

# Tribal (Gondi) Folk Literature: A Study with Special Reference to Gadchiroli District of Maharashtra

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## Abstract

Gadchiroli is one of the most backward and tribal districts in Maharashtra as well as in India. It is known as Adivasi and tribal District in Maharashtra. Many Gond and Madia tribes are dwelling in this hilly and forest area. The region occupied by these Gonds is regarded as Gondwana. The tribals living in this region speak Gondi and Madia languages which are spoken languages without a script. Gondi is a dialect of the Gonds which is considered to be originated in Dravidian language lineage. This dialect is the most primitive classic form and it has a glorious, rich and valuable folk literature. These Gonds have a very rich folk literature. These folk songs are not available in written form as it has no script. Tribal folklore originates from community and transforms from generation to generation in oral form. This folk literature of the Gonds is very rich, splendid which exists chiefly in the form of folk songs. Their cultural heritage is preserved and reflected through folk literature. Tribal folk literature (songs) is based and inspired by various natural tunes and sounds which they come across in the nature like sounds of birds, flowing rivers, winds, animals etc. Their popular folk songs are marriage songs (rela), Pandum, Rituals, Zulwe and Dhemse etc. Tribal people are capable to compose wonderful folk songs on different occasions and festivals. Folk literature is a part and parcel of the language and culture of their society. The tribal songs and tradition based on dancing and singing to the tunes of music. Singing and Dancings are very common and is a matter of daily routine. They celebrate every occasion by singing and dancing right from the birth ritual to the marriage or even in death rituals. During farming, on festivals while doing labour work in forest or elsewhere they sing and dance. Tribal people developed their musical instruments indigenously and made from natural resources. Their musical instruments are drums, beating instruments, stringed violin like instruments and horns of animals etc.

**Key words:** Gondi, Madia dialects, folklore, folk literature, Rela songs, oral tradition, rituals, Zulwe, Dhemse, Pandum, Tribal festivals.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Gadchiroli is the most backward area and tribal district in Maharashtra. The district is on the

Telangana, Chattishgarh and Maharashtra borders. The area is densely covered with deep forest. Even after seven decades of independence the area is remained far away from the mainstream of progress. The lifestyle of these tribals is still in traditional tribal way. The tribals who are living in this area are mainly Gonds and Madiyas. People speak Gondi and Madiya languages which are spoken languages without script but still they have a rich folk literature which is not available in any other areas of the literature and folklore.

### 1.1. Folk songs and Literature of tribal

Folk literature is a part and parcel of the language and culture of our society. Folk literature is studied for its intrinsic merit and for enjoyment, more as an independent literary genre. The tribal folk songs have come to us by an oral tradition. This tradition has been preserved for generations and transferred to new generations. For any oral transmission poetic form is the best because it can be easily remembered and reproduced. The tribal tradition also based on dancing and singing in tunes of the music. It is very often observed that the tribal men and women first start dancing, with music based on primarily rhythm and then only they start singing the songs. The tribal folk songs are sung only while dancing and hence these songs should be correctly called as 'Dancing Songs'. One may say that their songs are not sung but are danced. Dancing is very common and is a matter of daily routine. All occasions, in social and personal life are celebrating with dancing right from the birth ritual to the marriage or even in death rituals dancing and singing are very common. On the occasions of festivals during farming, while doing labour work in forest or elsewhere songs are sung and dances are danced. It is very common that many tribals possess the skills of composing songs and poems on the spot befitting the occasion. In this way tribal folk literature is mainly found in their songs. The singing and dancing is traditionally a collective or an affair of the whole community. Many tribal people are the best experts in creating and performing folk dramas. Different art forms have been developed by these tribal people. They are Dandar, Ramleela and specialize in dance befitting the occasion, for example the Khamm dance of the Korku, the Ghusali dance of the Kolam, the Rela or the Dussera dances of the Madiya etc. They have their own methods of makeup, developed indigenously from locally

available natural sources like colour stones and soils, resins from the trees, animal skins and feathers of the birds. On the occasions of singing and dancing two things are commonly observed everywhere in the tribal societies. The burning of bonfire by using firewood, consumption of liquors. The Mahua or the toddy liquors are very common and these are provided them the necessary vigour or enthusiasm for the wonderful performance. Gonds and Madiyas are found in a large scale in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. The dialect which is being spoken by them is called Gondi. This dialect is the most primitive and classic from which includes a very rich and valuable folk literature. Their social and cultural heritage is preserved through this folk literature. It consists of traditional songs, dramas of ritual, tales, sayings, question and answer songs and even mantras etc. Some songs are composed for men, for women or for both which are sung by a mixed group. Songs conveying the past history of their community, their origin, social organization and the great deeds of dead forefathers and lulling songs also very common.

These songs consist human values and sentiments which include love and affection. Affection for child, brother sister affection, humour, bravery and teasing etc. They have much attachment regarding Gods, deities, spirituality, nature and origin of nature and human beings. Their eco-friendly life, living style also enriches the nature unlike our so called modern life styles. Tribal songs and culture are inspired to a great extent by nature. Sun and Moon, Earth, animals, trees are clearly described or reflected in most of their songs. Though the tribal people are subdivided into many tribes their sentiments, emotions, oneness with nature, social attitude and community spirit etc are almost similar. Their ceremonies, rituals, for celebrating marriage, birth, death and festivals are much similar. The mother earth and nature surround them are always objects of worship and sense of gratitude is expressed towards them through the songs and tales.

## II. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Wonderful musical instruments were developed by tribal people indigenously and made them from the local and natural resources. Wonderful musical instruments are used in tribal songs and dances. They use various innovative methods to develop their own musical instruments and make them with the local and natural resources. Their musical instruments comprise of blow wind instruments, drum and beating instruments, cymbals, stringed violin like instruments and horns of animals.

Tribal songs and drama have an inborn impact of their surrounding atmosphere and natural environment. The traditional folk literature is based

on dancing and singing to the tunes of music. Tribal men and women first start dancing with music based primarily on rhythm and then only they start the songs. The music also is developed from various sources of tunes, notes and chords of which come across in nature. The sounds of birds, the sounds of rivers, waves of winds and sounds of animals are sources of their music.

## III. CONCLUSION

The folk literature of these Gondi, Madiya (Adivasi) is in literary value, style and aesthetics. Tribal folklore is based on dancing and singing to the tunes of music. Clearly it is observed that the tribal men and women first start dancing with music based on rhythm and then only they start singing of the songs. Their oral folk songs are comprised of word structure, fine diction, natural imagines of poetry, effective use of figures of speech, metaphors and similies through their excellent poetic power. Tribal folk songs have their particular internal rhythm. These songs have scent of their natural and forest living culture. All of their folk songs have particular melody and sweetness which is not available in any other areas of literature and folklore. They have natural rhythm of worth living, giving up rules of so called literature, aesthetism and style, their folk literature has established their independent and own enthusiasm.

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