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Nature-Culture Binary versus Ancient Folklore of Bihar (An Eastern Indian State)

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ABSTRACT

The research article utilizes the ancient folklore of Bihar to build an enhanced perspective on the relationship between culture and nature. Different legends, folk-beliefs, and folk practices have played an immense role in the generation of this analysis. The folklore of the *Angika* region as shown in the map is the primary source. The terms *Angika* and *Ang Pradesh* have both been famous in the ancient epic *Mahabharata*. *Ang Pradesh* is the abode of the warrior Karna, a prominent recurring figure in the epic. The researchers travelled to suburbs to interview the natives and document folklore. Whether nature culture could stagnantly be called binaries, is one of the central questions that the present research intends to answer.

1. Introduction

Different seasons bring along with them different festivals. These festivals include within themselves many rituals. Most of these festivals along with rituals are in the form of celebration or eulogy of nature. Human culture if we trace its history, itself is a derivative of nature.

Drake, in his renowned article, puts forth:

Thus, of all fields, it is much closer to the elusive thing called reality, and its objects of study are their

own justification, not some set of concepts which allows the investigator to abstract and simplify them. If some folklore is ugly or stupid or obscene (and much of it is beautiful), then that is the truth of it; a critical abstraction in terms of one or another set of concepts only distorts this ^[1].

Folklores reflect real folk life, including their mindset and thinking process. Guoliang Yu ^[1] and Khachtriyani S. A. ^[2] discuss the essentiality of folk literature in framing the minds of the natives. Chatterjee mentions several

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folk-art forms depicting major historic events in the book *Speaking with pictures: Folk art and the narrative tradition in India*. However, several theories consider human culture to be opposed to the physical environment ^[3].

The present research utilizes the folksongs of Bihar, an eastern state in India. Bihar is a multi-lingual state containing languages such as Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi and Angika. This paper particularly focuses on the folksongs of Angika language. Different regions from where the folksongs have been collected are illustrated in the map (Figure 1).

The word Angika is related to Anga region, one of the most ancient kingdoms of Bihar ruled by Karna, the warrior of the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. This area was chosen for research as the suburbs in this part witness less urbanization leading to the closeness of the natives with nature. India is rich in such folk practices. Sadhana Naithani puts forth regarding the folklore of India:

There are differences and the variety is visible right away, but there are also philosophical undercurrents that have defined the interconnectedness of South Asia. Every scholar writing on the subject has expressed this difficulty, even impossibility, of representing the diverse empirical realities of folklore in India and of the available scholarly sources ^[4].

Due to the lack of scholarly resources regarding folk-literature, a vast region of folk literature goes un-

noticed. This research paper draws attention to the still unnoticed part of folk tradition—that is mentioned in the present paper by putting the prefix Angika. The folksongs composed in Angika language are the product of the interaction between nature and culture. This is due to the dominant fact that the Angika-speaking region is still away from excessive urbanisation. Here, Festivals play an essential role in the depiction of the culture, in a similar manner as other parts of the world. Angika folksongs related to such festivals are a means to celebrate and magnify the environment.

2. Discussion

2.1 Eulogising of the Environment through Devotion of Heavenly Bodies

Festivals such as Chhatha (worship of the sun) and Chowthchanda (worship of the moon) act to show one’s devotion to the heavenly bodies by offering them what is available from nature. In other words, human beings offer nature what nature gives. These folk festivals are followed by the masses irrespective of their caste and class. There are certain other celebrations like Akshayanavami (celebration of spring), in which the villagers cook beneath a tree in order to celebrate the harvest of new crops. However, that some of these festivals have become extinct with modernization is a lamentable fact.

