

VOCAL FOR LOCAL

# FOLKLORE OF VAGAD

As per the syllabus of Add-On Paper for M.A. Semester IV  
Faculty of Humanities

*Edited by*  
**Seema Malik**



**MOHANLAL SUKHADIA UNIVERSITY, UDAIPUR**

Under the aegis of the Research Project

**Folklore of Vagad Region: Mapping Oral Traditions**

funded by Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) 2.0

Ministry of Education

Government of India

and

SPD RUSA, Rajasthan



# भारत का संविधान

## उद्देशिका

हम, भारत के लोग, भारत को एक संपूर्ण प्रभुत्व-संपन्न समाजवादी पंथनिरपेक्ष लोकतन्त्रात्मक गणराज्य बनाने के लिए तथा उसके समस्त नागरिकों को :

सामाजिक, आर्थिक और राजनैतिक न्याय,  
विचार, अभिव्यक्ति, विश्वास, धर्म

और उपासना की स्वतंत्रता,  
प्रतिष्ठा और अवसर की समता

प्राप्त कराने के लिए,  
तथा उन सब में

व्यक्ति की गरिमा और राष्ट्र की एकता  
और अखंडता सुनिश्चित करने वाली बंधुता

बढ़ाने के लिए

दृढ़संकल्प होकर अपनी इस संविधान सभा में आज तारीख 26 नवंबर, 1949 ई. (मिति मार्गशीर्ष शुक्ला सप्तमी, संवत् 20 हजार छह विक्रमी) को एतद्वारा इस संविधान को अंगीकृत, अधिनियमित और आत्मार्पित करते हैं।

## मूल अधिकार

समता का अधिकार (अनु. 14-18)

स्वतंत्रता का अधिकार (अनु. 19-22)

शोषण के विरुद्ध अधिकार (अनु. 23-24)

धर्म की स्वतंत्रता का अधिकार (अनु. 25-28)

संस्कृति और शिक्षा संबंधी अधिकार (अनु. 29-30)

सांविधानिक उपचारों का अधिकार (अनु. 32)

## मूल कर्तव्य

51 क. मूल कर्तव्य-भारत के प्रत्येक नागरिक का यह कर्तव्य होगा कि वह -

- (क) संविधान का पालन करे और उसके आदर्शों, संस्थाओं, राष्ट्र ध्वज और राष्ट्रगान का आदर करे;
- (ख) स्वतंत्रता के लिए हमारे राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन को प्रेरित करने वाले उच्च आदर्शों को हृदय में संजोए रखे और उनका पालन करे;
- (ग) भारत की प्रभुता, एकता और अखंडता की रक्षा करे और उसे अक्षुण्ण रखे;
- (घ) देश की रक्षा करे और आह्वान किए जाने पर राष्ट्र की सेवा करे;
- (ङ) भारत के सभी लोगों में समरसता और समान भ्रातृत्व की भावना का निर्माण करे जो धर्म, भाषा और प्रदेश या वर्ग पर आधारित सभी भेदभाव से परे हो, ऐसी प्रथाओं का त्याग करे जो स्त्रियों के सम्मान के विरुद्ध है;
- (च) हमारी सामासिक संस्कृति की गौरवशाली परंपरा का महत्त्व समझे और उसका परिरक्षण करे;
- (छ) प्राकृतिक पर्यावरण की, जिसके अंतर्गत वन, झील, नदी और वन्य जीव हैं, रक्षा करे और उसका संवर्धन करे तथा प्राणिमात्र के प्रति दयाभाव रखे;
- (ज) वैज्ञानिक दृष्टिकोण, मानववाद और ज्ञानार्जन तथा सुधार की भावना का विकास करे;
- (झ) सार्वजनिक संपत्ति को सुरक्षित रखे और हिंसा से दूर रहे;
- (ञ) व्यक्तिगत और सामूहिक गतिविधियों के सभी क्षेत्रों में उत्कर्ष की ओर बढ़ने का सतत प्रयास करे जिससे राष्ट्र निरंतर बढ़ते हुए प्रयत्न और उपलब्धि की नई ऊंचाइयों को छू ले;
- (ट) यदि माता-पिता या संरक्षक हैं, छह वर्ष से चौदह वर्ष तक की आयु वाले अपने, यथास्थिति, बालक या प्रतिपाल्य के लिए शिक्षा के अवसर प्रदान करें।

# Folklore of Vagad

M.A. Semester IV

Add-On Paper

Faculty of Humanities



Mohanlal Sukhadia University  
Udaipur



Under the aegis of the Research Project

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## ***Folklore of Vagad***

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*to the perennially vibrant  
tribal community of Vagad*



कलराज मिश्र  
राज्यपाल, राजस्थान



Kalraj Mishra  
Governor, Rajasthan



संदेश

मुझे यह जानकर प्रसन्नता है कि मोहनलाल सुखाड़िया विश्वविद्यालय, उदयपुर द्वारा जनजाति वागड़ अंचल के लोक साहित्य एवं ऐतिहासिक घटनाक्रम को पाठ्यक्रम में सम्मिलित किया गया है। इस संदर्भ में राष्ट्रीय उच्चतर शिक्षा अभियान- 2.0 के तहत शोध परियोजना के अन्तर्गत डिजिटल प्रारूप में पाठ्यपुस्तक तैयार की गई है।

राजस्थान का जनजाति अंचल अपनी विशिष्ट सांस्कृतिक परम्पराओं के साथ ही प्रकृति संरक्षण की अनूठी परम्पराओं और लोक का आलोक लिए है। जनजातीय संस्कृति प्रकृति से घुली-मिली अपनापे से लबरेज है। वागड़ अंचल का इतिहास आजादी आंदोलन के साथ ही संस्कृति की हमारी अनमोल विरासत है।

मुझे यह बताया गया है कि प्रकाश्य पाठ्यपुस्तक में जनजाति अंचल की गौरवशाली परम्पराओं के साथ ही जनजाति वर्ग की मौखिक परम्पराओं के संरक्षण से जुड़े आयामों को सम्मिलित किया गया है। उम्मीद करता हूँ, विद्यार्थियों के ज्ञानवर्द्धन के लिए उपयोगी सामग्री संजोते पुस्तक ऐतिहासिक तथ्यों की वास्तविकता को परखने के साथ ही सभी वर्गों की भावनाओं को ध्यान में रखते हुए प्रकाशित की जा रही है।

मेरी हार्दिक शुभकामनाएं।

  
(कलराज मिश्र)

**Dr. Bhupendra Singh**

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**MESSAGE**

It is heartening to learn that Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur has incorporated the Folklore of Vagad Region in the curriculum of the University. An e-book has also been prepared for the same which will certainly be beneficial for the students, teachers, researchers and others who have keen interest in our culture and heritage. Oral Literatures are rich sources of understanding how local communities engage with more universal human experiences. In a time when popular cultures across the globe are being rapidly homogenized through a global market, it is crucial that we record and study these traditions to preserve these unique ways of engaging with life. An academic effort towards this goal is a potent way to preserve oral literatures and to prevent the unique humanity they carry within, from being lost to time.

Efforts made by the eminent academicians of the University in this regard will certainly prove to be a milestone. My best wishes to the Principal Investigator Professor Seema Malik and the entire team for the success of the project.

  
(Dr. Bhupendra Singh)  
Chairman





**Prof. D.S. Chundawat**  
Vice-Chairman



**Rajasthan State Higher  
Education Council  
Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.)**

MESSAGE

I am happy to learn that Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur has incorporated Folklore of Vagad in the curriculum and an E-Book has been prepared for the same looking into the needs of the students under the aegis of the RUSA 2.0 project. This will go a long way in creating the interest of the students by making them aware of the rich cultural heritage of Vagad region.

My best wishes to the Principal Investigator Prof Seema Malik and the entire team for their commendable effort.

(Prof. D.S. Chundawat)



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संदेश

मोहनलाल सुखाड़िया विश्वविद्यालय, उदयपुर द्वारा जनजाति वागड़ अंचल बाँसवाडा-डूंगरपुर की लोक परम्पराओं व साहित्य को पाठ्यक्रम में सम्मिलित करने का निर्णय किया गया है। शिक्षा मंत्रालय के राष्ट्रीय उच्चतर शिक्षा अभियान-2.0 के सहयोग से शोध परियोजना की मुख्य अन्वेषक व संपादक प्रो. सीमा मलिक एवं टीम के द्वारा पाठ्यक्रमानुसार पुस्तक तैयार की गई है जो हर्ष का विषय है तथा इस पुस्तक को प्रारम्भिक स्तर पर डिजिटल प्लेटफार्म (ई-बुक) प्रारूप में उपलब्ध कराया जा रहा है। जिससे विद्यार्थियों को पाठ्यक्रम से संबंधित विषय-वस्तु का अध्ययन करने में सरलता रहेगी एवं नवीन ज्ञान व ऐतिहासिक तथ्यों से भी अवगत हो सकेंगे। प्रो. सीमा मलिक, शोध परियोजना की मुख्य अन्वेषक एवं संपादक टीम को मेरी तरफ से शुभकामनाएं व बधाई।

प्रो. अमेरिका सिंह

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### **Folklore of Vagad**

M.A. Semester IV

Add-On Paper

Faculty of Humanities

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## **SYLLABUS**

### **Folk Literature of Vagad**

#### **Objectives:**

- To foreground indigenous studies and to familiarize the students with the theory of oral literature
- To develop an understanding of the historical-geographical and socio-cultural-political scenario of Vagad with special reference to Mangarh and Gavi.
- To sensitize the students about the cultural heritage of Vagad through comprehension and interpretation of Vagadi songs, tales and performatives.

#### **Unit 1**

##### **Theorizing Folk Literature**

- Components of Folklore: Songs, Tales, Performatives

#### **Unit 2**

##### **Vagad Region**

- History, Geography and socio-cultural background of Vagad region
- Major Festivals and Customs

#### **Unit 3**

##### **Literature of Society and Culture**

- Songs
  - ‘Endariyo Jug’
  - ‘Nonu Hongteru’

#### **Unit 4**

##### **Literature of Socio-Political and Historical Significance**

- Song of Mangarh

#### **Unit 5**

##### **Tribal Literature of Vagad**

- Gavri: Performative

#### **Outcomes**

- This will enable the students to understand folk literature, its scope and significance.
- The students will develop an interest in folk studies and will be able to connect with the local culture of the region.
- The students will get familiarized with narratives/performatives of the Vagad region and will connect them to the cultural roots.

## Preface

In keeping with the temporal thrust of being ‘Vocal for Local’, this e-book is a humble attempt to foreground the rich culture and oral traditions of Vagad region. The e-book is a step in line with the spirit of the National Education Policy 2020 that emphasizes the inculcation of a sense of pride among the students towards Bharat and the rich knowledge systems and the cultural reservoirs of our country.

Folklore of Vagad is unfathomable, encompassing the rich cultural heritage of legends, songs, customs, history, artifacts, music, herbal medicines, myths etc. and is marked with continuity and dynamism. As a part of the RUSA 2.0 Project sanctioned by the Ministry of Education entitled “Folklore of Vagad Region: Mapping Oral Traditions”, this e-book is limited in scope. One of the objectives of the project was to introduce Folklore of Vagad in the curriculum and it has been successfully approved and implemented as an Add-On Paper in Semester IV in the Faculty of Humanities, Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur. The e-book is a consolidated literary corpus in accordance with the prescribed syllabus to facilitate the students. The aim is to introduce folklore to the students as a conceptual category of literature and acquaint them with the significant cultural artefacts of Vagad region like Mangarh, Gavri etc.

I wish to place on record my gratitude for the cooperation extended by the eminent scholars of Vagad- Sh. Upendra Anu, Ms. Malini Kale, Dr. Manna Lal Rawat, Dr. Premchandra Dabi, Sh. Dinesh Panchal and Sh. Satish Acharya who have generously spared time and shared information through interaction from time to time. Published seminal works like *Banswara (Vagad) ki Kala aur Sanskritik Virasat* by Malini Kale, *Sanskritike Bijakshar* by Upendra Anu and *Rajasthan me Vagadi Lok Sahitya* by Premchand Dabi have been of tremendous help in the writing of the e-book.

I want to place on record my sincere thanks to the Ministry of Education-RUSA for funding the project and thereby making it feasible for us to achieve our objectives. My special thanks are due to our Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Prof. Amarika Singh who initiated the drive to write e-books for students and it is precisely this that encouraged me to venture into e-book writing. It would not have been possible to accomplish this work without the timely co-operation, prompt response and moral support of my Co-Principal Investigators, Research Assistants and Field Associate who have majorly contributed in preparing the content. I am extremely thankful to them.

The e-book is dynamic by design and will evolve as we proceed further in the project. Besides English, e-book is also being prepared in Hindi and Rajasthani. It is hoped that the e-book will be helpful to the students and will create their interest in the folk literature of Vagad for further studies.

***Seema Malik***

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# 1

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## THEORISING FOLK LITERATURE

The concept of literature has been dynamic down the ages and the understanding of literature as elitist has undergone a sea change. There has been a democratisation of literature in contemporary times and it has become more inclusive. Besides written literature, the shift has been towards oral literature as it serves as a cultural archive of the day to day lives of the folk, their community specific ethos, history, beliefs, traditions and integral practises carried forward orally from one generation to another. It has been rightly pointed out by Angela Carter that literature, across human history, has primarily been narrated, not written, heard, not read. The oral narratives, folk tales, songs etc. are a significant reflection of the imaginations and lived experiences of the folk.

The word ‘folk’ has been derived from the Old English word ‘folc’ meaning common people or laity and thus in its earliest usage, the term was used to refer to the rural, illiterate peasants or the people living in the countryside. The Cambridge Dictionary defines the term folk as “people, especially those of a particular group or type”. The meaning of folk has been variously defined and explained in different dictionaries and by thinkers and subject experts and it can commonly be understood as a traditional origin in a culture that reflects a particular lifestyle peculiar to that culture. Folk essentially is



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something pertaining to common, ordinary people who share certain beliefs.

Earlier, for a relatively long span of time, the term folk was synonymous with the rural, countryside people and the rustic pastoral culture which stood as relatively unrefined and subsidiary to the educated, mainstream, urban culture. This dichotomy between the folk and the urban was identified and addressed by Alan Dundes, the renowned folklorist who played a pivotal role in defining folklore and establishing it as an academic discipline. In his attempt to quash the binary that had rigidly been grounded and was followed by most of the intelligentsia, Dundes tried to explain that folk was the original form of all emotions and a potent source to acquire knowledge. Despite all the riches of knowledge that science gifted to mankind, folk still stands apart in terms of its originality and freshness.

However, in due course of time, the term ‘folk’ acquired several layers of meaning and varied interpretations. Thus, its understanding today is no longer restricted to the confines of the dichotomy between the urban, elite, literate and the rural, poor, illiterate. Dundes, in his seminal work, *The Study of Folklore* explains that ‘folk’ can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is –it could be a common occupation, language, or religion-but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason still have some traditions which it calls its own (3). Further, according to him, the term ‘lore’ includes components such as “myths, legends, folktales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, tongue-twisters, and greeting and leave-taking formulas...” (3).

