



BLENDING FUN WITH WORK: THE SONG OF PEASANTS IN AWADHI FOLKLORE

DR. R. P. SINGH

Professor of English

Department of English and

Modern European Languages

University of Lucknow

Lucknow – 226007. (UP) INDIA

ABSTRACT

Almost every civilized and easy going society, across the globe, has expressed the patterns of bending work and fun. In the contemporary global culture, we find the malls and supermarkets playing music. The nature of the present paper is not analytical but descriptive and expository. It introduces select work songs especially the songs of the peasants collected from the agriculture fields in the Awadh region of north India. The work songs of the peasants and agricultural labourers are mostly sung by peasants and labourers and in some cases by some artists. These songs are the natural expressions of the workmen concerned in their rhythm of the work. They ease out the tiredness while working, and make work a fun. The work and labour songs create an environment where the workers feel refreshed and spirited. These are a kind of motivation, and they find nerve tonic in the words and moves of these songs. Also, they bring solidarity and produce a special cadence. The present paper explores three texts of work songs collected from the real-life situation in the fields of Awadh.

Key Words: Work Song, Labour Song, Awadh.

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary discourses of human sciences, and related activities we have explored the patterns of the uses of language in different activities of human being. Language and culture go together as the means of communication, and they emerge as tools of building the bonds of fraternity, amity, and solidarity. Different modes of expression in any culture many times bring forth the latent and reserved energy of any person that remains intact within from

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the very earliest phase of cognitive development. Language plays multiple roles in addition to being the mode of communication. After fulfilling the basic needs ('the base') of life, humans explore the possibilities of exploring the 'superstructure' around. In some cases base shows stepwise movement towards the superstructure, and in some other, the base makes superstructure out of it. Work songs in folklore relate to the second pattern. Here base itself creates the substitute of the superstructure, because there is neither time nor aspiration for separating these two-the base and the superstructure. The folk social set up create the patterns of entertainment with lesser effort in their surrounding, and seek enjoyment here. To sing while working is one such pattern. The songs of specific work are well recorded in many observations and researches. The researcher himself has observed it in different work cultures of Northern India. Different professionals in agrarian life, manage the space for finer sensibilities in the hard realities of the work and profession. Identifying the work songs of the peasants in the Awadh region of North India is the research question here. I could not locate any significant research on the work-songs of the region in question, although there are many significant types of research are there in this domain with references to other areas and professions. Ana Raquel Motta has studied the role of music /work songs at the workplace with reference to Brazilian farm workers. He finds that, "in the field of Applied Linguistics, the study of the relationship between language and work is an important locus to investigate and comprehend these two universal human activities and their mutual implications: language and work." (Motta,102). Almost every society across the globe has expressed the patterns of blending work and fun. In the contemporary supermarket, the culture we can easily find melodious music playing in the malls and supermarkets. Taxies, metro trains have their own system of the musical feast. I have even experienced the symphony of soothing music in a central evaluation hall of a college. Some forty professors were at work evaluating the answer scripts, and cool melodious music was playing. The nature of the present paper is not analytical but descriptive and expository. It introduces select work songs especially the songs of the peasants, collected from the agriculture fields in the Awadh region of north India. The Awadh region has been a rich seat of cultural synthesis and social syncretism. Various ideologies, lifestyles, philosophies fashion trends, language, and dialects have touched a vast vase of the cultural prism in this region. Traditionally the social set up of Awadh had different layers –the Nawabs, Raja, and Zamindars, Intellectuals, peasants, artisans, Sahukars and businessmen now it is a composite society, showing the perfect blend of tradition and modernity. The good thing is that folklore finds its due place even today in both the sectors – those rooted in folklife, and those living in urban pockets. Those in the transforming phase of folklore are bewildered rocking on the see-saw of to preserve or to leave, for those having the tag of elite find it under the pressure of 'carnival' and 'pastiche' of postmodernity.

The agrarian work songs in this region are mostly sung by the peasants and labourers. Sometimes we have them in cultural performances also. These songs are the natural

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expressions of the workmen concerned coming out during their rhythm of work in the field. They ease out their tiredness of work, and their singing lightens the mood to make work fun. Singing these songs helps to build a special bond among the singing group. It builds solidarity. It is a kind of special cadence – the cadence what Dennis Lee interprets as below:

What am I doing when I write?

I don't know.

A hockey player may understand very little about the principles of anatomy. But he gets his body across the ice somehow.

What am I doing when I write? The question is too important to discuss at a writers' conference, even this one. It is posed by the writing that wants to be done. And it is answered, sometimes, by the writing as it is done. There's not much left over to analyze what is going on.

Still, it's possible to make companionable noises—like when you're helping to lift a heavy crate, enjoying music, making love. (Lee 1).

What Dennis Lee finds for writing, we can easily associate with the blend of singing and work in our context. These work songs are also the signifier of the folk culture which has a unique world of its own in itself. These work songs express the aspirations, attitude, aptitude and the points of view on the people of the region on different issues.

Here are the texts of three work songs that I have selected from the oratures of Awadh. I did not go by the established records and bookish facts on the work songs of Awadh. My team visited the agriculture fields and recorded many work songs. Here three representative texts are given:

Text -1

Dhoori udi, udi gayi Khaad Paans

Dhoori udi,

udi gayi Khaad paans

mula chhorab na ham aapan aas.

Khet kai taakat khet ki maati

dēkhi dēkhi pāthar bhaya chātī

pānī barasā nahi rē ālī

pāthara bhā'i hō khēta ki nalī.