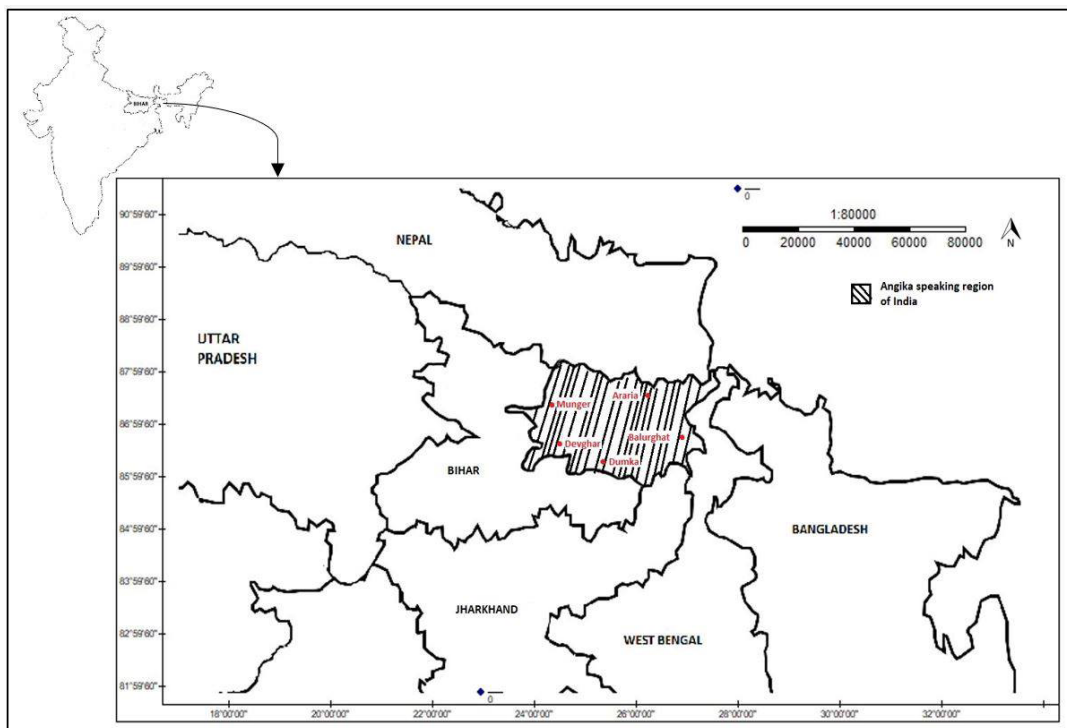


Figure 1. Angika-speaking region of Bihar.

The folksongs sung in festivals included in this paper are mainly of Chhatha. This is due to the unavailability of various folksongs related to other festivals of Angika region. Some of the folksongs are also taken from thread ceremony and marriages. Due to the coexistence of culture with nature not one of the rituals was celebrated without the inclusion of the physical environment. One of the songs of marriages runs as follows:

Ujaliyo, thar ghanaghan boilye
Bijuli chhitke chaunor ho
Unchi re dalan chadhi herye beti ke baap
Kate dal ave bariyat hari ho^[5]

...

The clouds are howling
 Everywhere thundering sound is there
 Bride's father is standing higher and is
 Looking for the groom's side to come^①

This song depicts nature as disrupting the daily humdrum of human life. A marriage is about to take place, but nature is creating barrier for it. This in itself reveals how nature could affect the life of commoners. The physical environment in which we live is both frightening as well as pleasing. It not only acts as a disruption but also as a bridge, that links human souls. Another song moves in the following manner:

Van maye faral karela, karaila ritu aayel hai
Aaju paral rakhbar karaila janu torih hey
Seho van paisili kone beti, kate rup aagri hey
Ghoriya chadhal aavai sunder var bahiya
pasaraithe hey^[5]

...

Bitter gourd has come in the forest, its season has come
 I will pick the bitter gourd, thought the bride
 The bride entered the forest
 The groom came riding on a horse with hands ready to hug

The forest containing the bitter gourd is shown as an interlinking element between three entities—the bride, groom and nature. The season of bitter gourds has been equated to the season of love. It is through nature that the two people come near each other. In many of the Indian texts, nature played an important role in bringing two lovers together. Valmiki's *Ramayana*, Kalidasa's *Abhigyanashakuntalam* and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath* are some of such examples. Not only lovers but friends also came together during seasonal changes such as rain:

Kaali ghat ghanghor ho, Yamuna ji ke teere

Chalho ho sakhi sab auro saheliya
Hilmil Yamuna nahay ho, Yamuna ji ke teere^[5]

...