During these developments of its structure and meaning, the term folk supposedly underwent significant conceptual changes. From the illiterate, rustic, pastoral culture, it gradually expanded to and incorporated the parts of refined culture and educated world. From the countryside, folk in later stages could now be traced into the urban world also. However, folk, wherever they are, have maintained its synonymity with oral traditions.

The American folklorist, Dan Ben Amos in his work “Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context” defined folklore as “artistic communication in small groups” (13). Thus, in simple words, folk may be defined as an all-encompassing assimilation and representation of the culture of a particular community by way of songs, tales, performances, day-to-day rituals, legends, beliefs, traditions, cultural practises etc. which are known to be the essential components of folklore.

Oracy as the medium of expression in different cultures, gradually acquired the form of traditions. In his book, *The Singer Resumes the Tale*, Albert Bates Lord writes “Oral literature, then, consists of the songs and stories, and other sayings, that people have heard and listened to, sung and told, without any intervention of writing. The creator or transmitter did not write the song or the story but sang or told it; the receiver did not read the song or story but heard it. These stories and songs are, therefore, not only oral but also aural; they are not only told, they are also heard” (np).

Oracy, the primary expression continued to serve mankind for centuries until the invention of alphabet, which is a relatively recent scene. This invention led man into the arena of first the written and then the printed word, and the role of memory that used to predominate human expression previously, was decreased to a significant degree. In oral traditions, the longest of compositions could easily be recited and performed spontaneously without much deliberation. The traversing from the invention of the alphabet until now, has taken man away from his cultural roots and freshness of originality. With the passage of time, the need to repair the snapped links was realised in order to re-establish the connection with one's roots. Thus, folk re-entered the scholarly scenario of the mainstream literati, with a new focus that foregrounds oral traditions and the study of folkloristics in the arena of literature studies.

The term folklore is made up of two words, ‘folk’ (from the old English word ‘folc’) meaning ‘people’ and ‘lore’ (from the old English word ‘lar’) meaning instruction. The term was first coined by the British writer William John Thoms in the year 1846. There is no one particular definition that succinctly encompasses and in turn

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defines the myriad practices, beliefs, customs and rituals that fall into the purview of what folklore contains and represents. According to the American folklore society: “Folklore is the traditional art, literature, knowledge, and practice that is disseminated largely through oral communication and behavioural example. Every group with a sense of its own identity shares, as a central part of that identity, folk traditions—the things that people traditionally *believe* (planting practices, family traditions, and other elements of world view), *do* (dance, make music, sew clothing), *know* (how to build an irrigation dam, how to nurse an ailment, how to prepare barbecue), *make* (architecture, art, craft), and *say* (personal experience stories, riddles, song lyrics). As these examples indicate, in most instances there is no hard-and-fast separation of these categories, whether in everyday life or in folklorists' work.” It clearly explicates that there is no water-tight compartmentalization vis-à-vis the different components of folklore and its material. It is this inherent fluidity of these components that keeps the folklore dynamic and retains its freshness.

Folkloristics or folklore studies is a sub-division of ethnographic studies which takes its origins from anthropology. It represents the area of study wherein all that is incorporated in folklore is collected, categorized, analysed and illustrated in a scientific manner. Thus, this discipline functions as a bridge between humanities and social sciences and is essentially interdisciplinary in its nature. This interdisciplinarity comes into play the moment one tries to delve deeper into figuring out the methods to study folklore and the vast scope it encompasses.

The word ethnography has been derived from the Greek words—‘Ethnos’ meaning people and the word ‘Graphein’ meaning writing. It is an offshoot of anthropology that deals with the study of society and culture. Ethnographic researchers use the method of participant observation in order to collect data pertaining to their research. The observation can either be overt or covert. In his book *Being Ethnographic: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Ethnography*, Raymond Madden says that ethnography can be understood as

writing about a group that is socially, culturally and ethically defined..

Ethnography provides the purpose and method for any type of anthropological research. One of the most commonly used methods for data collection while studying the folklore and the culture of any particular place or region is ethnographic field work carried over a relatively larger time span in order to pick up the intricacies of material as well as abstract beliefs.

The word anthropology has been derived from the Greek words-*anthropos* meaning human and *logia* meaning study. Also known as the science of humanity, anthropology is a multifaceted gamut that studies the origin, biological, physical and cultural development; social customs, beliefs and all kinds of developmental aspects of humankind.

The term Orality has been derived from the Latin word *oralis* meaning 'mouth'. Thus, it refers to the practise of using the spoken word as a means to interact, communicate and convey ideas. The American historian Walter J Ong has rightly said that “Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche” (14). In his works, Ong discusses two kinds of orality-primary and secondary. Ong differentiates between these two types based on the exposure to the print medium and the usage of electronic and digital technological devices.

With the invention of the written word, the literary compositions were now available for multiple readers. It was around three thousand years ago. With the advent of the print technology in the last quarter of 15<sup>th</sup> century, the journey of literature received its biggest shift. This revolutionary milestone changed the attitude of masses about literature and literature now became more easily available and accessible for the common people. In India, oral tradition has been as old as the *Vedas* and the *Puranas* and the tradition of writing the literary text has also been there for thousands of years. Yet the oral traditions in India have never been completely

uprooted. The Indian psyche is deeply connected to its cultural roots. The print literature in India became popular during the British regime. This became the standard norm for mainstream literature. Thus, folk for these two centuries was dealt with the low-end literature and the printed word became synonymous with literature to such a degree that no literary discussion could occur without the printed word. Yet, it goes without saying that oral literature is the major source of literary creations. *Beowulf* in Britain and epics like the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* in India have been a great literary inspiration for the later writers. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* bear folklore analogues for almost 22 out of 28 tales. Thus it is clearly established that folklore is intricately and inextricably woven into mainstream literature in terms of themes, content, art of expression and as an inspiration.

### Characteristics of Folklore

- a. On the basis of the various definitions it can be said that folklore is an amalgamation of folk arts, folk practises, folk rituals, folk ways and folk literature. It is an expression of folklife and it dwells upon the life itself. All that the folk lives and has as a means for it, falls under this category.
- b. The linguistic expressions which pertain to the aboriginal belief systems are a part of folklore.
- c. Orality or oral compositions which have no particular author and are based on oral-aural tradition.
- d. The creations in folklore represent the folk mindset and are generally validated by the members of a culture or ethnic group.
- e. The different facets of folklore necessitate for it to be a gamut of different items. The things that comprise it are many and the scope that opens up is wide. The word folklore is used for both the body of traditions that is the beliefs, folk tales, folk dance, folk drama, myths, legends, values, customs and conventions that are there in a cultural group and the signs studying it that is the methods, processes and systems to observe, record, archive and analyse the very items involved in it.

## Components of Folklore

### The Performative

Man being an aping creature is instinctively mimetic. This characteristic (of imitation), with the dawn of languages must have given the human kind its first dialogues and thus began the journey of drama. Even in the era of sophisticated, literary dramaturgy, the simple, situational dialogues of the folk, suffused with cultural values, still remain fascinating and relevant. Folk theatre is a blend of all the three elements of theatrical performances, i.e, dance, music and drama.

The two great epics of India have contributed greatly in the progression of the folk performative drama. Based on *Ramayana*, *Ramleela* and based on *Mahabharatra*, *Rasleela* have been the most popular parts of folk dramatic performances right from the urban stage to the rustic nooks in the smallest of villages. Folk theatre in India is mostly dominated by historical and religious elements.

Theatre or *Natya* is a kind of performative art wherein the performers (actors, musicians, dancers etc.) use their expressions, dialogues, songs, dance, hand and body movements, etc., usually as a live performance in front of an audience. In the Indian context, *Natyashastra* (about 500 BC) or *Natyasastra*, Bharata Muni's famous treatise on performing arts such as dance, drama, poetics, etc. serves as an important work that expounds on the classical Indian concept of drama. According to which there are two types of production of theatre:

1. *Lokdharmi*: As the word itself suggests, *lok* means 'folk' and thus the term *lokdharmi* implies the folk mode of theatre.
2. *Natyadharmi*: Contrary to *Lokdharmi*, *Natyadharmi* implies the classical mode of theatre.

The folk theatre which is *lokdharmi* in nature still stands true to its traditional roots. Till date, folk theatre serves as an extremely powerful tool for spontaneity of dialogue, music and acting. All these three things form a confluence in an unpremeditated art form.

Folk theatre in India initially dealt with themes related to religion, ancient rituals and mythology. However, in due course of time, several other aspects came into its purview and thus folk theatre became more inclusive. India has a diverse variety of such *lokdharmi* forms of theatre that vary as per the region, culture, language and the likes and while the most original, authentic forms of such *lokdharmi* theatre are still alive in the nook and corners of India, incessant and extensive efforts are being made in order to give them projection and thus in so doing, to bring them from the margins to the mainstream.

### **Characteristics of Folk Theatre**

1. Performed by professionally untrained artists
2. Idyllic and informal setting
3. Predominance of religious themes
4. Spontaneity of art
5. Musicality
6. No typical stage required for the performance
7. Use of locally available resources for costumes and props
8. Most performances have the theme of the triumph of good over evil.
9. Sublimity of human emotions
10. Inclusion of the supernatural
11. Conventionally even female roles are played by male performers
12. Fusion of religion, tradition, imagination, culture and popular beliefs
13. Ecological concerns
14. Focus on interpersonal relationships

*Nautanki* and *Swang* from Uttar Pradesh, *Bhand Pather* from Kashmir, *Bhavai* from Gujarat, *Jatra* from Bengal, *Maach* from Madhya Pradesh, *Bhaona* from Assam, *Tamasha* from Maharashtra, *Mudiyettu* and *Koodiyaattam* from Kerala, *Yakshagaana* from Karnataka and *Therukoothu* from Tamil Nadu are among the prominent forms of folk theatre across the country.

All these forms vary in the way they are performed and presented, language and costumes and make-up worn by the performers, use of props, thematic concerns of the folk performance, etc.

### **Popular Folk Theatre of Rajasthan**

Major forms of folk theatre and performances that add richness to the gamut of the kaleidoscopic folk culture of Rajasthan are:

1. *Khyals*
2. *Rammats*
3. *Nautanki*
4. *Raasdhari*
5. *Gavri*
6. *Turra-kalangi*
7. *Ramleela*

With the change of times, the themes with contemporary relevance are being given voice to in the arena of folk theatre. This theatrical format has survived for centuries precisely because of this dynamism and historical characters stay alive in the folk mind-set due to their current relevance, religious myths and stories of miracles replete with the everyday life of the cultural group.

### **Folk Songs**

The tradition of folk songs is ages old, in fact there is no denying the fact that these have been an extremely important part of the human existence and till date they add richness to the cultural and social fabric of Indian society.

With literary texts and poems, one can generally trace the specifics such as the date of creation, name of the creator, etc. however, since folk songs fall within the purview of oral tradition (that is highly dynamic), the same does not stand true for them. In many ancient Indian scriptures, the act of singing songs has been mentioned quite often but the question of where and how these songs originated or when they were created remains largely unanswered. Despite the obvious restrictions vis-a-vis the authorship of these songs, it is



through the beauty that finds an artful expression in them that their unknown creator gets immortalized for eternity.

One can fall back upon the ancient scriptures in the Sanskrit language to get an idea about just how early on these songs became a part of the human existence, for example the *Rigveda* has the word *ghathik* in it (a term that is generally used in the context of songs). Songs serve as a medium to express a gamut of human emotions.

When it comes to artistic expression, human beings have a natural and innate quality of creating and relishing music. Since antiquity, songs are considered to be the most basic expressions of human emotions with aesthetically. Thus, indisputably, it can be said that humans have closely associated themselves with paintings in written form and songs and music in oral form even when they were not familiar with writing.

With the evolution of human society, these artistic expressions have changed their forms. The more developed and advanced forms have become a part of the literate and elite society whereas the ones that did not change much, maintained their primitivity. Contrary to the classical forms of music that the sophisticated and civilized society associates itself with, the folk occurs to the mind and appeals to the same more naturally.

Folk music which connotes the rusticity of masses, the dialectic words and the local musical accompaniments, prevails in all the cultures of globe. The beauty of folk music and songs lies in their spontaneity. Folk songs of a country are reflective of the regional element, indigeneity in all their diversity.

### **Components of Folksongs**

1. Folksong is elementally a song representative of folk mind set and emotions.
2. It emerges from the commonality without any known authorship.
3. Is dynamic in nature and consequently has several versions.
4. There are no consistencies vis-à-vis time, place and action as the characters appearing in a folksong may shift to different time zones and geographies instantaneously.

5. Is transmitted across generations orally as a tradition.
6. Is effortlessly sung with ease.
7. These songs exist in memory, emerge from memory and are calibrated and re-calibrated in the memory of those whom they are passed on to.
8. Folksongs often celebrate familial relationships such as the intricacies of the filial bond, love affairs, husband-wife relationship and human emotions such as jealousy, rivalry, pride, etc. These may also have as their content social situations, seasons and social change.
9. There is no printed version to mark the standard format consequently across generations. The process of change in the text is inevitable. The things of contemporary relevance and significance are continuously added while those that become redundant are deleted.
10. Certain songs become so prominently woven into the socio-cultural fabric of the society that they become oral tradition.

Some of the most prominent folk songs and music traditions in India are as follows:

- *Bihu* in Assam
- *Lavani* in Maharashtra
- *Baul* in Bengal
- *Nattu Purapaatu* in Tamil Nadu
- *Jugni* tradition of Punjab
- *Zeliang* in Nagaland
- *Koli* fisherman tradition in Maharashtra
- *Maand* in Rajasthan
- *Kajri* in Bihar and Uttar-Pradesh
- *Garba* in Gujarat

Rajasthan has been a land known for rich traditional heritage for centuries. The state has nestled and nurtured arts of its people and presents a mesmerizing panorama of multi-hued and diverse traditions of folk songs and music. The following are the prominent cultural traditions including folk dance, folk song etc.

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1. *Maand*
2. *Manganiyars* and *Langas*
3. *Phad* tradition
4. *Panihari* and *Ghoomar*
5. *Kalbeliya*

Certain traditions in Rajasthan are based on seasons and songs attached to those seasons such as *Fagun* on Holi and *Malhar* in *Sawaan* whereas certain others are eponymous and narrate the tale of their lead characters such as the love ballad *Dhola Maru*, the folk ballad of *Galaleng* etc.

### Folktales

Folktales are an important component of the folklore of any region:

- Folktales are stories that are passed down from one generation to the other by word of mouth.
- Folktales usually have human beings or animals (presented as anthropomorphic) as the main characters. The characters represent human virtues and vices such as honesty, greed, wisdom, viciousness, nobility etc. In the literary genre, most of the folktales fall under the category of fables.
- Folktales not only deal with the mundane concerns of day to day life, but they also talk about the realities and experiences of life.
- Folktales usually contain supernatural elements. Elements of mystery and miracle are often a part of folktales. These tales have been the torch-bearers for the continuity of essential cultural values across generations and also for imparting practical wisdom and morals as well.
- These tales do not have a set time frame however they are usually set in the distant past.
- One of the most prominent recurring themes of the folktales originating from different parts of the world is that of the triumph of good over evil.
- Folktales usually have a happy ending, the conflict between good and evil is resolved as virtue gets rewarded whereas malevolence

gets punished.

- Folktales are not merely meant for entertainment, but these also impart valuable moral lessons about the several aspects of life and living.
- The narrative of a folktale is usually very small and is woven around one or two events. A folktale invariably carries some pithy notion that may either be a wise saying or a wise decision arrived at through experiential learning.

## Glossary

fagun:	the twelfth month of the Hindu calendar
lokdharmi:	life oriented
malhar:	a raga used in Indian music
natya:	to act, represent
natyadharmi:	theatre oriented
puranas:	Hindu religious texts
Rigveda:	the oldest known sacred book among the four vedas
Vedas:	large body of Hindu sacred writings

## QUESTIONS

*Choose the correct answer of the following multiple-choice Questions:*

1. What does the old English term *folc* mean?
 

(a) Happiness	(b) People
(c) Elites	(d) Group
2. According to Dundes, “To discuss folk or folklore in the context of the advancement of .....seems somewhat paradoxical.”
 

(a) humanities	(b) ethnography
(c) anthropology	(d) science
3. Who defined folk as “an artistic communication in small groups”?
 

(a) Alan Dundes	(b) Antti Aarne
(c) Dan Ben Amos	(d) Eugen Fehrle

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4. In which of his works does Dundes define folk as “any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor.”?  
(a) *Holy Writ as Oral Lit*  
(b) *Folklore Matters*  
(c) *International Folkloristic: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore*  
(d) *The Study of Folklore*
5. .... is the term preferred by academic folklorists for the formal, academic discipline devoted to the study of folklore.  
(a) Folk Narratives (b) Folk literature  
(c) Folkloristics (d) Folklorist
6. Who discussed the ideas of primary and secondary orality?  
(a) Walter J. Ong (b) Edward J. Ong  
(c) Eric Foner (d) Raymond Madden
7. Bharata Muni wrote.....  
(a) *Abhigyansakuntalam* (b) *Meghadutam*  
(c) *Kavyamimansa* (d) *Natyashastra*
8. *Maach* belongs to:  
(a) Bihar (b) Bengal  
(c) Madhya Pradesh (d) Uttar Pradesh
9. *Lavani* is a folk song from:  
(a) Goa (b) Maharashtra  
(c) Karnataka (d) Kerala
10. A fable is:  
(a) A poem (b) Drama  
(c) Story (d) Song

*Give short answers to the following:*

1. Give the etymology of the term ‘folklore’.
2. Write short notes on the following:  
(a) Folk (b) Folklore

3. According to Alan Dundes, what components does the term folklore include?
4. How was the role of memory impacted after the invention of the print media?
5. Comment upon the methods of studying folklore.
6. Write a note on the scope of anthropology?
7. Differentiate between the concept of *Lokdharmi* and *Natyadharmi*.
8. Comment upon the origin and authorship of folksongs.

*Give detailed answers to the following:*

1. Discuss folklore as an interdisciplinary field of study.
2. Discuss the characteristics of of folklore.
3. Discuss the characteristics of folktales.
4. Write a detailed note on folksongs.

## 2

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### VAGAD: AN OVERVIEW

Vagad or Wagad, situated in the western part of India and on the Aravalli hills of Southern Rajasthan, was a stately province before the Independence. The place is believed to have existed during the Ahar civilization, which means the history of Vagad dates back to 4000 years ago. In the cultural context, present-day districts of Dungarpur, Banswara and some part of Southern Udaipur which is known as *chhappan* altogether create the region of Vagad. Renowned for its tribal populace, Vagad has made its socio-cultural and political progression in different times at different levels.

The name Vagad or Wagad has had its own myths embedded in it. The scholars and historians are divided in their opinions about the origin of the name as some believe that it is derived from the word *vaagjad* and some other believe it to have been derived from the word *vaagvar*. However, the word *vaag* is common here which means sound or speech. In ancient history, it is known as *Bagar*. It is said that though the vernacular of the region is called Vagadi, it acquires its words and dialects from several neighbouring provinces and due to this linguistic multiplicity here, it came to be known as *vaagvar*. Some speculate that due to its surroundings with forest area it is called *vagad* since the word in Gujarati means ‘forest’ or covered with forest. However, inscriptions, dating back to thirteenth century,

found in a museum at Ajmer and Baroda call it *Vaagat* instead of Vagad.

The center of the Ahar civilization is said to be the Mewar region of Rajasthan. However, the settlement of the population on the banks of this river later on extended to create other centers as well. Ahar or Banas is the chief river of the Southern part of Rajasthan and the two districts Banswara and Dungarpur constitute the major part of this Ahar-Banas culture. Studies claim that the historical accounts of the region till tenth century AD are very obscure and inadequate to give a continuity to the findings chronologically but the excavation of the Ahar civilization, unearthed some silver coins from Surwaniya village of Banswara district, which are said to belong to 181 to 353 AD. The coins have the inscriptions that mark the names and other symbols associated with the Khshatraps of the time. This discovery establishes that the region was being ruled then by the Kashatrapas and Satrapas from somewhere near Afghanistan. Later on, the rule of Gupta dynasty is also assumed here but has not been ascertained. It is also said that Bagar was invaded by the Arabs between 725-738 AD but they were expelled by the Guhilots.

It is in the medieval times when the Parmars of Malwa invaded and started ruling over the region of Bagar that a continuity can be traced in history. However, the written or the printed sources are not available of the early period but the popular oral narrative form called *khyat* sung in the region have been of great help to the historians. One of the *khyats* mentions a few details which have been transferred through the generations. As per the narrative, the Bhil Chief Dungariya wanted to marry the daughter of a prosperous Mahajan who agreed to this but later on conspired with Rawal Veer Singh of Mewar and in the marriage ceremony assassinated the Bhil Chief. In 1358 AD, Rawal Veer Singh started ruling the village possessed by Dungaria. He named the town after Dungaria and a monument was also erected by him as a promise to Dungaria's two widows. Besides, a new tradition also started which required that the accession and coronation of a new ruler will be done by the descendent of Dungaria who would mark *tilak* with his own blood-stained thumb on the forehead of the ruler. Rawal Veer Singh was



killed by Allaudin Khilji. Thereafter, Bhachundi became the king. After him, Rawal Gopinath occupied the throne. He is known for the construction of the famous Gaipsagar Lake, the cynosure of Vagad. After him, Rawal Somdas and Maharawal Udai Singh I succeeded the throne respectively. The latter had two sons and therefore he divided the state of Dunagrpur into two parts. The elder son Prithviraj got the western part of the state whereas the younger son Jagmaal was given the eastern part which came to be known as Banswara. Subsequent to this, the two towns have witnessed several rulers and ups and downs. There are two rivers namely Mahi and Som that are the major sources of water in the region. Mahi river was taken as the midpoint for the partition of Vagad.

Both Dungarpur and Banswara, that jointly make Vagad, have their different history and specialties but the large inhabitation of the tribal population is the feature that is shared by both the places. The language spoken in the region is Wagadi or Vagadi which is a blend of Gujarati and Mewari. Bhils are considered the aboriginals or the natives of the place. They live in small huts with single rooms which are called *tapra*.

Dungarpur is a Rajasthani word which implies the ‘city of hills’ as the word *dungar* in Rajasthani means ‘hill’ and *pur* is ‘town’ or a ‘city’. Geographically, it extends between 23° 20' and 24° 01' north latitude and 73°21' and 74°01' east longitude and stretches along the Aravalli hills, the *dungar*. However, there's another popular narrative regarding the origin of its name that it was named after the tribal chief of Bhil community named Dungariya who was assassinated in fourteenth century as mentioned above.

The district shares its boundaries on its north with Mewar region or to be specific with Udaipur district, on the east with Banswara district and on its west and south with Gujarat state. Dungarpur is around 3770 sq km. Simalwara, Dungarpur, Bicchiwara, Sagwara and Aspur are the five tehsils of this district. Baroda, the old capital of the region, is in the Aspur tehsil of Dungarpur. When the state of Rajasthan was formed, it was the smallest district. In 1945, the ‘Dungarpur Rajya Praja Mandal’ was constituted and later on in 1948, it became a part of the United States of Rajasthan.

The place is known for its rich flora and fauna. Besides, it has a rich reservoir of ores and minerals that include soapstone, limestone, asbestos, fluorite etc.

### Important Places of Dungarpur



### Dungarpur District

*Courtesy: Central Ground Water Board, Ministry of Water Resources*

- a) **Udai Vilas Palace:** Named after Maharawal Udai Singh I, the palace is constructed with the Pareva stone which is typical of Dungarpur. The palace is opposite the Gaip Sagar lake and is well-known for its beautiful Rajput design of sculpture, the balconies, the bracketed windows, arched gates, pillars, and the stonework on the floor are a perfect example of the classical architecture of Rajasthan. It has *Udai-Vihar Udyaan*, the garden; *Badal Mahal*, and a temple of *Srinathji*. The renowned *EkThambia Mahal* is also situated in this palace.
- b) **Juna Mahal:** Similar to Udai Vilas Palace, this is also made of the pareva stone found in the region. It is said to have been

constructed in the thirteenth century and is famous for its murals, miniature paintings and the mirror work in the interiors of the building.

- c) **Gaipsagar Lake:** As discussed above, the construction of the lake is ascribed to Rawal Gopinath and its significance lies in the Rajrajeshwar Shiv temple lying on the bank of this lake. The temple has a splendid view with wonderful architecture manifested in its several dome-shaped *chhatris*. It is said to have been constructed by the queen Ummed Kanwar, wife of Maharawal Udai Singh II.



**Gaipsagar Pal**

- d) **Galiakot:** On the banks of the river Mahi, a monument called Syed Fakhruddin's Shrine is situated. The area where it is situated is called Galiakot. The shrine is dedicated to this great *Peer* who is buried here and his teachings are engraved in the interior of the mosque which is made of white marble.
- e) **Punjabpur:** 37 kms away from the epicenter of the district Dungarpur, there lies a hamlet called Punjabpur which is believed to have been established by Raval Punja. A great Saint called Mavji was born here in the village called Sabla. His disciples believed that he was Kalki, the last incarnation of Vishnu. *Gyan Bhandar, Akalraman, Bhajanstrot, Gyan Ratn-Mala* are among his famous writings.

- f) **Somnath Temple:** As the name suggests, the Shiv temple is situated at the banks of the river Som. It is said to have been constructed in twelfth century and the construction is unique in itself since the stones are secured with such a technique to one another that no cement, limestone, or sand was used in it.
- g) **Beneshwar Temple:** The most valued Shiv temple of the region is situated where the borders of Banswara and Dungarpur districts meet. However, this comes in the district Dungarpur. The temple is also associated with Mavji and large number of people from the neighbouring states and districts come to this holy place throughout the year.

Besides the above said places, there are numerous Jain and Shiv temples. Sagwara is renowned for its Shiv temples that have marvelous sculpture. Boreshwar, Bhuvaneshwar, Madhavraietc are the famous Shiv temples. There are several Devi temples also where people come with great devoutness. Alongside, the *Kshetrapal* idols also have great significance in people's lives. The deity Bhairav in the form of *Kshetrapal*, the preserver of land, is worshipped in all the Shaivite and Vaishnavite temples. Since ancient times, *Kshetrapal* is considered to be the one who saves the village or the town from evil spirits, enemies, and natural calamities. Usually, these three-eyed idols are established at the north-east of the village and are worshipped with appropriate rituals without fail.

Among other places of significance, there are several big and small monuments that are dedicated to the personalities who have been a part of inheritance of Vagad. One such place is Nana Bhai Park. A place for recreational activities for people, the park memorializes the valiance of Nana Bhai who ran a school in the area was shot down during the British campaign so that the school run by him may be closed down. At the same place there is Veer Bala Kali Bai Panorama that commemorates Kali Bai who was killed in the same campaign while saving the life of his teacher in school.



## Kali Bai

Besides Nana Bhai and Kali Bai, Galaleng is another name whose legends are very popular in the region. Galaleng, also known as Gulal Singh, was the elder son of Lal Singh and was the ruler of Aasalgarh. For the people of Vagad, Galaleng epitomizes loyalty, sacrifice, and valour as Gulal Singh died at the young age of 21 in the battle of Kadana. On the insistence of Galaleng's beloved, Phool, who is said to have performed Sati with him, Jogi Amaria composed the legend. Galaleng is an integral part of Vagadi culture.

Oral narratives of Hamalda also contribute to the rich historicity of the place. The ruler Samant Singh of Talakpur Patan was popularly known by the name Hamalda. He fought with the Maharana of Mewar for a Gaur Brahmin and his bravery is glorified in the oral songs.

There is a temple of Gavri Bai also. Known as *Vagadki Meera*, Gavri Bai was a child-widow and was a devotee of Lord Krishna. She is famous for her religious poetry. Her temple was built by Maharawal Shiv Singh. Her famous contribution is *Keertan Mala* which has 801 poetic *padas*.

Another folk belief is that of Narsi Mehta who belonged to the Nagar Brahmin community of Dungarpur. Like Gavri Bai, he was a devout

believer of Lord Krishna. There's a famous myth related to it. According to that, Narsi Mehta did not have enough money for his sister's marriage, thereafter, Lord Krishna disguised himself and helped him in it.

Besides the aforesaid persons, Bhogilal Pandya, Nagendra Singh and many others are the famous personalities of historical-political significance. Bhogilal Pandya, *Vagad ka Gandhi*, lived in Simalwada. He founded Dungarpur Praja Mandal and Seva Mandir. He worked for the upliftment of the tribal communities of Vagad and involved them in the freedom struggle of India. Similarly, Nagendra Singh also received Padma Bhushan for his contributions.

The other part of Vagad is Banswara. *Bans* is a Rajasthani term for Bamboo and *wara* means 'town'. Thus, the name itself suggests that Banswara takes its name for the excess of Bamboo trees in the region. However, another myth of its great tribal hero Bansiya Bhil is also associated with its name but there are no other details that second this belief. The abundance of bamboo, the low Aravalli hills and the river called Mahi tender this place a scenic beauty that mesmerizes the viewers.

The region is known as *Lodhi Kashi* or little Kashi because of its twelve *Swayambhoo* (self-emerged) and half *Jyotirlingum*. It shares its borders on the east with the state of Madhya Pradesh and on the south with Gujarat. The north-east part of the district touches Pratapgarh district and the north-west side touches Dungapur district. During the monsoons, numerous natural water-falls and islands can be seen. The most notable geographical feature is that the Tropic of Cancer passes through the district.

Banswara has a rich diversity in natural resources. It has a reservoir of rock-phosphate, marble, dolomite, iron, zinc, manganese etc. It is also renowned for its fertile land and bio-diversity. Mahi river and its tributaries like Som, Jakham, Anas and Kagdi endow the region with diverse crops and scenic beauty.



**Banswara Map**

Courtesy: Hydrogeological Atlas of Rajasthan, Banswara District(2013)

### Important places of Banswara

- a) **Mangarh Dham:** Under the Anandpuri Panchayat, the 1000 ft high hill of Mangarh is known for the massacre of around 1500 people by the British forces. The incident that is known as the Jalliawala Bagh of Rajasthan took place when the social reformer Govind Giri was addressing the tribal crowd in 1913. The tragic incident speaks of the sacrifice of the martyrs, their spirit of patriotism and awakening that was instilled in the tribals by Govind Giri.
- b) **Chheen:** Also known as Cheench, it is a village around 16 kms away from Banswara. The huge assembly hall, artistic pillars and 6 ft high beautiful idol of Brahmaji are the major attractions of the place. Adjacent to the temple, there is a *ghat* which is called *Brahma Ghat*. Another significant temple,

*Chheench Mata*, is situated near the village and is said to have been built around 1628.

- c) **Ghotia Amba:** Around 30 kms away from Banswara, the place Ghotia Amba has a great cultural significance since it is said to have a close association with the *Mahabharat* times. It is believed that the Pandavas during their exile lived in the village for some time and it is the same place where they fed 88 thousand sages. The seed of mango that was bestowed by Indra to the Pandavas was also sown by them at this place. The place is also known for the Shiv temple, Ghoteshtar Mahadev.
- d) **Arthuna:** The village Arthuna is known for its sculpture and architecture and is one of the most significant archaeological sites of the state. The place is said to have been prosperous in ancient times and under the name Utthunak was the capital of Parmars. It has several remnants of the temples and monuments from eleventh and twelfth century that speak of its lost grandeur and forgotten past. There is an old Mandaleswar Shiv temple in it and other than this several other temples with broken idols still exist.
- e) **Tripura Sundari:** The temple of Tripura Sundari is known for its splendor and antiquity. It has a beautiful eight-armed idol of Goddess Bhagwati. The temple is considered as one of the *Shakti-Peeths*.
- f) **Andeshwar Parshwanath:** It is a Jain temple in Sajjangarh tehsil of Banswara. The temple is made of white stone, marble and is known for its sound sculpture.
- g) **Mahi Dam:** Mahi Bajaj Sagar Dam is a boon to the district since it very significantly contributes to its agriculture and economy. The Dam has a stretch of around 3 kms and during the rainy seasons, large number of tourists visit the place to get the magnificent view of the release of the excess water.

Other than these, there are several other temples like Nandini Mata Temple, Lakshminarayan Temple and Ranchhor Ji Temple that make the region rich culturally.



## Major Festivals of Vagad Region

**Beneshwar Mela:** On the confluence of the three sacred rivers of the region, *i.e.*, Som, Mahi and Jakham which is also known as *Triveni Sangam*, people come together in large numbers from different states at the Shiv temple of Beneshwar on the full moon day of *Magh* month to celebrate it. The *Sangam* is located where the borders of Dungarpur and Banswara meet. Since the Bhil community has great reverence for this fair, it is also called the ‘Kumbh of tribals’. Thus, for them, it is no less than Prayag or Kashi.

Around five to seven lakh people from Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Rajasthan participate in it. Some prefer to visit the *Dham* on foot. The fair is a true representative of the tribal beliefs. It is believed that the soul of the deceased people gets salvation if their bones are immersed there just like people do in river Ganga. Thus, it can also be called the Ganga of tribal communities.

Both Shaivites and Vaishnavites hold this place in high esteem. In the premises of the temple, there’s a museum where the literature of Saint Mavji is preserved. The literature related to him is known as *Chopda*.

**Navratri:** Vagad region is greatly influenced by the culture of Gujarat due to its proximity to it. Therefore, the Garba of Gujarat is very popular among the local masses of Vagad. Navratri is the festival when the nine forms of Goddess Gauri are worshipped and celebrated. The festival has a great significance for tribal and non-tribal communities of Vagad. With great fervour, people believe that the goddess will bring prosperity and will preserve them from any evils.

**Holi:** For Bhils, Holi is Holika Mata and they celebrate Holi with great enthusiasm. At the time of *Holika Dahan*, Bhils gather in the ground and perform Gair. Gair is one of the most sparkling dances of Bhil folks. They present a lively spectacle wearing flared dresses and bearing sticks in hands. Once the *Holika Dahan* is over, the next day, they collect all their weapons, sticks, fences, swords, *lathis*, shields etc. and go to play *Raad* or *Raar* after they have played with colours. Bhils wear very colourful dresses on the day. *Raad-Raman* is a sort

of presentation of battlefield wherein the wives try to dissuade their husbands from going into the battlefield but they still go and fight. This symbolic fight keeps them motivated to fight for their land and instills in them feeling of patriotism.

**Ghotia Amba:** As discussed above, the place has a great cultural significance due to its association with Pandavas of *Mahabharata*. Besides the characteristics of the place discussed already, there is a Shiv temple namely Ghoteswar Mahadev. It is said that with the natural waterfall, the Shivling never remains dry. Also, the mango tree sown by the Pandavas is also there. Every year more than fifty thousand people come to this place. the fair begins on *Chaitra Amavasya* and runs through the second of the month of *Chaitra*. People take bath in the five *kunds* of Pandavas and then go around the mango tree to get their desires fulfilled.

**Gavri:** The next day of Rakshabandhan in Bhil community begins as Gavri which is a forty-day long dance drama. To worship Goddess Gauri and Lord Shiv, the Bhils of Aravalli region perform Gavri with great austerity. The unique dance drama has elements of both the forms i.e. dance and drama. Therefore, the genre it belongs to, is called dance-drama only.

Vagad has its unique and peculiar social fabric which is woven from its social customs and practices. These form a very special world of their own. A few customs and social practices of Vagad region are enumerated below:

- In Hindu social system there are sixteen *Samskaras* out of which *Janm* (Birth), *Paran* (Marriage), and *Maran* (Death) are the main occasions which are more prominent. In Vagad region almost all the communities, including the tribal societies, observe many practices. *Seemantonnayan Samskar* is one of them and it refers to *Seemant* that is, the parting centre line of a woman's hair when divided into two equal halves. This custom follows the practice of combing the hair of a pregnant woman. This symbolically gives the message of care and gender sensitivity. Birth of a girl child is celebrated among the people of Vagad.

- Naming a child is a peculiar social practice and mostly among the tribal societies in this region the newly born child's uncle or aunt (*Mama or Bhua*) name the child. At times the *Bhopa* or the priest is asked to do this if the child is born as an answer to the prayers to a deity. The underlying practices of naming the child are of immense interest. There are names attached to objects of daily life, or of nature or to days of week, rivers, complexion, gold, silver, diamonds, any place or city, gods and goddesses, and so on.
- Marriage is an institution of much significance. In this region, especially among the tribal societies, many types of marriages are in practice. Tribal communities are very different from other communities in their marriage customs. Traditionally, customs like *Dapa*, *Detwariya*, *Aata-Saata* etc. have been in practice in this region. However, gradually with the spread of education, such practices have been dynamic in keeping with the changing times. In case of a divorce, the concerned person calls for a Panchayat of both the villages and rips off a part of his turban and hands it over to his wife who is being divorced. The lady ties it to a pole and fixes it to her father's roof as an indication that her previous husband has no right over her. This process is known as *Chheda Phadna*.
- *Saagdi* system has been an age-old practice for thousands of years in this region. This practically has been a living pattern across India. In Vagad region, *Saagdi* system is found in various versions. The basic *Saagdi* is the one who takes money on loan from a *Sahukar* (money lender) without interest and avows to till his lands, sow seeds, raise and cut the crops and divide them as decided by the *Sahukar*. This system requires that both the *Sahukar* and the *Saagdi* treat each other as family and not as a master and a servant. This system has now taken the form of wages and food agreement for both the parties which is more like a short-term contract that is subject to suitability.
- Death is also strongly associated with customs and there is a community meal after the death of a family member. Generally,

the dead are cremated, but in certain communities following Kabeer and Bhagat Bhils, they bury the dead. Dead bodies of children are also buried. The third, ninth, and twelfth days are observed for rituals and the last community meal is known as *Kaatta*. *Kaatta* meal is not a burden on the family of the dead as flour, grains and other things are provided by the relatives or the whole community as a gesture of empathy and support.

There are so many other customs that pertain to festivals, social occasions, religious rituals and life patterns. There are differences in customs according to the social and financial stratification of the society. Yet it can be said that the customs and their observance in this region has kept the tenor of life vibrant, fresh and dynamic. These customs have been the basis of the unbroken chain of practices across centuries.

## QUESTIONS

*Choose the correct answer of the following multiple-choice questions:*

1. The name of the tribal chieftain, who was slain by Raval Veer Singh, was:
 

(a) Amaria	(b) Ghumaria
(c) Dungaria	(d) Bansia
2. The silver coins excavated from Surwania are associated with:
 

(a) Parmars	(b) Guhilots
(c) Khilji	(d) Kshatrapas
3. Which of the following deity is regarded as Kshetrapal?
 

(a) Shiv	(b) Krishna
(c) Gauri	(d) Bhairav
4. Kali Bai is known for her sacrifice made for the cause of
 

(a) Art	(b) Dance
(c) Education	(d) Medicine
5. What is Arthuna famous for:
 

(a) It is a park	(b) It has developed industries
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- (c) It is an archaeological site
  - (d) It is a district headquarter
6. What was the name of the younger son of Udai Singh who ruled Banswara
- (a) Jagmal
  - (b) Madhav Rai
  - (c) Prithvi Raj
  - (d) Hamalda
7. *Saagdi* system is
- (a) An agricultural contract
  - (b) A religious custom
  - (c) A marriage type
  - (d) A type of dowry
8. *Kaatta* is related to:
- (a) Marriage
  - (b) Childbirth
  - (c) Death
  - (d) Divorce
9. *Gair* is associated with:
- (a) Diwali
  - (b) Navratri
  - (c) Holi
  - (d) Sakranti

*Give short answers to the following:*

1. Who were Nana Bhai and Kali Bai and why are they famous?
2. Comment upon the name Galaleng.
3. Who is associated with Mangarh? Why is Mangarh famous?
4. Write about the Bhil chieftain Dungaria.
5. How did Dungarpur divide into two parts?
6. Who was Gavridevi?
7. Which place is associated with Pandavas and how?
8. What is *Seemantonnayan*?

*Give detailed answer to the following:*

1. Write a detailed note on the places of historical interest in Vagad.
2. Write a detailed note on the places of religious interest in Vagad.
3. Comment upon the institution of marriage and its aspects prevalent in tribal communities of Vagad.

4. Which are the famous festivals of Vagad? Write an illustration of these with their socio-cultural significance.

# 3

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## FOLK SONGS

Songs have primarily been profound expressions of the human emotional world. Possibly, the first emotional vibrations of the human existence were given expression to in the form of a song, as songs are the closest to mind and heart. Human mind tends to sing both in happiness and in sadness.

Folk songs are the verse compositions that originate from among the people of a country, culture or a region and are passed on by word of mouth across generations. These songs are simple, spontaneous expressions of the cultural beliefs nurtured across ages; the belief systems that bolster up these verses are accumulated through practices and values of a particular culture. These songs are dynamic in nature and often exist in sundry versions. These are the simple yet vibrantly melodious verses sung to the accompaniment of music that is equally sweet. Oral tradition has been the life line and the track for the determining characteristics of folk songs. These songs are known to have survived for centuries without having been scribed.

Folk songs are representative cultural artefacts of a culture which is so distinct from what is called the urban or refined culture, and so are the songs of the folk. The songs which are representative of a particular individual mind set are affected by individuality of philosophy and psychology and this also calls into question as to

who are the creators or authors of these songs whereas for a folk song the question itself is irrelevant since there is the universality of the feelings and thoughts. These songs represent the harmony of the individual mind with the multitudinous nature of the folk and the co-existence of singularity with plurality.

Thus, folk songs are eloquent expressions of those feelings, thoughts, beliefs and sentiments which are characteristic of the folk mind set. These verses seem to be sublime since there is no particular author or a definite musicality. Effortless flow of the sounds in tandem with the spontaneous flow of measures calls for a fusion that presents a spirited experience when one listens to a folk song. These songs have ancient myths, the beginning of creation and the belief system of the community, their apocalyptic vision, eclipses and their significance and impact as the thematic concerns. They also sing of the deities like Rama, Krishna, Ambay Mata etc. Without much rise and fall, like the mantras of Vedas, they are sung accompanied by dances of men and womenfolk. This singing at times takes the question answer form with lines sung by men and women alternatively. Without much of the linguistic labyrinthine, they are spontaneously created and instantaneously sung. People who have composed them and who sing them are mostly illiterate, unrecognised poets. Singing is accompanied by dances, enactments and kaleidoscopic world of dresses and masks etc. Folk songs are imbued with the spirit of peaceful co-existence among human beings as well as nature and are impacted by their times. Thus, their dynamism lends them perpetual relevance. There are various kinds of songs and can be broadly categorised as:

- a. **Ritualistic Songs:** Songs which are sung on various occasions / rituals such as birth, death, marriage, and other occasions or festivals and devotional/worship songs.
- b. **Functional songs:** Folk tends to dedicate their spirits to work. They sing while working such as at a construction site, while fetching water or while harvesting. They may create a song while walking to or from their workplace.
- c. **Calendric Songs:** These are mainly the songs of seasons following the calendar. *Barahmasa* is the most popular folk song



found in almost every landscape irrespective of language. These also include the songs of various festivals that come in and have become synonymous with the seasons in which they fall, e.g., *Fagun* and Holi or *Savan* and Malhaar.

There are historical and social folk songs as well. Religious beliefs and mythology form a wide segment of folk oral traditions. *Sringar Rasa* is also a prominent feature of folk songs and both *Sanyog* and *Viyog Sringar Rasa* are majorly manifested in folk songs.

### **Folk Songs of Vagad**

The orally transmitted folk songs of Vagad encompass various themes like the cycle of life, *Samskaras* etc. The *Solah Samskaras* have found profound expression in the songs of Vagad. The folks sing of festivities and the rural spirits are vibrantly heard in fairs. Songs of religious beliefs and rituals attached to them portray an array of living hues and are replete with the fluidity of life, ever new, ever fresh. History, environmental awareness, anthropic feelings, humane values like bravery, sacrifice, loyalty, co-operation, fraternity, and universality find expression in the versified lore of this region.

These songs are representative of modes and manners of life in which men and women cohabit. The harmonious and the discordant, the peaceful and the painful, every form of coexistence is found in these songs of life. All other perspectives are comprehensively found, elicited, enlivened, examined and critically discussed within the gamut of these musical compositions.

The religious festivities at the community level in Vagad have made it for all to survive with faith in local deities and beliefs that are deep rooted in the very soul of the people that find expression in the form of the divine inspiration when songs and bhajans of these deities are zealously and joyously sung.

From this kaleidoscopic lifelike world of folk songs of Vagad, two songs have been prescribed for the study.

## Tiny Hongteru Amidst the Divine Abode

(*Devio Wada Mein Nonu Hongteru*)

Amidst the divine abode, sits the tiny Hongteru,  
 Seeks answers from humans born in *Kaliyug*, tiny Hongteru,  
 Who are the great gods in your lives, asks tiny Hongteru?  
 Earth and sky are our great gods, tiny Hongteru,  
 Yes, they are the ones, tiny Hongteru,  
 They are our great *guru*, great *dev*, tiny Hongteru,  
 We worship them, thus, tiny Hongteru.