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*Calav sakhī, calava sakhī khētīyā ki ōrī
calāv sabhaya jāangar khētīyā ki ōrī.
Pariśrama kērī būnda giraybayai
varuṇa dēva se indra dēva tak
sab devi dēvatā gōhrbaya
śhram keri pūjā śrama kērā arpaṇ
śrama sēnī hīrā khān ugaibaya.
Calava sakhī, calava sakhī khētīyā ki ōrī
calāva sabhaya jāangar khētīyā ki ōrī.*

English Rendition:

*The storm and drought took away the manure
But I won't give up!*

*The power of the field is its manure
the heart turns numb at sight,
there is no rain, buddy,
the drains in the field turned to stone!
Friends, let's move towards the fields
Hey all! Let's take that way!
May the nectar of labour flow
We'll invoke all deities from Varuna¹ to Indra.²
Offerings labour, worshipping it,
we'll make our fields the mines of the diamond.
Friends, let's move towards fields
Hey all! Let's take that way!*

The translation is self-explanatory. It shows the dried up environment but the willpower of the singer is not so. It is replete with hope. The song was recorded from a field during the month of August. The farmers were awaiting the showers for more than a month during this peak phase of rains in the region.

Text 2

Shram kai boond badhi umadi

¹ god of water and ocean in Hindu Mythology.

² The king of gods, the god responsible for rain, in Hindu Mythology.



*Shram kai boond badhi umadi
aau dekhav sabhay
shram ki boond chali purvayi³
aao dekhav sabhay.*

*Shram ki nami seni badari chhayi
dekhav barkha si aayi
dekhav barkha rani aayi
dekhav barakha rani aayi!*

*Shram ki sakti se khushi bhaye sab
khushi bhaye sab devi devta
khushi bhaye devhar ho
dekhav hamare shram ki sakti.*

*Mehnat kari kari bharab bakhori
mehanat se sagara des
hamare shram ki sakti
hamare shram kee sakti!*

English Rendition:

*The drop in labour⁴
appears to stir, come and see,
the drop of labour brings eastern wind,
just see-o come-you all!*

*The moisture of labour brought clouds
see it shows the impending rain
rain is looming –just see
see, the rain is on the cards!*

*The power of labour brought joy around,
the gods and goddesses are happy
and the deities of all sort so.
See the power of our labour !*

³ The eastern blows of wind give soothing effect in the region. The 'Purvayi' wind offers even romantic connotations.

⁴ It connotes the power of labour



*By work , by labour
we will make our granaries full,
All powerful our labour!
Be all powerful our labour!*

As the first text, this is also a hopeful note. The farmers kept on their efforts. The drops of sweat are shaping into the drops of rain. The deity of rain is happy. The clouds have come up. The farmers show ecstasy. Labour is supreme for them, and they hail it.

Text -3

Hamari launki hain phasal hamara Dhaan

*Hamari launkee hain phasalei hamra dhaan
dekhav dekhai jamana
hamari phasalain sugandh udavain
dekhav dekhay jamaana*

*Paathar bhuin ka ham sorjhava
neer bhara bhuiyan narmava
bade prem se bhuin ma ropin
naram naram angurin se guian*

*Jeev launk paathar maan aava
dekhav dekhay jamaana.
dekhav dekhay jamaana.*

*Mehanat seni ham son banaubai
Mati ker kan kan chamkaubayi ,
ham sakhiyan gajab ker .*

*hamari launki hain phasalei
hamara dhaan
dekhav dekhay jamaana .*

*hamari phasalei sugandh udavaein
dekhav dekhay jamana.*

English Rendition :

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*Our crops are grown,
they shine and smell,
see the world takes a glance!*

*We smothered the stony land,
with water, moistened the field,
the buddy planted the stretch
with tender fingers cool.*

*The stone got a life,
see, the world is watching!*

*With our labour , we will mint gold,
We will glisten every particle on earth
Our friends are marvelous!*

*Our crops are grown,
they shine and smell,
see the world takes a glance!*

This text is recorded from a green paddy field. The power of labour and hope has grown a prosperous crop of paddy. The cheerful group of workers in the field sings this song while removing the weeds from the field.

The English renditions of the songs are self-explanatory. The texts show the action orientation of the workers. They are hardworking and industrious. They believe in the power of their labour and look quite convinced of it. The analyses of these texts approve the statement of Jayalaxmi, Phurailatpam when she says that, “folklore studies may facilitate us to discover the roots of distinctive communities. The labour songs create an environment where the workers feel refreshed and spirited. These are a kind of motivation, and they find nerve tonic in the words and moves of these songs. To French philosopher Yves Schwartz⁵ the activities like singing and music evolve as, “an impulse of life and of health, without preset boundaries, that synthesizes, crosses and links everything that the disciplines represents separately: the body and the soul; the individual and the collective; the doing and the values; the private and the professional; the imposed and the desired” (Durrive, Schwartz,

⁵ Text in original: “um impulso de vida, de saúde, sem limite predefinido, que sintetiza, cruza e liga tudo o que se representa separadamente: o corpo e o espírito; o individual e o coletivo; o fazer e os valores; o privado e o profissional; o imposto e o desejado”.(Motta,105)



23,cit. by Motta). The work songs of Awadh show the life and vision of the agrarian workers in the region. These are very important artifacts to read and understand the folk culture concerned.

Notes The texts of the work songs are recorded by Mahendra Pratap Singh, from the real-life situation in the fields of Awadh (from Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh). English translation of the text is by the author of this paper.

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