Dark clouds are heavy near Yamuna
 Let us go mates and friends
 Let us have a bath in the Yamuna River

In this folksong, nature acts as an attraction for the mates. This kind of mesmerizing force of nature is what leads to its destruction in today's era. In the lines quoted above, the singer only wants to experience the sublime, and nothing else. Another kind of song called Kajri (song of rain), describes a wife in the season of rain longing for her husband. The song is in the following manner:

Rimjhim barse la ho sawanva
More sajanwa sun lo na
Rahi rahi garje la ye gaganwa, bijuri chamke o
la anganva

...

rain is pouring down with a beautiful sound
 Listen to it my love
 Cloud thunders again and again, lightning also again and again

Through attachment with nature, the attachment of two people grows. This depicts the importance of nature in the hearts of our ancestors who used to sing songs that linked them with nature. The river Yamuna was a meeting point for lord Krishna and his beloved Radha:

Jamuna kinarva rama sang radha gori
Krishna karey barjori^[5]

...

O Rama, on the bank of river Yamuna
 Krishna is teasing Radha

The folk-songs may take various forms such as musical adaptation, lyrics and narratives. Angika folksongs act as a boosting agent in various festivals, as people very religiously sing these songs.

Various ongoing of nature remain incomplete without sun light. As clearly mentioned, Chhatha puja is a kind of sun worship. In this festival, the devotee offers pious water to the Sun God by pouring it while he or she stands inside a water body. Along with it, the sun worshipper also offers various fruits, vegetables and sweets during the process of devotion. It was an eco-friendly festival once. However, nowadays no celebration is complete without burning crackers. This pollutes the water bodies in which the devotee stands while making offerings to the sun along with pouring holy water. The songs of Chhatha are full of eulogy for the sun. Sunlight is an abiotic component of our environment. The energy that it yields to flora and fauna, and the role it plays while maintaining the water cycle is very vital. Moreover, it is the source of our food

① All translations, mentioned otherwise, are work of the first author.

because all plants feed themselves through the process of photosynthesis, which in itself contains a major role of sunlight. One of the songs of chhath puja runs as follows:

Saton kothaliya ji Deenanath
Saton me kebar
Tohra doobate ho deenanath duniya anhar
Tohra ugate ji deenanath duniya injor^[5]

...

There are seven rooms
 And seven doors on each
 On your fall, o Sun God, whole world becomes dark
 On your rise, o Sun God, whole world is full of light

This song acknowledges the importance of sun light in sustaining the lives of human beings. By illustrating through words, the condition of earth without sunlight, the singer or devotee proudly eulogizes the sun. Similarly, another song related to this worshipping is quoted below:

Chandan ke gachh tar chakmak karai se
Tahi tar suraj dev neend arsayel
Uthvan geli suruj ke aama se
Uthoon na suruj dev, liyo na arag se^[5]

...

Beneath the sandalwood tree, something is shining
 Beneath it the sun is about to sleep
 O Sun God, wake up
 Listen to my call and wake up

The fasting is three days in *chhath* worship. The devotee worships this heavenly body while it is setting. The next day he or she worships the rising sun. In the above song, the worshipper requests the sun to sleep in the first two lines and wake up in the last two lines. Every component used in this festival is organic. This in itself is symbolic. The organic offerings symbolize the life on earth, and the sun acts as a life sustaining force or energy. All of these festivals were complete only when singers sang folksongs. However, with time as human voice changed into digital one, the legacy of folksongs started diminishing. Moreover, the festivals lost seasons because of climate change. People kept on following Hindi calendar for the celebrations, but the festival celebrated in spring started being celebrated in winter due to climate change. All these festivals are ordered according to seasons—Holi in spring time, Chowthchanda during autumn, Deepawali before winter season and Chhatha while winter season begins. Due to disruption in the cycle of seasons, these celebrations are also somewhat affected.

2.2 Folksongs of River Exhibiting Ecological Influence

The folksongs sung during marriages also exhibit the lifestyle and closeness of the natives with each other:

Nadiya kinar baba kekar bajan bajai chhai
Yamuna kinar baba kekar saajan aavai chhai
Nadiya kenar beti tore bajan bajai chhai
Nadiya kinar beti tore sajan aavai chhai^[5]

...

Whose trumpet is blowing at the river's bank?
 Whose groom is coming at the Yamuna's bank?
 Your marriage's trumpet is blowing at the river's bank.

Your groom is coming at Yamuna's bank.