Who among your gods are small and who the great ones,  
 asks tiny Hongteru?  
 Water and air are our great gods, tiny Hongteru,  
 Yes, they are our great *guru*, great *dev*, they are the ones,  
 tiny Hongteru,  
 We worship them, thus, tiny Hongteru.

Who among your gods are the small ones, asks tiny Hongteru?  
 Moon and sun are our great gods, tiny Hongteru,  
 Yes, they are the ones, tiny Hongteru,  
 They are our great *guru*, great *dev*, tiny Hongteru,  
 We worship them, thus, tiny Hongteru.  
 Who among your gods are the small ones, asks tiny Hongteru?

Amba is the great goddess, our great *devi*, tiny Hongteru,  
 Yes, she is the one, tiny Hongteru,  
 We worship her thus, tiny Hongteru.  
 Who among your gods are the small ones, asks tiny Hongteru?

Laxmi is our great goddess, our great *devi*, tiny Hongteru,  
 Yes, she is the one, tiny Hongteru,  
 We worship her, thus *devi*, tiny Hongteru.

*Translated by Seema Malik*

## देविया वाड़ा मोय नॉनू होंगटेरु

देविया वाड़ा मोय नॉनू होंगटेरु  
काले मोनिविया वाळा होंगटेरु  
देविया वाड़ा मोय नॉनू होंगटेरु  
कुण रे मोटा देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
धरणा रै असमान रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
वो ई है मोटा देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
वो ई है सतिया देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
ओपणे नाम लेवां रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
जिणा रै सोटा कुण है मोटा देव नॉनू होंगटेरु  
पाणी नै पवन रै मोटा देव नॉनू होंगटेरु  
वो ई है सतिया देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
ओपणे नाम लेवां रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
जिणा रै सोटा कुण है देव नॉनू होंगटेरु  
कुण के वाजे देवा नूं नॉनू होंगटेरु  
सांदो ने हूरज देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
वो ई है सतिया देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
ईनो नै नमण करूं रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
जिणा रै सोटा कुण है देव नॉनू होंगटेरु  
अंबा मोटी देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
वो ई है सतिया देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
अंबा नै नमण करो रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
जिणा रै सोटा कुण है देव नॉनू होंगटेरु  
लसमी मोटो देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
वो ई है सतिया देव रै नॉनू होंगटेरु  
लसमी नै नमण करो रै नॉनू होंगटेरु

संदर्भ : संस्कृति के बीजाक्षर

प्रधान सम्पादक: डॉ. अर्जुन सिंह शेखावत, सम्पादक: उपेन्द्र अणु

## Commentary

The song ‘Tiny Honteru Amidst the Divine Abode’ (*Devio Wada Mein Nonu Hongteru*) is structured in a conversational mode where the tiny bird Hongteru, sitting amidst the divine abode, poses the question about the supremacy of god among the gods and seeks answers from the people living in *Kaliyug*. The apparently simple questions posed in the song address the existing factions among human beings and symbolise the perpetual tug of war for supremacy. The inherent message that emerges is that of peaceful co-existence by accepting due significance of all, be it fellow beings or nature.

In the temple of the Gods and Goddesses, debating as to who should be worshipped as the greater Gods and who as the smaller ones, Earth, Sky, Air, Water, the Moon or the Sun and Laxmi, all are considered with the potential claims and in the end, in unison Goddess Amba is considered to be worshipped as the most powerful and revered. The answers are representative of the harmonious mindset of the tribal community that values and worships nature as much as they worship the gods and goddesses. The song is a beautiful expression of the simple, unadulterated beliefs of the tribal people of Vagad region that sustain them through thick and thin.

## QUESTIONS

*Choose the correct answer of the following multiple-choice questions:*

1. What does the word ‘nonu’ mean?
 

(a) Big	(b) Tiny
(c) Round	(d) Large
2. ‘Devio Wada’ means:
 

(a) Small area	(b) Remote Area
(c) Residential Area	(d) Divine abode
3. Who is worshipped as the greatest in the song?
 

(a) Sun	(b) Water
(c) Laxmi	(d) Amba

4. The above song is sung by:
- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| (a) Sahariya | (b) Meena |
| (c) Garasia  | (d) Jogi  |

*Give short answers to the following:*

1. What message is being conveyed through the song?
2. Who are the gods and goddesses mentioned in the song?

*Give detailed answer to the following:*

1. Bring out the significance of worshipping nature as gods.
2. Critically appreciate the song 'Tiny Hongteru Amidst the Divine Abode' (*Devio Wada Mein Nonu Hongteru*).

### **The Dark Age** (*Endariyo Yug*)

There wasn't the Earth or Sky, O, my Lord!  
Nor Air, no Sun or the Moon, O, my Lord!  
Nor were there the nine lac stars, O, my Lord!  
Only the Dark Abyss filled with Water, O, my Lord!  
Palled with the darkest dark, O, my Lord!  
There were the radiant gems and diamonds, O, my Lord!  
Transfusing light into the water and the surface, O, my Lord!  
There lay the divine Parasuram in the nether world, O, my Lord!  
And was borne a Lotus from his naval, O, my Lord!  
Khomad took birth in that Lotus, O, my Lord!  
Slept he, covered in one-and-a-half-foot cloth, O, my Lord!  
Twelve years and well into the thirteenth, slept he, O, my Lord!  
His slumber was unbroken till then, O, my Lord!  
There drew an Ami from his lips, O, my Lord!  
Traversed it for twelve *yojan* to Shiv's penance place, O, my Lord!  
Confused, he brooded over its source, O, my Lord!

Thought he, there must be some warrior new on Earth, O, my Lord!  
 This Ami has come from him, thought he, O, my Lord!  
 All that Ami got into Shiv's *kamandal*, O, my Lord!  
 Amiya was borne from it the ninth day, O, my Lord!  
 She asked Shiv, the secret of this, O, my Lord!  
 "There on water lies Khomad, my father" said she, O, my Lord!  
 Amiya and Shiv, were both confused, O, my Lord!  
 How to meet Khomad? Their minds fused, O, my Lord!  
 How to travel on sea for thousand miles, O, my Lord!  
 How and where to find Khomad on the sea? O, my Lord!  
 His was the desire, that was Amiya's plea, O, my Lord!  
 Shiv and Amiya followed the course, O, my Lord!  
 With that Ami tried to reach Khomad, the source, O, my Lord!  
 The pull put the pressure, Ami was stretched, O, my Lord!  
 So were the sleeping Khomad's lips stressed, O, my Lord!  
 Awakened, he asked Amiya, "Answer me-, "O, my Lord!  
 "You have been to the nether world, what did you see-?"  
 O, my Lord!  
 Humbly she pleaded, "Gifts I've brought to the Earth, see-,  
 O, my Lord!  
 "There are also the ailments for everybody," O, my Lord!  
 "Strange is that you brought ailments of no avail," O, my Lord!  
 "This is the heavy burden of deeds, things fail," O, my Lord!  
 A black human then and there Khomad created, O, my Lord!  
 "This will set things right," Khomad predicted, O, my Lord!  
 Khomad gave the ailment poison to Amiya, O, my Lord!  
 Not all but in part to her, O, my Lord!  
 Over a quarter, from that liquid, saved he, O, my Lord!  
 To eighteen types of plants, that potion, gave he, O, my Lord!  
 This became the cure for the ailments, O, my Lord!

*Translated by Mahendra Singh Purohit*

## अंधारियो जुग

धरण नै असमान जग में होतो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
अंधारियो खंडो थो सूरज चांद न हातो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
दरिया रे खेड़त भरियो पेरीवा रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
इत पीयाळो रे पड़ियौ म्हारा परसराम रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
झूटियौ मायं ऊगा रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
उणरै फुलड़े खोमद उपना रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
सवा हाथे रौ रे अचलो लेवीये रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
बारै रे जगत नींद लीदी रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
तेरमा रे बरसे री साया आई रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
निंदड़ली आई ने ढबकी आई रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
ढबकी आई ने अमी सूटी रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
बारै रे जोजन मां अमी पुगी रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
सेवजी धूणीत अमी पूगी रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
भोळोसंकर विसार मोड़े रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
परथी रे माथै रे जोधौ उपनो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
उणरे जोधा रे अमी आई रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
कोरे रे गरत अमी लीहत रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
नवे दनो मां अमिया जळमिया रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
भोळे रे संकर पूछिया रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
धीरा रे रहीने अमिया बोली रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
इत मोरे खोमद जळेउतारे लो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
सांभळो रे अमिया म्हारी वातौ रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
आपरे खोमद रा दरसण करावो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
अमिया ने संकर विसार मांड्यो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
आपणे रे जावू रे धोढामात रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
अमी रे पाण चढ़वा लागी रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
भोळो रे संकर ने अमिया आवे रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।

कुण रे दामण रजू जागणे रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 नेह रे दामण नेह रे जोगण रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 तागे रे हमेरियो होठ तणो रा रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 अमिया हांची रे वात जग मों होई रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 सांभळो रे अमियाजी म्हारी वात रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 अमिया पीयाळो गीया नै कांई देख्यो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 धरण रे माता रे दीवो देख्यो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 सवा रे सेरत रोग लाई रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 रोग रे लाईने कबद कीनी रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 अमिया खोटी रे वेणों री जग में वातो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 सवा रे पाव रोग रीयो रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।  
 अडारे जात रे वनास्पति रे लो, म्हारा लालजी रे लो ।

संदर्भ : संस्कृति के बीजाक्षर

प्रधान सम्पादक: डॉ. अर्जुन सिंह शेखावत, सम्पादक: उपेन्द्र अणु

## Commentary

The song 'The Dark Age' (*Andiyaro Yug*) is sung by the Garasiya Bhil community on the religious occasions in the temples and other places of worship in devotional spirit. This song represents their spiritual and mythological beliefs about how the world came into existence out of darkness, when there was nothing but a dark void. Similar references are found in other mythological narratives across the globe and one classic example is *Paradise Lost* by John Milton where he describes the Dark Abyss. Travelling to the other worlds/ Nether Land and bringing of ailments as gifts also find echo in other myths systems like the Pandora's Box. The song refers to the sacrifice, human welfare, the larger good and other beliefs that Khomad represents when he is worried about the ailments and their presence on Earth. He gives that drink to Amiya, who is capable of counter fighting the effects and the rest he gives to different plants to be turned into the medicinal cure for different ailments. It will not be out of place to add here that the tribal community has a remarkable insight into the medicinal value of plants spread across the vast span



of Vagad and herbal medicine has come up in a big way today on the basis of their knowledge.

The song is suffused with sublimity of thought and feelings and the description of the dark abyss filled with water is suddenly illuminated with the radiant transfusions from gems and diamonds, though the darkness does not completely vanish from the mental eye. The supernatural and the divine are mixed in the description of Parsuram and the birth of Khomad. One life form creating another life is the essence of all religious belief systems and of science as well. Khomad's *Ami* or saliva creates Amiya and this Amiya has the characteristics of both endangering and supporting human life. Reference to Shiv in the song is significant as Shiv essentially pertains to the controlled absorption of poison and the general welfare of humankind. The chain that begins with god that has all power and is omnipotent creates Parsuram, then the Lotus which creates Khomad, then the Ami that creates Amiya, all are the parts of a bigger scheme wherein the final solution to the existential problem is sought with god himself. This leads to the ultimate surrendering of the spirit to the eternal. Resignation to the ultimate Lord in spirit overpowers and the devotees forget their physical existence, its sufferings and pains.

## QUESTIONS

*Choose the correct answer of the following multiple-choice questions:*

1. What was there in the beginning:
 

(a) Earth	(b) Sky
(c) Nine lakh stars	(d) The dark abyss
2. What was the source of light that pierced the mass of water?
 

(a) The Sun	(b) The Moon
(c) Gems and Diamonds	(d) Stars
3. What was borne from the navel of Parsuram?
 

(a) Khomad	(b) Lotus
(c) Amy	(d) The poison

4. Khomad is the father of:  
(a) Amy (b) Shiv  
(c) Amiya (d) Lotus
5. Where does Khomad live?  
(a) On the mountain (b) On the sea  
(c) In the nether world (d) In the sky
6. To whom did Khomad give the poison?  
(a) Shiv (b) Amiya  
(c) Water (d) Himself

*Give short answers to the following:*

1. Describe the place where Parsaram dwelt?
2. Who is Khomad? Discuss his role in the narrative of the song?
3. Why did Shiv want to see Khomad and who accompanies him in the travel?
4. What did Amiya bring from the nether world?
5. How does Khomad react to the gifts that Amiya brought?
6. What happens to the poisonous potion in the end?

*Give detailed answers to the following:*

1. Bring out the relationship between Ami and Amiya?
2. Comment upon the presence of Lord Shiv in the song?
3. Critically appreciate the song 'Dark Age'.

# 4

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## MANGARH

The Indian freedom movement has been the subject of debates, discussions and dialogue for ages at length and much has been written about the battles and revolts that ensued in the British Raj and yet, there is no dearth of many relatively lesser known episodes that did amplify the growing rebellious sentiment simmering in the hearts of the people and still remain brushed under the carpet vis-à-vis the national projection of the struggle.

One such exemplary incidence of unprecedented cruelty on the part of the British regime and of suffering on the part of the simple Bhils of the region took place on the Mangarh Hill, a mountainous region, situated on the border between Rajasthan and Gujarat on November 17, 1913 wherein over a thousand people (mostly members of the Bhil Tribe) were brutally massacred by the British forces, aided by the local rulers of the princely states. While for the people of the Vagad region, Mangarh Hill stands as a testimony to the gory bloodshed that resulted in the death of a large number of unarmed Bhils, at the national level, it has not been adequately represented and given due recognition.

The Mangarh Hill massacre is known to people as the “Jallianwala Bagh of Rajasthan”, yet while the latter has seen potent projection as a major turning point in the Indian freedom struggle, the former,



**Photo: The Mangarh Hill**

despite being a historical event of great significance, has not received pan India visibility and projection. This is probably the only incident in history wherein, the precedent is recognized and known in terms of the subsequent as it is a well-known fact that the Mangarh Massacre took place on November 17, 1913 six years before the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre on April 13, 1919.

### **Mangarh and Govind Giri**

Mangarh Dham was the *Karma Bhoomi* of Guru Govind Giri, one of the most influential socio-religious preachers and reformers of the time and a large number of Bhils of Banswara, Dungarpur, Idar, Sirohi were his followers who would readily gather in thousands at his call. He was the founder of *Samp Sabha*, a social reform movement which was instrumental in bringing about prominent changes in the social fabric of the Bhil community of the region in terms of customs, food habits and ethical practices.

Another movement initiated by Govind Giri was the *Bhagat Andolan* or the *Bhagat* movement, through which he initiated, exercised and established his connect with the whole of Vagad region. In order to strengthen unity among Bhils, he established *Dhoonis* that served as places of congregation for his disciples to perform *Havans* and other religious ceremonies that promoted social harmony. The *Bhagat Andolan* or the Bhagat Movement started off as a socio-political and

religious movement meant for initiating the Bhils towards a better life through religion and spirituality.

