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Abstract- India is a country feasting on festivities. All of its 29 states have their distinct culture and traditional occasion of celebration. Sama Chakeva is one such festival in folk tradition of India. It is celebrated in Bihar which is an eastern state situated in Gangetic plane. The mythological and religious story of this festival traces back to lord Krishna and his family. The festival of Sama Chakeva cherishes the love between brother and sister.

In this festival, people show regards towards environment by welcoming winter migratory birds; Brother is presented as a redeemer of sister but, there are many questions shielded under festivity of Sama Chakeva. Who decides the purity of a girl's character; she herself or the society? Has patriarchy given her any power to defend herself? This story also points towards the basic structure of Indian society in which women sexuality has no expression. In a civilized society bourgeois women represent domesticated side of nature. Negation of sexual needs of a woman is the basic foundation of patriarchal mindset in the whole world. In addition to explaining story and rituals of Sama chakeva, I have tried to analyze the story of Sama from feminist perspective.

Keywords: *mithila, folk tradition, patriarchy, culture.*

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Sama Chakeva: A Worthy Celebration Amid Some Unanswered Questions

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In this festival, people show regards towards environment by welcoming winter migratory birds; Brother is presented as a redeemer of sister but, there are many questions shielded under festivity of Sama Chakeva. Who decides the purity of a girl's character; she herself or the society? Has patriarchy given her any power to defend herself? This story also points towards the basic structure of Indian society in which women sexuality has no expression. In a civilized society bourgeois women represent domesticated side of nature. Negation of sexual needs of a woman is the basic foundation of patriarchal mindset in the whole world. In addition to explaining story and rituals of Sama chakeva, I have tried to analyze the story of Sama from feminist perspective. Despite having gender issues in its essence, the proper understanding of this festival asserts that our folk traditions have ecological concerns. Nature and culture have been placed side by side in our society.

Keywords: mithila, folk tradition, patriarchy, culture.

I. Introduction

India is a land of diverse culture and traditions and every of its region is painted with some shades of peculiarity. This distinctness comes to light in festivity, dressing and food habits. All of its 29 states have their distinct culture and traditional occasion of celebration. Sama Chakeva is one such festival celebrated in Bihar which is an eastern state situated in Gangetic plane. It is a regional festival of Bihar celebrated in Mithila region. In the Bihar, which is seen today ancient Mithila comes under Darbhanga, Saharsa, Madhubani and few other districts. The root of Indian festival generally resides in some mythological, religious or Puranic tales. In Skand Puran and Padma Puran we get the reference about the story of Sama Chakeva. The story behind this festivity has different versions in popular folk tales. In local eyes this story of Sama Chakeva is interpreted as celebration of brother and sister love; and to welcome the migratory birds coming towards plain in winter season from Himalayan terrain.

Lord Krishna who was king of Dwarka had a daughter named Sama and a son with name 'Samb' who later recieved fame as Chakeva. A person from lower caste puts allegation on character of Sama that she has illicit love affair with an unnamed person and she often visits him in forest. An angry father Krishn cursed Sama to transform into bird. Sama flies off in the forest. Her brother Samb performs penance of Lord Vishnu, who in turn gives him the boon to take the shape of bird too. Samb changes into bird named as 'Chakeva'. He also flies in wilderness of forest and recognizes Sama after listening to her songs. Together brother and sister come out of forest in their regained human form. Sapt rishi and citizens of Vrindavan give testimony about purity of Sama and her character. Krishna regrets his hasty decision and punishes the person who had allegedly accused Sama.

In the memory of this event people of Mithila celebrate the festival of Sama Chakeva. In its essence, this festival is women-centered as they make all the arrangements for this festival and are main participators. In the month of November they prepare numerous clay idols in representation with this story. Most of idols are in form of birds. There are idols of Sama, Chakeva, Saptarshi, Vrindavan and Chugla (the person who defamed Sama) and in connotative sense who do 'chugal khori (bad mouth others). After the idols get dried in sunlight, they are white washed in pithar (rice flour liquid) and then are colored with natural colors. On the auspicious Purnima (full-moon) night young girls and women feed chura dahi (curd and dried rice) to their brother and play with idols in full moon light. Folk songs are sung in honour of Chakeva. In these songs Chakeva is potrayed in heroic light as being the redeemer of sister. Two rituals are crucial in this idol play of Sama Chakeva. Women burns the moustache of Chugla which is made of jute, this ritual signifies the destruction of evil. They also sing in chorus which is sometimes accompanied by dance.

'chugla ke mochh me aag lgle'

"The moustache of ill willed person is in flames"

The other important ritual performed in this festival is that the performers also burn a replica of Vrindavan for a second or two, and then put off the

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fire. Vrindavan is a symbol of the collective Vrindavan community and it is adorned with dried grass. While playing with Vrindavan women sings that

'vrindavan me aag lagle, koi na bujhaile

Hmre bhaiya bujaile ….

