaching war strategies to Abhimanyu when he was still in the womb.
- The Gamit community is standing on the threshold of modernity. The Gamit people who grew up in native environment and then migrated to the towns and cities for varied purposes have felt the drastic change very closely. They are open to change as well as they are also aware of the fact that the traditional knowledge preserved in various folklore forms like folksongs, folktales, proverbs, riddles, etc. are the passing shadows, which require to be preserved and to be documented.
- On the part of the researcher, the study of folksongs and folktales has assigned the responsibility to collect and conserve this legacy before it completely becomes extinct. For example, there were traditional Gamit musical instruments being played by the Gamits like *kingari*, *towali*, *pawari*, which have almost disappeared. Such native artists’ art should be found out and preserved through videography. Fishing techniques, bird- traps and making process of traditional musical instruments should also be documented. Gamit language should be preserved; folksongs, folktales, riddle, proverbs should be preserved in print as well as in electronic database.

## WORKS CITED

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Folklore culture, including stories, music, dance, legends, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, customs, and so forth within a particular population comprising the traditions (including oral traditions) of that culture, subculture, or group. It is also the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared. The academic and usually ethnographic study of folklore is sometimes called folkloristics. The word 'folklore' was first used by the English antiquarian William Thoms in 1846. Folklore is a collection of fictional stories about animals and people, of cultural myths, jokes, songs, tales and even quotes. The study of folk tradition and knowledge is called folkloristics. Although some folklores depict universal truths, unfounded beliefs and superstitions are also basic elements of folklore tradition. Types of Folklore. Following are the major forms of folklore: Folk song. 2. The Study of Folklore in Literature and Culture: Identification and Interpretation. 3. Metafolklore and Oral Literary Criticism. 4. From Etic to Emic Units in the Structural Study of Folktales. x e Meaning of Folklore liquidated (meaning revealed through analytic means). I included essays that I thought had stood the test of time and will be useful to students and scholars working with folklore today and in the future; since some essays do go back a way, I updated some of the prose in the text and made corrections where necessary. all manner of cultural expression in his familiar American home and abroad in exotic locales, in historical and contemporary events, and in material as well as oral forms. To be sure, he was naturally inquisitive and, some would say, obsessive.