This kind of nature-human interaction is portrayed in Angika folksongs. Indian culture considers rivers as gods and goddesses. The Indians from long time back called rivers as the means of their civilization. Rivers are the means of the towns that lie established now. Many of the ancient cities lie near the banks of the rivers. Rivers and oceans form the map lines of different countries. This in itself is ironical; rivers become both linking and parting elements for human civilization. They connect as well as detach two lands. Literarily speaking, these rivers give water to living beings; however, they do not drink their water themselves. These rivers themselves drink all of the impurities. From ages, they act like Kali (goddess of destruction of evil) and devour almost all of human as well as animal impurities. By engulfing material as well as spiritual impurities, these rivers are no less than a means for redemption to Hindus. Due to industrialization and urbanization, these saviour and detractor of impurities, now need protection. The flow of these rivers is the signifier of the rising and developing human civilization. These abiotic parts of environment run by cutting through the edges of many mountains which in itself is a sign of their struggle. A pleasant contact with the water of these rivers enhances the creative and imaginative expression of human beings by uplifting their soul. Earth is full of life mainly due to these rivers. Every river, whether large or small, adds to the life of the place where it moves. However, when human acts make this life force miserable, they also become a source of destruction. These gigantically destructive and pleasant views of the rivers are the signifier of their beauty and power. All of the holy rivers are considered as the way to spiritual attainment.

Most of the religious ongoing in India are incomplete without the inclusion of the water of these rivers. Environment in this manner attaches us to our religious and spiritual roots. Nevertheless, natural upheavals related to rivers such as flood or even drought are very fearsome. It

leads to human, animal and material loss. It seems as if through these violent acts, the environment warns against the outcome that excessive pollution and exploitation of ecosystem will yield to us. These folksongs are full of the description of the majestic river Ganga. The adjective of *maiya* or mother is used while eulogizing this river. This river has a special place in the Vedas and ancient texts. According to Hindu myths, this river is considered as a jewel for Shiva's hairs. Folks bathe in this river in order to wash away their sins:

Meelahu re sakhiya chalu dekhe ganga ke lahariya

Ganga nahaiyalase paap katit hoinhe

Nirmal hoinhein dehiya ^[5]

...

Let us meet sisters and go to see the waves of Ganga

By bathing in this river, our sins would wash away

By bathing in this river, our bodies would be pure

Nevertheless, it is a belief that by this act of bathing human beings gain or think they have gained from the environment. This in return reflects, that human beings receive from nature and never give anything in return; they most of the time only exploit and degenerate it.

The element of water, which is considered to be elixir of life, is one of the forces that drives the theme of several folksongs. It is a popular notion that life on the earth originated because of water. Human beings have utilized water to get rid of various malfunctioning of their body. It is water that clears all of the impurities. In Hindu religion, most of the rituals are begun by the worshipping of a water body. In marriages, people bring water from rivers, ponds or wells in a jolly manner. The bride also enjoys carrying water from wells to her paternal home before the marriage ceremony. Indian tradition carries the notion that there are seven seas. Hence, in marriages seven pitchers are worshipped. In the final ceremony of a person also, water plays an essential role. Every movement of the earth along with its inhabitants is related and dependent on water. Indian culture considers rivers as gods and goddesses. Most of the civilizations started on the river banks. Therefore, most of the folksongs contain the description of the river Ganga. perceived as "mother", this river has great importance in the whole India. According to religious myths, this river arises from the locks of lord Shiva. It is a popular belief that taking a bath in this river makes us pure and rids us from all of the sins:

ho ganga maiya agam lahraye

Shiv ke jata joot se nikali

pap ou taap nasay

ek laha hame deun vardani

jug-jug keru kalyani

jo pavain tari jaaye ^[5]

...

O mother Ganga, your waves are moving

Flowing out from the locks of Shiva

They demolish our sins

Give us a boon

That you will make us pure

From ages to ages

Such is the glory of this river that the reflection of the sun in this river not only makes the river beautiful but also gives peace to our eyes:

Kalkal bahe jaham dudhwa ke dhar

Ganga maiya ho dhan tori mahima apaar

Riddhi siddhi sohe maiya tohre acharwa

Sabke arajiya par karlu wicharwa (qtd. in Kumari 44)

...

Smoothly is your stream flowing like milk.