(When Vrindawan was in danger, nobody saved it, my brother saved it.)

Besides these rituals women folk songs of Maithili language have pivotal importance in this festival which are basically composed in praise of brothers and purity of Sama. They distribute homemade sweetmeats among themselves; Ultimately they discard the idols in water. This last ritual of idol submerging in water indicates towards Vidaai (farewell) of Sama to her husband's home.

II. Nature, Culture and Ecology

Mankind thinks about nature in association with themselves .In our folk tales, myths and stories nature is not featured as an individual entity but as part of culture. Man and nature belongs together in their created glory in tragedy and in salvation. Indian ethos is sensible with respect to this angle for they have the tradition of nature worship from the dawn of Harappan civilization.

Serpil Oppermann comments:

"Nature and culture can no longer be thought of as dichotomous categories Rather we need to theorize them together and analyze this complex relationship and mutual effect on one another."

Sama Chakeva is celebrated in winter season when the Himalayan birds migrate from Nepal terrain towards plain areas of Northern India. This festival is also a welcome ceremony for these migratory birds. Following last ritual of discarding idols in water and singing songs women request the birds to come again next year. Most of the clay idols are formed in the shape of vivid colorful birds. There exists a parallel between story of Sama and arrival of these birds. The story of Sama has also tropes of bird morph, animals and forests and thus, this festival is an interesting fusion of nature and culture. This story of Sama Chakeva makes a symbolic nexus where animal kingdom meets with human beings. The cursed miracle of Sama being changed into bird is suggestive of the idea that animals too have emotions. The story and songs sung in this festival comes in tradition of folklores. It is women of society who maintains the tradition of folk literature with continuity from one generation to next generation. In these songs sung by women, sisters are depicted as waiting for their brother.

Human beings have the central position in great chain of being but, the hierarchy needs to be balanced with space for all life forms Most of our local Indian festivals are inculcated with traits of nature preservation. The society of Bihar is still agrarian in nature; Fertility of earth, greenery of landscape and well being of animals is important to native residents of Bihar. Sama chakeva has hidden concern towards the species of endangered birds. By using clay and natural colors it pays homage to earth and greenery. Our folk culture had a great inherent wisdom. This festival brings man, nature and animal kingdom in a shared sense of harmony.

III. Women and Culture

In addition of presenting a smooth story with happy ending about love of a brother for his sister, This festival has many subtle nuances which put patriarchy in rather questionable position. The story is about women ; the celebration is carried out by women but, the central character Sama is muted; she doesn't speak for herself; Sama is not only voiceless but she is devoid of any power to defend herself; accusation as well as defense came from masculine side. Who decides the purity of a girl's character; she herself or the patriarchal society? Why has society not given her any power to defend herself?

In a civilized society bourgeois women represent domesticated side of nature. Negation of sexual needs of a woman is the basic foundation of patriarchal mindset in the whole world. Sama was falsely accused for rejecting this repressive mores of society. This thought coincides with Adrienne Rich's view in 'Of woman Born':" there is nothing revolutionary whatsoever about it, the control of women's body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected."

In a patriarchal system, women are expected to be happy with their traditional roles .The foundation of patriarchy is laid on polite subjugation of women with their position. They are respected or they are mistreated; they won't speak anything. Eco feminist critics comment about feminization of nature. In this myth of Sama Chakeva, man is shown superior to both women and nature. Father commands daughter to be bird and son brings her back from natural world. Sama as a woman is torn between anger of father and love of brother. In short span of life lived as bird she was away from shackles of patriarchy. This instance does also indicate that in realm of nature, there is no discrimination.

In woman and Nature: The roaring Inside her, Susan griffin says:

"He says that women speaks with nature. That she hears voice from under the earth……..But for him the dialogue is over. He says he is not part of this world, that he was set on this world as a stranger. He sets himself apart from woman and nature."

Patriarchy controls women by assuming her to be similar to Prakriti (nature). Nature and women belong together while Purush (male) is an aloof existence; separate and dominating over them. This story further comments about faulty behavior of Lord Krishna.

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Despite famed as Man in figure of Samb is associated with Veer Rasa and Woman in name of sama is related with Shringar rasa and Karuna rasa. Lord Krishna who is known as a liberator of abducted women, failed to do justice to his own daughter. It points that social commentary affects the decision making of state.

IV. Conclusion

Despite the veiled suppression of woman in this festival, it has many positive aspects; it aim to preserve local culture. It is a festival of dance, song, folk tale and pottery. Along with a social message that gossip mongering shouldn't be encouraged in society as defamation can damage the reputation of innocent, it also depicts sibling love. Harboring on the beauty and bounty of nature and welcoming migratory birds with all its criticism the festival adds to the liveliness of Indian socio-cultural milieu. A tradition slowly being lost Sama Chakeva is a festival worth reviving.

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