There is a dearth of validated factual information about his biographical details and there are different versions available as to his parentage, early childhood and education, yet the seeds of spirituality, devotion and his philosophical connect with the divine permeates all the versions. One such source is the fourteen page autobiography written in Gujarati by Govind Giri.

Govind met a saint named Raj Giri who later became his spiritual mentor. Guru Raj Giri discerned the seeds of spiritual curiosity and awareness in the little child Govind and agreed to take him as his sixteenth disciple in the village Bansiya, during his visit along with fifteen of his earlier disciples. Thus began a journey of a child's transformation into a future social influencer through the phase of being a devout disciple and a pursuer of the ultimate truth. During this journey, Govind was observant, enthusiastic, inquisitive and obedient. He soon earned the trust of Guru Raj Giri and was given the title of 'Giri' to be attached to his name. After spending considerable amount of time under the mentorship of Guru Raj Giri, Govind changed his name to "Govind Giri" to honour his Guru and preached his first lesson as a Guru himself after attaining *Diksha*. He then returned to Bansia.



**Photo: Govind Guru**

He made sure that the *Bhagat Sampradaya* or the Samp Sabha had representation from all walks of life and thus some of the earliest members who joined him as *bhagats* and took on the task of popularizing the *Bhagat* movement were members of the Bhil community who hailed from different stratas of the society.

## Ten Commandments of The *Samp Sabha*

Based on Guru Govind Giri's beliefs, the members of the *Samp Sabha* were required to follow ten commandments in their day to day life, for example leading an honest life, practising vegetarianism, abstinence from alcohol, becoming self-reliant, boycotting the British judicial system, adhering to the judgments made by their local panchayats in case of any personal disputes, refusing to pay *begar* to the local lords and *jagirdars*, resisting the unjust treatment meted out to them by the British officials and to put up a vociferous protest against such oppression, making use of *swadeshi* articles, imparting moral values to their children to ensure character development, construction of schools and *pathshalas* etc. Guru Govind Giri was evidently influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's vision of *Swadeshi* and by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the Indian philosopher and founder of the Arya Samaj whom he met during one of his early visits to Udaipur. The time spent with Swami Dayanand Saraswati left an indelible impact on Govind Giri's mind as many parallels can be found in the ideas propounded by Swami Dayanand and those popularized by Govind Giri as the foundational commandments to be followed religiously by the members of the *Samp Sabha*. Almost nine decades after his death, these commandments laid down by Guru Govind Giri still serve as the guiding principles that direct various facets of the lives of the Bhils.

The *Dhoonis* established at various places by Govind Giri created religious awakening among the Bhils through *Bhajans*, *Yajanas* and *Kirtans*. Soon the religious fervour gained momentum and these devotional gatherings acquired undertones of political awareness about the rights of the Bhils and the plight of their community at the hands of their oppressors. This is precisely where the social and the religious conflated with the political as the *Bhagat* movement that started off as an earnest attempt by Guru Govind Giri to unify the Bhils and lead them towards a better life, gradually metamorphosed into a more concerted endeavour to encourage the Bhils to raise their voices against the oppressive British rule and to put up a fight for their cause. Till date, the *Dhooni parampara* continues to be an extremely important tradition in the Vagad region as well as parts of

Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, etc. and the members of the Bhil community gather here on special occasions to celebrate festivals, religious fairs and to perform religious rituals regularly. The flame of the *Dhooni* thus remains unwavering and perpetually lit.

Born in an impoverished Banjara family on December 20, 1858 in the village of Bansia, near Dungarpur, Rajasthan, Govind Giri never received any formal training or education. However, being a precocious child from a very young age, he harboured immense curiosity about religion, mythology, culture, spirituality and the likes, and thus he would often spend time with the temple priests and saints in order to satiate his hunger for more and more knowledge about *Dharma*, culture and religion. Being extremely observant, he learnt a number of religious songs and bhajans within no time and could reproduce them verbatim.

It is believed that for quite some time, Govind Giri accompanied his parents and travelled to several places carrying essential goods and commodities in order to make both ends meet. However, his growing affinity with righteousness, spirituality and an ardent desire to help the downtrodden Bhils pushed him to seek a greater purpose in his life.



**Photo: Dhooni of Guru Govind Giri**



The Bhils are one of the largest tribal communities living in parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. During the British Rule, they were forced to live in a state of perpetual fear and uncertainty. The rulers of the princely states of Mewar, Banswara, Dungarpur and Sirohi along with the *zamindars* and *jagirdars* spared no opportunity to oppress them. Survival had never been easy for them, as the forests and hills that they called home offered limited resources and to make things worse, they were denied even the most basic human rights under the British Regime. They were made to pay heavy taxes for almost any activity they undertook and were forced to work incessantly for days without food, water or remuneration. Their illiteracy and ignorance made them soft targets for the greedy money lenders.

Cut off from the mainstream society and deeply harassed by the unjust and oppressive laws of the British, the Bhils led an ignorant and uncivilised life steeped in superstitions and alcohol addiction. The institute of marriage had no sanctity for them whatsoever. Furthermore, the great famine of 1899-1900 also popularly known as the *Chappaniya Akal* proved to be the final nail in the coffin as the tribals were the worst hit. The Bhils had thus resorted to banditry, stealing and looting, and became morally depraved.

Deeply anguished by the deplorable condition of the Bhils, Guru Govind Giri spearheaded the challenge of unifying the Bhils and led them towards a more spiritual, civilised and morally upright way of life. It is believed that he lost his wife and his children in the *Chappaniya Akal* and thus felt all the more determined to give a rebellious voice to the marginalised Bhils who had hitherto remained silent. He thus travelled extensively in order to teach the Bhils the ideals of purity, honesty, self-assertion and spirituality. He warned them about the many ill-effects of alcohol on human body and mind and such was the charisma of his teachings that a large number of Bhils had quit drinking alcohol as a result of which there was a substantial decline in the revenues generated from liquor sales which greatly angered the liquor contractors and in turn, the British rulers.

Govind Giri then took on the task of sensitizing the Bhils towards the immediate need of putting up a united front against their oppressors



and thus encouraged them to defy the unjust taxation system that had been bogging them down for ages. Using spirituality as an anchor, he managed to create socio-political, cultural and religious awakening to make the Bhils realize the value of self-assertion and standing up for one's rights.

### **Religious Beliefs**

- There is only one god
- Disbelief in idolatry (idol-worship)
- Worshipping god with pure devotion and utmost reverence
- Bathing early in the morning followed by daily worship
- Belief in Karma and the afterlife
- Establishing *Dhoonis* and regularly performing *Havans* and other religious rituals
- Wearing rosaries of *Rudraksh* around the neck
- The belief that Moksha is the only way to attain liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth

### **Social Beliefs**

- He vociferously condemned dowry system and was progressive enough to favour widow-remarriage
- He understood the importance of standing united against an oppressive system and hence started the *Bhagat Movement* parallel to establishing the *Samp Sabha* in 1903. The word *samp* implies unity and brotherhood.

### **Moral Beliefs**

- Shunning of ill and unethical practices prevalent then in the Bhil community
- Refrain from stealing, lying, and resorting to violence etc.
- Advocated leading a simple, spiritual life
- Abstinence from alcohol
- Practising vegetarianism
- Obedience
- Not indulging in adultery and fornication

- Never to resort to violence or unnecessary aggression but to stand up for one's own rights

Guru Govind Giri's life journey (1858-1931) imbued with religious fervour and spiritual awakening alongside social awareness and political activism spread across a span of almost seven decades wherein he started off as a young child Govind, attained *Diksha* and became Govind Giri and upon taking up the role of guiding the Bhils towards spiritual awakening, he finally began to be known as Guru Govind Giri. The area is suffused with his aura even today and he is still alive in his *Bhagats* and followers who gather to pay their reverence and observe night vigils with devotional songs in the memory of their beloved Guru.

By eradicating immoral practices like stealing, alcohol addiction, banditry, etc. along with a strong emphasis on health and hygiene, Guru Govind Giri managed to find a place in the hearts of the Bhils as countless people from different parts of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh joined hands with him in his fight to ensure the all-inclusive upliftment of the Bhils and also to snatch the agency and authority from the hands of the British lords and their stooges (the local lords, political agents and *jamindars*) by the simple act of refusing to play the part of the victim any longer.

With all the activities in the areas of social reform and religious belief, Govind Guru was becoming too powerful a presence that stirred the fear of subverting the established regime with vested interests in favour of the local lords as well as the Britishers. The King of Dungarpur expelled Govind Giri on the charge of treason and betrayal. Not only him individually, but even his Bhagats were subjected to many such hardships and every possible attempt was made to crush his spirit and the work he had done so far to unite the Bhil community.

Mangarh is the place where Guru Govind Giri had ordered his followers to gather on the occasion of *Margashirsha Purnima* on November 17, 1913. The congregation primarily had the objective of a grand *yajna* that would contribute to the cause of Bhil unification and spread the message of the presence of a Bhil voice. The

commandment to gather on the Mangarh Hill was issued by Govind Giri around a fortnight ahead of the scheduled date. His Bhil followers responded enthusiastically to the call and soon the hill witnessed a hubbub of the Bhil movement.

This was supposed to be a religious ceremony in the form of a *Dhooni* being lit for the purpose of worship. Bhils in grand numbers assembled on the hill but this grand assembly alarmed the neighbouring princely states of Banswara, Dungarpur and Santrampur.

Govind Guru had already become a disturbing factor to the vested interests of these states since his preaching had resulted in the unification of the Bhil tribe. The British were on a look out for an opportunity to make him pay for his anti-state activities.

The gathering on the mountain hill was seen as a massive threat and thus the Kings of the princely states of Banswara, Dungarpur and Santrampur contacted the British political agent of Southern Rajputana States, Mr. R. E. Hamilton to take necessary action. Getting the support of the British Regime to crush the imminent threats to their states was the first and foremost thing for these local lords. To take charge of the situation, the combined forces of the states of Banswara, Dungarpur and Santrampur were asked to surround the hill from all sides. All necessary arrangements were made to disperse the unarmed Bhils and thus the British troops aided by the forces of these states had come well equipped with machine guns, artillery and even small cannons mounted on mules and donkeys. At the initial stage, a warning was issued by the British asking the Bhils to disperse and vacate the Mangarh Hill. However, the Bhils refused to retreat and Govind Giri presented a thirty-three point demand letter to the British authority. Some of the demands made by him were permission to travel freely from one village to another for the sake of religious and moral preaching, to allow his followers the freedom to visit him as and when they needed his guidance, not to interfere in the religious activities of the *Samp Sabha*, to ensure that no authority except the state will have the right to collect *Begar* from the Bhils, etc.



The British had no intention to accept what Govind Giri had proposed and thus, the process of negotiations came to a dead end. British commanders Col. Sherton, Major S. Bailey, and Captain E. Stiley instructed their troops to open fire on the Bhils.

Known for their simplicity, the Bhils were thrown into frenzy as they had no training of any warfare with guns and cannons. What followed was a sight of massive bloodshed with heaps of dead bodies lying around and the injured Bhil bhagats screaming in pain. Every time someone visits the Mangarh Dham, it is as if the hills echo the gore, the brutality and the cruel carnage that claimed the lives of over a thousand innocent Bhils and left several injured. The crowd was thus brutally and forcefully dispersed, Guru Govind Giri was shot in the leg and was arrested along with several of his Bhil followers to be taken to Ahmedabad jail. The matter was brought before a special court the following year and every attempt was made by the British officials to justify the heinous act of ending so many innocent Bhil lives.

Guru Govind Giri was thus awarded a death sentence which was later changed to life-imprisonment. Owing to his good conduct and keeping in mind the influence he had among his disciples, he was finally released from the prison in 1919 but was banned from entering several princely states in Rajasthan and Gujarat (Dungarpur, Banswara, Idar, Sunth, Rampur etc.) where he had a strong foothold owing to the loyalty and devotion of his *bhagats* towards him.



It is believed that immediately after being released, Guru Govind Giri spent some years at the *Bhil Seva Mandal* in Dahod and continued to work for the betterment of the Bhil community there before finally retiring to the Panchmahal district of Gujarat where he died in the year 1931. Till date, the *Mukhya Dhoonie* at Mangarh Hill and the *dhoonis* at several other places serve as a symbol of the spiritual and religious awakening of the Bhils.

Later, to commemorate the Mangarh tragedy and to keep the spirit of resistance alive, it is said that Guru Govind Giri composed the song '*Bhuretiya, ma nahi manu re*' ('*Bhuretiya*, I won't give in'), condescendingly addressing the white rulers as '*Bhuretiya*'. The song is suffused with an unyielding spirit and expresses a relentless determination to drive the British out of motherland. The song inspires the Bhil community to break off the shackles and raise voice against British oppression and undue taxation. The song refers to different places of Vagad region to which the Bhils identify with a sense of belongingness and have strong cultural, social and religious associations. The song denotes an assertive hold on the geographical area of the motherland by encompassing various places of Vagad, Gujarat, Malwa, Jambukhand, right up to Delhi. It ends in a spirit of patriotism towards the motherland and obligation towards Mangarh, the place where his followers sacrificed their lives for the cause of society and country at his call. Govind Guru says that he is indebted

to Mangarh and the real tribute to it would be the defeat of the ‘Bhuretiyas’ and the establishment of the Panchayat Raj. The song as a clarion call reverberates till date in the Vagad region.

### **Bhuretiya, I Won’t Give In**

My birth place is Vagad,  
I move around Malwa,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

I move around Malwa,  
My *dhune* is in Mangarh,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

My *dhune* is in Mangarh,  
My place of worship is Natwa,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

My place of worship is Natwa,  
My place of rest is in Ukreli,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

My place of rest is in Ukreli,  
My pair of tongs is in Bhandara,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

My pair of tongs is in Bhandara,  
My *kotwal* patrols in Watakwarda,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

My *kotwal* patrols in Watakwarda,  
My sword is in Khedapa,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

My chants resound in Bhambrikund,  
My holy *kund* is in Jhalod,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

My holy *kund* is in Jhalod,  
My holy lamp is in Dahod,  
Bhuretiya, I won’t give in!

My holy lamp is in Dahod,  
My rug is spread across Godhra,  
Bhuretiya, I won't give in!

My rug is spread across Godhra,  
My seat is in Ahmedabad,  
Bhuretiya, I won't give in!

My seat is in Ahmedabad,  
My *gaadi* is in Delhi,  
Bhuretiya, I won't give in!

My *gaadi* is in Delhi,  
My annals are in Beneshwar,  
Bhuretiya, I won't give in!

My annals are in Beneshwar,  
My pen traverses across *paatal*,  
Bhuretiya, I won't give in!

My pen traverses across *paatal*,  
My *akhada* is in Jambukhand,  
Bhuretiya, I won't give in!

My *akhada* is in Jambukhand,  
I am indebted to Mangarh,  
Bhuretiya, I won't give in!

I am indebted to Mangarh,  
I owe *Swaraj* to Mangarh  
Bhuretiya, I won't give in!

