

1 Sama Chakeva: A Worthy Celebration Amid Some Unanswered 2 Questions

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7 **Abstract**

8 India is a country feasting on festivities. All of its 29 states have their distinct culture and
9 traditional occasion of celebration. Sama Chakeva is one such festival in folk tradition of
10 India. It is celebrated in Bihar which is an eastern state situated in Gangetic plane. The
11 mythological and religious story of this festival traces back to lord Krishna and his family. The
12 festival of Sama Chakeva cherishes the love between brother and sister. In this festival, people
13 show regards towards environment by welcoming winter migratory birds; Brother is presented
14 as a redeemer of sister but, there are many questions shielded under festivity of Sama Chakeva.
15 Who decides the purity of a girl's character; she herself or the society? Has patriarchy given
16 her any power to defend herself? This story also points towards the basic structure of Indian
17 society in which women sexuality has no expression. In a civilized society bourgeois women
18 represent domesticated side of nature. Negation of sexual needs of a woman is the basic
19 foundation of patriarchal mindset in the whole world. In addition to explaining story and
20 rituals of Sama chakeva, I have tried to analyze the story of Sama from feminist perspective.

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22 **Index terms**— mithila, folk tradition, patriarchy, culture.

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32 needs of a woman is the basic foundation of patriarchal mindset in the whole world. In addition to explaining
33 story and rituals of Sama chakeva, I have tried to analyze the story of Sama from feminist perspective. Despite
34 having gender issues in its essence, the proper understanding of this festival asserts that our folk traditions have
35 ecological concerns. Nature and culture have been placed side by side in our society.

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

37 **1 I. Introduction**

38 India is a land of diverse culture and traditions and every of its region is painted with some shades of peculiarity.
39 This distinctness comes to light in festivity, dressing and food habits. All of its 29 states have their distinct
40 culture and traditional occasion of celebration. Sama Chakeva is one such festival celebrated in Bihar which is
41 an eastern state situated in Gangetic plane. It is a regional festival of Bihar celebrated in Mithila region. In the
42 Bihar, which is seen today ancient Mithila comes under Darbhanga, Saharsa, Madhubani and few other districts.

3 SERPIL OPPERMANN COMMENTS:

43 The root of Indian festival generally resides in some mythological, religious or Puranic tales. In Skand Puran and
44 Padma Puran we get the reference about the story of Sama Chakeva. The story behind this festivity has different
45 versions in popular folk tales. In local eyes this story of Sama Chakeva is interpreted as celebration of brother and
46 sister love; and to welcome the migratory birds coming towards plain in winter season from Himalayan terrain.

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

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

66 'chugla ke mochh me aag lgle' "The moustache of ill willed person is in flames"

67 The other important ritual performed in this festival is that the performers also burn a replica of Vrindavan for
68 a second or two, and then put off the Sama Chakeva: A Worthy Celebration Amid Some Unanswered Questions
69 fire. Vrindavan is a symbol of the collective Vrindavan community and it is adorned with dried grass. While
70 playing with Vrindavan women sing that 'vrindavan me aag lagle, koi na bujhaile Hmre bhaiya bujaile ?.

71 (When Vrindawan was in danger, nobody saved it, my brother saved it.) Besides these rituals women folk
72 songs of Maithili language have pivotal importance in this festival which are basically composed in praise of
73 brothers and purity of Sama. They distribute homemade sweetmeats among themselves; Ultimately they discard
74 the idols in water. This last ritual of idol submerging in water indicates towards Vidaai (farewell) of Sama to
75 her husband's home.

76 2 II. Nature, Culture and Ecology

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

81 3 Serpil Oppermann comments:

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

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

94 Human beings have the central position in great chain of being but, the hierarchy needs to be balanced with
95 space for all life forms Most of our local Indian festivals are inculcated with traits of nature preservation.

96 The society of Bihar is still agrarian in nature; Fertility of earth, greenery of landscape and well being of
97 animals is important to native residents of Bihar. Sama chakeva has hidden concern towards the species of
98 endangered birds. By using clay and natural colors it pays homage to earth and greenery. Our folk culture had
99 a great inherent wisdom. This festival brings man, nature and animal kingdom in a shared sense of harmony.

100 4 III. Women and Culture

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

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

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

119 In woman and Nature: The roaring Inside her, Susan griffin says: "He says that women speaks with nature.
120 That she hears voice from under the earth?????..But for him the dialogue is over. He says he is not part of this
121 world, that he was set on this world as a stranger. He sets himself apart from woman and nature."

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

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

128 5 IV. Conclusion

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

135 6 Works Cited

Figure 1:

