

CITIZEN LIFE IN RITUALS OF MITHILA

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In any culture, the manner of responding of an individual towards one's society is an utmost important aspect. In the culture of Mithila this manner of responding i.e behavioral functions are given much importance. This behavioral and moral ethical characteristic of a person determines how effective administrative social system of the society is. As society is made up of members and the manner of behavioral aspects among members determine the strength of feeling of brotherhood and kinship. Such societies are seen having much concern about protecting their rich cultural heritage and are often respected by other cultures and are kept at high pedestal.

The region of 'Mithila' owes its name from 'Maithli' the daughter of king Janak who is not only a source of inspiration for the region but also epitome of feminine virtues, sanctity and qualities. The region associated with her birth place is Sitamarhi (Bihar) and Janakpur (Nepal). In 1816, after Sugauli agreement though the region got divided and half of the area went under administration of Nepal but the regions still have close cultural affinity. The region is blessed with rivers and in the land of Mithila, all the rivers bear significance of matriarchal values. The region enjoys immense greenery and the chief livelihood of the people is agriculture since ages. Sowing, irrigating, winnowing, husking and then comes 'labaan' i.e. getting the fruit of toil in the form of new crop. The chief helping agent in all this is cattle, so the custom of worship of the lord of cattle i.e. 'Pashupati' is there. People practicing agriculture therefore celebrate 'Pakheb' in which the cattle are decorated and blessings for the safety security and growth of fertility of progenies are prayed from the deity. Due to immense usefulness and importance of cattle wealth the idea of imagination of different gods having varied beasts and birds as their family members can be understood in Indian Mythology.

In the locale of Mithila, the social life of the people is sacrificial in nature as throughout their life pertaining from birth to death--various fasts, festivals, yagnas, thread ceremonies (Upnayan) and marriages are there which are marked by various auspicious and occasional local songs sung by female communities giving light on the significance of blessings and good wishes of the community needed for growth and development of the souls. In the land of Mithila in comparison to male deity, female deity holds wider significance. For every individual family and clan, the clan-god is a Goddess called 'Kuldevi' who is among 'Ten Mahavidyas' – Kali, Tara, Tripursundari, Bharavi, Chinnamasta, Baglamukhi, Dhumavati, Matangi and Kamala.

There is always a deeper significance behind every celebration and festivities of Mithila as they are concentrated, hard earned and saved knowledge of ancestor communities that have been passed on to generations having in its core the intention of the uninterrupted growth and development, safety and security of generations from ages. After deep observation, one can find that the societal behavior of an individual as well as purgation of the soul is the chief purpose behind the observed fasts and festivals. By the means of self-regulation in these observed fasts in the place of importance of self and personal ambitions comes the importance of family and clan-community. Together with this, the intermixing of people in the times of festivities makes the threads of oneness and togetherness stronger. Standing together in the times of grief and happiness nurtures the bond of oneness and builds the potential for more than one can stand against. As in Indian Mythology togetherness is the key to the growth of 'Self'.

Even in modern day feminist theories, The Other Third World feminists have drawn everybody's attention towards returning to spirituality as it is having a great source of feminist power. In this regard, voice of Kristina Groove draws our attention towards the fact those native accounts of spirituality within feminism turns to community rather than individual. This spiritualized feminism has got a larger social role because it

has got to work with communities and entire localities. Hence, we find women experience linked with communities and entire locality. In this respect, the land of Mithila is rich in the form of folklore tradition and in every respect of life where every female child and woman is worshipped in the representative form of Divine-Mother. Every clan of Mithila has its own clan god which is a goddess worshipped in the form of a symbol made from clay called 'Peedee' worshipped from generations whose clay is collected from places as stables, palaces, confluence of rivers, oceans, cow-sheds, market squares and ant hills and termite soil. On 'Peedee' through rice powder and vermilion traditional symbol of peace, harmony and growth is made in the form of lotus (Astadal), Nine Planets (Navgrah) etc are made. This is a symbol of belief that each and every strata of society, division of labor for the concept of civilization as well as well as conjugal, symbiotic, adjustment among components of Nature whether bird, beast or man is needed for growth of humanity which is worshipped in the form of clan goddess from generations.

There is abundant and rampant use of produce of the land in the society of Mithila as in every auspicious time the produce of agricultural land i.e. the result of hard toil of the masses in the form of gain of labor is consecrated to the Gods. On special occasions milk porridge (payas) is consecrated to clan-goddess by the elderly lady of the clan. Even daughters of the house are given grass's edge, paddy, and turmeric in the edge of their sari before they go to their in laws house. All this have symbolic significance--to be the bearer of healthy, intelligent progeny and to grow constantly with peace and harmony. The region of Mithila has an ancient tradition of worshipping the 'Nag Deity'. Snake worship in the month of rainy season called Saavan in Hindu calendar is done. 'Vish-hara Mata' together with 'Divine Mother' is worshipped by ladies for infallible married life and long life of their husbands and families. There are many local tales as well as songs for the occasion but in every song and tale there lies the belief of living with harmony and paying due respect to the species having immense significance as they hold the link of our ecosystem by controlling factors harmful in agricultural economy and saving from epidemics and famines.

The Matriarchal significance in the society of Mithila is good to look at. As in the society of Mithila leading role of females can be envisioned by visualizing their role on the occasion of marriages and other auspicious times When new bride enter the clan, all the ladies of the house perform 'Chumaun' i.e. a form of blessing performed together with ancestral song done for the purpose of conjugal happy married life and fertility of the couple for their future life. At most, of the occasions the rich culture of Mithila has a tradition of remembering their ancestors and paying reverence to them and together with this mother goddess are worshipped on such occasions. These mother goddess are sixteen Matrikas in the form of small circular figure round heads made from cow dung and edge of grass are Gauri, Padma, Sachi, Medha, Hristi, Pusti, Tusti, Savitri, Vijaya, Jaya, Devsena, Swaha, Swadha, Mata, Lokmata and Atmakuldevta. On all such occasions, the female folk of Mithila have special songs suitable for the occasion. These songs are not only rich in the field of literature but also hold an important place in the perspective of music. As these songs are based on rural ragas and rag anis, they have been owned by classical Indian music. Together with worship of Ancestral and Tantric Gods Mithila has got a tradition of worshipping Community Gods or Lok Gods. But in their worship all the communities participate and have specific folk song for their God.

Thus, we can find even with surface introspection that life of the people of Mithila is sacrificial in nature and from birth until death; people of the region follow them religiously. The community bond is very strong through which every ritual and festival becomes the expressive face of the whole community living together in the rich cultural land of Mithila.

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