*Translated by Seema Malik*

## गोविंद गुरु द्वारा स्वरचित गीत

वागड़ मां मारो जन्म हे  
मालवा मां मारो फेरो हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

मालवा मां मारो फेरो हे  
मानगढ़ मां मारी धूणी हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

मानगढ़ मां मारी धूणी हे  
नटवा मां मारी भक्ति हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

नटवा मां मारी भक्ति हे  
उकरेली मारो पड़ाव हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

उकरेली मारो पड़ाव हे  
भंडारा मारो चीपियो हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

भंडारा मारो चीपियो हे  
वटकवाड़ा मां मारो कोटवाळ हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

वटकवाड़ा मां मारो कोटवाळ हे  
खेडापा मारी तलवार हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

खेडापा मारी तलवार हे  
भमरी कुंडामां मारो रणको हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

भमरी कुंडामां मारो रणको हे  
झालोद में मारी कुंडी हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2



झालोद में मारी कुंडी हे  
दाहोद मां मारो दीवो हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

दाहोद मां मारो दीवो हे  
गोधरा मां मारी जाजम हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

गोधरा मां मारी जाजम हे  
अहमदाबाद मारी बैठक हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

अहमदाबाद मारी बैठक हे  
दिल्ली मां मारी गादी हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

दिल्ली मां मारी गादी हे  
बेणीशर मां मारो सोपड़ो हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

बेणीशर मां मारो सोपड़ो हे  
पाताल मां मारी कलम हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

पाताल मां मारी कलम हे  
जंबूखण्ड मां मारो अखाड़ो हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

जंबूखण्ड मां मारो अखाड़ो हे  
मानगढ़ मारो वेरो हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

मानगढ़ मारो वेरो हे  
वेराने वाली पंच राज करवुं हे  
भुरेटिया नई मानुं रे.....2

## GLOSSARY

<i>begar:</i>	Persian word that loosely translates to unpaid exploitation of labour
<i>bhagat:</i>	name given to the followers of Guru Govind Giri
<i>bhuretiya:</i>	a term used by the natives of the region for the white-skinned British
<i>chappaniyaakal:</i>	the Indian famine of 1899-1900
<i>dhoonis:</i>	a place where the Bhil followers of Guru Govind Giri performed religious rituals
<i>kotwal:</i>	title used to address the leader of a fort/ <i>kot</i>
<i>parampara:</i>	tradition
<i>rudraksh:</i>	prayer beads associated with the Hindu lord Shiva, worn for protection and for chanting religious <i>mantras</i>
<i>samp:</i>	unity, brotherhood
<i>yajna:</i>	a religious ritual done in front of a sacred fire ,often with <i>mantras</i>

## QUESTIONS

*Choose the correct answer of the following multiple-choice questions:*

- When did the Mangarh Hill Massacre take place?
  - 17 October, 1913
  - 18 November, 1913
  - 17 November, 1914
  - 17 November, 1913
- Mangarh Massacre in Rajasthan is also known as:
  - The Jallianwala Bagh of Rajasthan
  - Bloody Massacre of Rajasthan
  - The Brutal Carnage of Vagad
  - The Massacre of Vagad

3. Who became the spiritual mentor of Guru Govind Giri?  
(a) Guru Hiralal                      (b) Guru Rajgiri  
(c) Guru Motigiri                    (d) Guru Amardas
4. In which language did Guru Govind Giri write his autobiography?  
(a) Gujarati                            (b) Hindi  
(c) Rajasthani                        (d) Vagadi
5. What among the following was not preached by Guru Govind Giri?  
(a) Abstinence from alcohol  
(b) Practising spirituality  
(c) Leading an extravagant life  
(d) Standing up for one's rights

*Give short answers to the following:*

1. When and where was Guru Govind Giri born?
2. What impact did the “Chappaniya Akal” have on Guru Govind Giri's life?
3. Briefly state a few religious beliefs preached by Guru Govind Giri.
4. What happened when Govind Giri met Guru Rajgiri?
5. What are *dhoonis* ?

*Give detailed answers to the following:*

1. Write a detailed account of how Guru Govind Giri emerged as one of the most influential socio-religious reformers who took up the cause of Bhil upliftment.
2. Give a critical analysis of the Bhuretiya song.
3. Throw some light on how the following contributed to the unjust oppression of the Bhils:  
(a) The British masters  
(b) The lords of princely states and zamindars
4. Describe the Mangarh Hill Massacre in detail.

5. Write a short note on the following:
  - (a) The Bhagat movement
  - (b) *Dhooni*
  - (c) *Samp Sabha*
6. Based on your reading of the BhuretiyaSong, answer the following questions:
  - (a) Prepare a list of places and objects mentioned in the song by Govind Giri.
  - (b) Elucidate upon the area of life to which the objects belong.
  - (c) Comment upon the overall scheme of the song based on this analysis.

## **GAVRI: THE TRIBAL DANCE-DRAMA**

Gavri or Gavari, named after the goddess Gauri, is the forty-day long dance-drama as an artistic offering to her by the Bhils for the welfare of their community and the whole world around. Gavri is believed to be the most ancient tribal dance of southern Rajasthan which is celebrated every year for centuries. There have been several speculations about the inception of this art form. Attempts have been made to trace its roots in the time-line, however, none of the sources claim authenticity. It is performed by the Bhil community in certain areas of Pratapgarh, Dungarpur and Udaipur.

Besides its religious significance, Gavri very significantly contributes to the social intermingling and interaction of the Bhil community. This unique festival is a legendary example of harmony and brotherhood. The villagers including the actors are basically the worshippers, who perform this not for any commercial or personal gain but for the good of the society. This centuries-old art form is an invocation to the divine to protect the people from famine, disasters, unknown diseases, and provide them with adequate rains for crops, and health and prosperity to all the living beings. The desire of welfare of all is central to it. The fellow feeling exhibited during the celebration with their devotion and sacrifices, marks the spirit of humanism in this tribal culture. Thus, Gavri symbolizes unconditional faith and love for the Goddess Gauri.

The dance-drama is performed during the monsoon, particularly in the months of *Shrawan/Sawan* and *Bhadrapada/Bhadon* as per the Hindu calendar. To simplify, it begins the day after Rakshabandhan in the month of *Shrawan*.

### **The Beginning of the Festival**

The *Bhopa* or the priest of the community in his typical dress wanders in different villages before this with *Ghungroos* tied to his waist and ankles. The countrymen of the particular village, who want to host Gavri, express their wish to perform this. Thereafter, the *Bhopa*, amidst the few selected members of the village, summons the goddess Gauri and seeks her *paati* or permission to play Gavri. The desire to perform and host Gavri can be easily observed as the rest of the rustic mass waits for the approval of the goddess. The *Bhopa*, who is believed to be someone who is chosen to be possessed by the divine spirit, in the state of trance with the quivering body, notifies the approval or disapproval for Gavri. Once the permission is granted, all the villagers celebrate it by observing a *rati-jaga* (*ratrijagaran*) in the village. Following this, the *mandali* or troupe of the actors who volunteer to play different characters in this performance seek the blessings of Gauri, and in front of the deity Bhairav, take an oath to preserve its sanctity. The invocation to the goddess is done every day as a ritual before the performance commences. The possessed *Bhopa* stands in the center with a trident in his hand and the other performers create a circle around him and move clockwise. There is another outer circle that moves anti-clockwise. This circular motion is believed to be creating an energy-field. Gauri, who is also known as *Shakti* or energy, is played as deity Ambav and Lord Shiv as *Budiya*.

Other than the religious rituals at the beginning of this performance as described above, there are some social ceremonies also which are practiced before this by the host-villagers. The dance-drama is performed in all those villages where the sisters and daughters of the host-villagers are married off. This is considered as a gesture of love and respect towards the women of the family that strengthens their ties with them. The women welcome the troupe by accepting the religious flag. They offer *odhanis* or sarees to the two *Rai(s)* and a

*pagri* to *Budiya*. The villagers present the artists with coconut, the sacred fruit, sweets and grains.

To keep intact the auspiciousness and piety of the ceremony, the artists vow and choose to observe a particular life-style for these forty days in the following way:

- a) They abstain from non-vegetarian food, green vegetables, liquor or alcohol.
- b) They do not indulge in any sexual activity during this period.
- c) They renounce everything that makes life comfortable, like shoes, bed, etc.
- d) They observe fasting and do not harm any creature.
- e) They do not bathe during this period.
- f) They cannot remove their *ghunghroos*.
- g) They do not enter their house during the entire course of the festival.

The answer to why Gavri is performed also has several myths associated to it. However, few narratives are most widely accepted. Bhils believe that in the month of *Bhadon*, *Gaurja* or Gauri comes down to the Earth to visit and bless these sons of the soil. Therefore, to welcome and to please her, they hold this event and sing in her praise. Gauri's husband Shiv is considered as the creator of the universe and according to their belief, the first tree on the Earth was that of Banyan which was brought to the Earth by the deity Ambav Mata, who is none other than Gauri herself.

Another narrative is that of Bhasmasur from Hindu mythology. It is said that when this demon was killed by Lord Vishnu, he expressed his last wish to be remembered. Consequently, Lord Vishnu blessed him and said that every year in the month of *Bhadrapada*, this dance will be performed and thus he will be remembered.

Similarly, another belief is that when Gauri went to meet her parents, Lord Shiv became sad and could not bear her absence for a few days. To liven himself up, he came down to Earth for merriment and celebrated Gavri with these tribal people. The same narrative is performed as an interlude too.

Accordingly, there are numerous myths linked to the reason behind its performance and every small group of the community has their own beliefs and narratives that are different in details but center on Shiv and Gauri. Nonetheless, despite ambiguity, Bhil community celebrates Gavri with undeterred faith and fervor towards it. Every individual irrespective of their age and gender participates in it with great enthusiasm.

The unique features of the performance of Gavri are as follows:

- 1) This is a novel performance in the world which runs for forty days continuously and the whole village takes part in it.
- 2) It is played by the male members of the Bhil community. The female roles are also played by the males only. The number of the artists and performers may range from 40 to 100 as per the requirement and availability.
- 3) It is the most ancient theatrical form of this region which is transmitted orally across the generations.
- 4) Gavri players perform this whole day from morning around 8 to the sunset.
- 5) Gavri is hosted and performed voluntarily. The villagers contribute to host the festival willingly and bear all the expenses on their own.
- 6) Though the artists opt to perform voluntarily but once this forty-day carnival begins, they cannot opt out of it. In case of death of a performer, his son or grandson has to perform in his place. Such stringency is imposed to ensure the sincerity of the artists and the sacredness of the art.
- 7) The players or actors are never given any training before its performance. It is said that the males of the Bhil community learn it in the womb of their mothers.
- 8) The costumes and meals for the artists are managed by the host-village.
- 9) The host-villagers help the artists financially and also take care of their fields and farms during this period.



- 10) It is performed at different places everyday for forty days and no means of transportation is used for their movement to different places.

Gavri epitomizes the cooperative and managerial skills of these aboriginals who are largely illiterate or undereducated. With an altruistic spirit and away from the glittery world, Bhils perform this with the limited resources available to them. The importance of Gavri lies in the fact that the festival strengthens their social and personal ties and generates hope and inspiration among them.

### **The Myths**

Though there are several narratives that are enacted but the major narrative as discussed above, revolves around the mythological tale of Bhasmasur and Shiv.

In Hindu mythology, Lord Shiv is a god who can be pleased easily and that is why he is known as Ashutosh and Bholenath. When the demon or *Asura* named Vrikkasur asked Narad Muni an easy way to obtain a boon, Narad Muni, due to the fact that Lord Shiv is regarded as soft-hearted and the easiest to please among gods in the Hindu pantheon, suggested the demon to worship Shiv from among the three of the greatest deities. Vrikkasur devotedly practiced severe penance by offering his body as oblation in the fire to succeed. Pleased with his devotion, benevolent Shiv bestowed him with a power to burn up anything he would put his hand on. On account of this, he was named Bhasmasur, the Ash-demon who could burn anything down to ashes. After being granted the boon, as per his demonic tendencies, he desired to test this on someone and decided to try his newly acquired power on Shiv himself with the intention to own Gauri. To find an escape from the situation, Shiv, who was being chased by the demon, sought Lord Vishnu's help. To resolve the predicament, Vishnu disguised himself into an extremely beautiful woman who is known as his only female incarnation, Mohini. Bhasmasur, enchanted by her beauty, immediately fell in love with her and wished to marry her. Mohini told him that she is fond of dancing and tricked him into imitating her dance moves. Intrigued by her, the demon kept emulating for long and thereby let his guards

down and forgot about his power. At this point, Mohini touched her head with her hand as a dance move and Bhasmasur, imitating the pose, burned himself up into ashes.

However, the above-mentioned narrative is the popular tale which is mentioned in different *purans* but the anecdote in the Bhil Gavri is a variant of its generic version and can be described as follows:

The demon Bhasmasur served Lord Shiv on Mount Kailash for twelve years with great devotion. Pleased by him, Shiv wanted to grant him with something the demon wished for. The demon desired to be bestowed with the bracelet of ash that Lord Shiv had in his hand, and Shiv gave that miraculous bracelet stating that it would burn up anyone or anything to ashes if he put his hand over it with the bracelet in hand. Meanwhile, the demon saw goddess Parvati and enthralled by her exquisiteness, wished to possess her. Having been granted the blessing, Bhasmasur thought of using the boon on Shiv himself. Lord Shiv fled from there but the demon kept chasing him. To preserve her chastity, Parvati transformed herself into a bee and hid herself in the locks of her husband. Shiv reached out to Vishnu to seek his help who disguised himself as Parvati in order to intrigue the demon. When the demon saw her coming towards him, he happily proposed her to marry. Parvati then agreed to accept the proposal given the condition that she would sit on his shoulder and make him dance the way she does with Shiv. The demon agreed to this seemingly very easy condition. He started dancing with Parvati sitting on his shoulder and became so absorbed while dancing that Parvati grabbed his hand and put it over his head. At this point, Vishnu appeared in his original form and the demon while burning sought a blessing to have his name immortalized.

Lord Vishnu then instructed this forest-dweller community to perform Gavri every year to celebrate this event. The narrative is enacted by the troupe with a great fervor and *Raibudiya* plays the role of Shiv and it is said that the wooden mask of *Budiya* signifies *Bhasmasur* and the hair and other things signify Shiv. The character of *Rai* is Gauri itself. Thus, one of the *Rais* is Parvati, the wife of Lord Shiv and the other *Rai* is Vishnu's feminine form whether it is

Parvati or Mohini.

The aforesaid narrative is the primary performance of Gavri. However, there are more than two dozen plays that are performed in Gavri besides the interludes which are based on different themes. In most of the narratives, valiance of Gauri and Shiv, in their different forms, is depicted. Some of the stories or *khel* are as follows:

- a) *Bhanwra Danav*
- b) *Kangujri*
- c) *Jogi ki Jamat*
- d) *Kanjar and Kanjari*
- e) *Navratri*
- f) *Kheturi*
- g) *Kalu keer*
- h) *Kalbeliya*
- i) *Banjara*
- j) *Meena*
- k) *Roi Maachhla*
- l) *Kalka Devi*
- m) *Dhariya Bheel*
- n) *Nahar*

The stories when played along with the songs and dialogues, appear very raw in their form but they manifest the basic nature of their culture and life style that integrates the humans with all the other forms of life. One can see how humans associate themselves with gods and demons and also with animals and the nature as a whole. The character of different castes and communities are also seen there, it suggests the harmonious co-existence of people of different communities within the given social structure.

Besides these age-old narratives, the artists, with the changing times, have infused the plays with various emerging themes and topics of contemporary relevance but not all the troupes do such experimentation with themes to keep pace with the time. However,

the major thematic concerns of the plays are as follows:

1. Legends of Shiv and Gauri
2. Conservation of nature
3. Social and religious life
4. Values and ethics of the tribal people
5. Interpersonal relationships
6. Myths of inception of the universe
7. Relation between gods and humans
8. Role of Bhils in society
9. The popular beliefs and superstitions
10. Contemporary issues

## Characters

There are several characters who play various roles in Gavri. However, *Raibudiya*, two *Rai(s)*, *Bhopa* and *Kutkudia* are the five major characters who are called *Manji* and the other characters are known as *khelye* who perform variably as per the requirement of the narrative.

### Major Characters

1. *Budiya* or *Raibudiya*: The central character of Gavri is called *Budiya*. He is the husband of the goddess Gauri and is believed to be the one who protects, preserves and also destroys. The wooden face mask and a red brief/loin cloth are a part of the attire of this character. He keeps a wooden stick in his hand that has a red cloth tied at the top of it. When the artists form a circle and move in a particular direction, he moves in the opposite direction. He can independently move as per his wish in different directions since he is a powerful deity. All the artists in the circle are called the *gana* or attendants just like Shiv has at Kailash.



**Raibudiya**

*Courtesy:*

*Lok Kala Mandal, Udaipur*

2. *Rai*: *Rai* is the Bhil version of Goddess Gauri. At the local level, Bhils name Gavri as *Rai* only. The character of Budiya has two women characters with him who are called *Rai*. They are believed to be different forms of Gauri as Lord Vishnu's Mohini form and another Lord Shiv's wife Parvati. The twin characters have similar attire, ornaments, expressions and performance. Moreover, they answer in unison when they are asked a question. Both the artists act in a synchronized manner without any rehearsal before hand and thus it fascinates the spectators.



**Rai**

*Courtesy:*

*Lok Kala Mandal, Udaipur*

3. *Bhopa*: *Bhopa* is a tribal priest who organizes and regulates the whole event, therefore, he is also called '*paat bhopa*'. He is believed to be someone who can invoke and invite the deities by going into trance. Thus, in the beginning of and during the festival, the deities Gauri and Bhairav possess his body to communicate with people. The abnormally trembling, quivering body of the *bhopa* is a sign of this possession of his body by the deities. For the commencement of the play every day, wherever he puts the *trishul*, becomes the center around which Gavri would be played.



**Bhopa**

*Courtesy:*

*Lok Kala Mandal, Udaipur*

4. *Kutkudia*: There are two *kutkudias* in the play who are the narrators or the *sutradhaar*. In the beginning, they introduce the

viewers with the story of the upcoming play. During the enactment as well, they make their commentary about the story and the characters. The narration in the beginning of the play is called *Jhamtada*.

### Minor Characters

In the minor characters the Bhils play the roles of people from different castes and communities like Kanjar-Kanjari, Kalbeliya, Meena, Baniya etc. through these characters they depict the characteristics of these communities as perceived by the Bhil tribe and try to situate themselves in the framework of the society around. Different versions of Gauri like Kalika Mata, Ambav Devi, Durga Mata, and other deities like Krishna and Vishnu are also characterized. Besides, there are characters like lion, boar, crocodile, black bee etc. who are demonized or glorified as per the narrative and the conventional beliefs.



**Khetudi**



**Kanjari**

*Courtesy: Lok Kala Mandal, Udaipur*

### The Theatrics of Dance-Drama Gavri

Gavri is a unique art form that amalgamates the genres of dance, drama song and music and integrates all these with the art of storytelling which is the very essence of the traditional form of dissemination of knowledge in Indian knowledge system. There are no theories that can be applied to analyze this form as are used for the classical art-forms, but there are certain elements that can be observed for its understanding.

The tribal community with the power of their imagination use the available resources metaphorically to create the attire or setting or for any other requirement.

**Attire:** There are no extravagant designer dresses for the performance of this dance-drama which is celebrated with such a fanfare by the Bhil tribe. However, the colorful dresses, masks and tribal ornaments make them look spectacular. The Gavri costumes largely reflect their lifestyle since they are very identical to the dresses they wear routinely, and make modifications as per the requirement of the play.

The female characters wear *lehanga-choli* and *odhani*. The characters of *Rai* have a cotton cloth tied around their mouths which becomes their mask. A simple crown or a peacock feather makes the actors goddess or deity or king. The actor playing *Raibudiya* has his face hidden behind the wooden mask signifying Bhasmasur. He also carries a stick as the *trishul* of Shiv with a red cloth that implies the colour of energy. The *bhopa* wears a white *dhoti* and *angarakhi* which has a red trident shape stitched at the back of it. The white dress implies purity. He also has a trident in his hand. The yellow and green colours also have great significance for tribal people.

With the changing times, their appearances are also making gradual shifts. The characters now can be seen with outlandish tattoos on their bodies. Though tattooing has been a part of the tribal life for centuries, but the motifs are changing now. Similarly, face painting is also a vital part of their attire. If the actor is playing the role of a lion, he would simply paint his body with yellow and black. To play *Kalika Mata*, he would paint his body or face with black.

**Setting:** Unlike the classical or the mainstream art forms, this dance-drama does not require any set or stage for the performers. As a part of the folk theatre, any street, courtyard, ground, field, farm, crossroads, or any spacious place under the wide-open sky becomes the theatre for this performance. For creating a particular setting, tree branches or bed sheets or *odhanis* are used. Since, the place of performance changes every day, a static stage is practically of no use to them.

**Dance:** Dance is one of the major aspects of Gavri, however, it cannot be separated from the drama and the songs. All the '*khelye*' move in a circular motion singing a song before and after one narrative is enacted. This is called '*ghaai*'. The synchronized movements of legs and hands of all the players in a circle are typical to most of the tribal dances. Some characters also show their acrobatic skills during it. The coordination in beats and rhythm along with the movements come very naturally to these untrained folk artists.

**Songs and dialogues:** The two belong to the dramatic segment of Gavri. Most of the songs are sung as chorus and the performers do not follow any specific pattern for it. The dialogues are impromptu since they are not written anywhere and the mixing of songs and dialogues is very common. Most of the dialogues are spoken by *kutkudias*. The lyrics and the music of the songs do not have much sophistication. Between the two plays, there's an interval when the artists go to a nearby hut or house to change their costumes. During those intervals, interludes are also played. Some of the interludes have comic elements in it.

**Instruments:** Gavri is played using the two folk instruments: *thali* and *maadal* also called *mandal*. A bronze made *thali* is beaten with a wooden stick during it. The other instrument *maadal* is a barrel shaped drum which is very popular among the tribal groups.

Thus, Gavri, one of the oral traditions of Rajasthan, does not follow any established norms of artistic expression, rather it dwells upon the raw aesthetics of spontaneity of the elements of dance and drama. There are many other art forms like Bhavai, Terah Tali, Rasdhari etc.





### Maadal

*Courtesy: Lok Kala Mandal, Udaipur*

which are expressions of similar religious fervor and are very popular among the folks. However, Gavri is one of its kind that is performed during the daytime and except for a few elements, the dramatic spectacle of the viewer changes every time they see it.

The festival Gavri is a reflection of an absolute faith in divinity through this artistic expression by Bhils. It also exhibits their social and cultural values that are ingrained in the tribal mindset. This ancient art-form, in the ever-changing milieu, is now on the verge of extinction. Since it is not a commercial activity, the younger ones of the community are reluctant to give their time to it. Though it is an over generalized statement here but the impact of this changing outlook in new generation is quite visible. The growing consumerism, education level and modernism are all contributory to its existing condition. Therefore, the art-form requires more attention of people from across and outside the country. This oral tradition of the Bhils in southern Rajasthan is enriching and contributes to the kaleidoscopic gamut of the Indian art and culture.

## GLOSSARY

<i>Angarakhi:</i>	(angrakhi) a kurta-like attire with a different style
<i>Bhopa:</i>	(bhopa) the priest
<i>Gana:</i>	(gann) attendants
<i>Ghai:</i>	(ghaai) refrain

<i>Ghungharoos:</i>	(ghunghroos) bells of anklets
<i>Jhamtada:</i>	(jhaamtara) the conversation made by the kutkudia
<i>Khel:</i>	(khel) enactment of plays
<i>Khelye:</i>	(khelye) the minor artists of Gavri
<i>Lehenga-choli:</i>	(lehenga-cholee) Rajasthani attire of women. Skirt and blouse
<i>Mandali:</i>	(mandalee) troupe
<i>Manji:</i>	(maanjee) the major characters
<i>Odhani:</i>	(odhannee) veil
<i>Pagri:</i>	(pagri) turban
<i>Rati-jaga:</i>	(raati-jaagaa) night vigil
<i>Sutradhaar:</i>	(sootradhaar) narrator
<i>Trishul:</i>	(trishool) trident, weapon of Lord Shiv

## QUESTIONS

- What are the following words related to?
  - Khelye:* i) *Kutkudia*
  - Gaurja:* ii) *Shiv*
  - Jhamtada:* iii) *Kanjar-Kanjari*
  - Raibudiya:* iv) *Priest*
  - Bhopa:* v) *Rai*

*Choose the correct answer of the following multiple-choice questions:*

- Gavri is played in the months of?
  - Shrawan-Bhadrapad
  - Chaitra-Vaishakh
  - Bhadrapad-Ashadh
  - Ashadh-Shrawan
- For how many days Gavri festival runs?
  - 20
  - 30
  - 40
  - 50
- Which of the following is **true** about Gavri?
  - Gavri is hosted to earn livelihood by Bhils
  - Gavri is a gesture of love and respect to women

- (c) Gavri is played by all the men and women of the village
  - (d) It is a classical dance form
4. Which of the following is not true about Gavri?
- (a) Gavri is performed after the approval by the goddess Gauri
  - (b) Gavri artists shun non-veg, leafy vegetables and liquor
  - (c) Gavri is also called Rai
  - (d) Gavri is performed twice in a year
5. Who among the following is not a major character?
- (a) Bhopa
  - (b) Raibudiya
  - (c) Rai
  - (d) Nahar

*Give short answers to the following:*

1. Who is Raibudiya?
2. What is the role of kutkadia?
3. What attire does the Bhopa wear?
4. Give names of any two '*khel*' of Gavri.
5. What is *jhamtada*?

*Give detailed answer to the following:*

1. Reflect upon the social and religious significance of Gavri.
2. How does Gavri begin?
3. What are the major characteristics of Raibudiya and Rai?
4. Who are the main characters of the Gavri performance?
5. Reflect upon the story of Bhasmasur as performed in Gavri.
6. Do you think that Gavri is a unique dance-drama in itself? If yes, give reason.
7. What are the major characteristics of a tribal dance-drama?
8. Critically appreciate Gavri as a performative art form.

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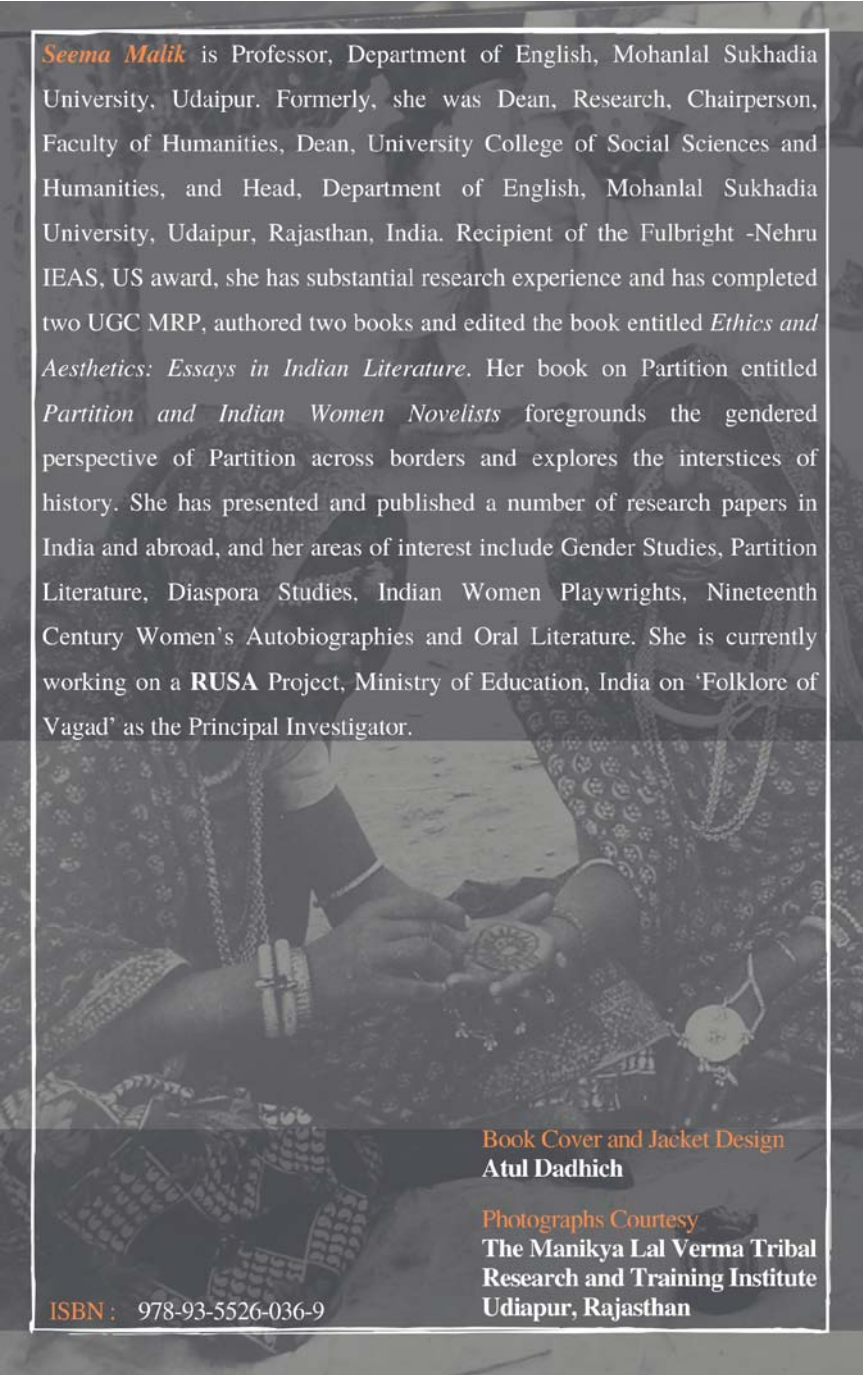
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