Your glory is great o Mother Ganga

Religious fulfilment looks beautiful on your water

It is a famous belief that lord Shiva absorbs the river Ganga in his locks when this river descends from heaven. The earthly beings pray to the river so that she can come to our planet:

Sarag se utaral maiya devi Ganga

Hey gangajal paniya

Amarpuri se utarala avey

Hey gangajal paniya

Siv lelan jata me samaye

Hey gangajal paniya ^[5]

...

Climbing down from the heaven

O water of Ganga

Climbing down from Amarpuri

O water of Ganga

Lord Shiva has absorbed you in his hairs

O water of Ganga

The stream of Ganga River has been compared to that of holy water that makes its drinker immortal. People believe that if this water is given in the mouth of a dying person then he or she will get an abode in heaven:

Pawan ba tohri lahariya ae Gangaji

Pawan ba tohri lahariya

Raja bhagirath kathin tap kaile

Sarag se tohra dhara par laile

Pawan ho gaile dharatiya ae gangaji

Pawan ba tohri lahariya

Ant samaya na kare tor asha

Ek boond paniya mitave jantrasa

Khuli jalasarag duariya ae Gangaji

Pawan ba tohri lahariya ^[5]

...

Pure is your stream o respected Ganga
 Pure is your stream
 King Bhagirath did a devotion purely devoted
 He brought you onto the earth from heaven
 The earth became pure due to you
 Pure is your stream
 In end times your drops
 Quench the thirst of the dying one
 And the doors of heaven open for him
 Pure is your stream

Bhagirath is a mythical character, a king who brought Ganga down to the earth after years of worship and devotion. According to ancient myths Bhagirath requested the river Ganga (which resided in heaven) to come on earth so that the soul of his dead ancestors could attain nirvana (peace). The river agreed, however she descended through the locks of Lord Shiva in order to minimize the pressure of her stream on the earth ^[6]. The manner in which this natural water body is utilized by the king seems to be connoting the selfishness of living beings. Earth with all its elements is merciful; human beings find their own ways through nature. However, when this nature turns revengeful and disastrous then we realize that nature does not need us, we need nature. This river is not only devotional for the folk singers but it also adds to the romantic aspect of life:

*Ganga ma kiye asnan
 Bindiya le gayi machhariya* ^[5]

...

I had bath in the river Ganga
 The fish took away my bindi

“Bindi” (a sticker that Indian women wear on their forehead) is a mark of love for Indian women. The river played an essential role in day-to-day life of the people residing near its banks. Moreover, this song captures the image of a lady in love who lost her “bindi” at the place of her lover but is giving excuses to probably her friends or family members. Similarly, a song runs in the following manner:

*Dheere baho ganga dheere baho
 More piya utran do par* ^[5]

...

Flow slowly o Ganga, flow slowly
 Let my love climb down the boat on the bank

If the river Ganga is the river which in folksongs is a means of devotion, Yamuna on the other hand is shown in folksongs to be an abode romantic escape. This river is connected to lord Krishna (an Indian mythical God) in folk life. Yamuna and lord Krishna are remembered together in North India. It is a belief that Vasudeva, the fa-

ther of Krishna, carried him as an infant through the river, in order to escape from Kansha (the brother of Krishna’s mother Devaki, who would have killed to escape his own death). Yamuna was flooded, but when the waves touched the feet of Krishna, Yamuna shrunk to make the way, and Vasudeva was able to take Krishna across the river to Gokuldham, where he grew up:

*Bhado ki andhiyari ratiya,
 Jamuna bahai jaldhar
 Krishna charan jab jamuna lage
 Neeche utar gayi hilor
 Kanhaiya ji ke lai ke chale* ^[5]

...

In the dark night of August
 River Yamuna was flooded
 When Yamuna touched the feet of little Krishna
 The waves shrunk down
 And Kanhaiya was taken by Vasudeva

According to another myth, Krishna’s ball went into this river while he was playing. Lord Krishna jumped into the Yamuna. This river was an abode of cobras. Krishna controlled the snakes because they were not willing to give the ball back. Therefore, only after controlling the snakes. Krishna was able to get his ball back:

*Jamuna kinare kadam juri chhaiyan
 Genda khele murari murali hey
 Uchhali ke gend jamuna dah giral
 Koodi pare nand lal, murali hey* ^[5]

...

On the bank of Yamuna is the tree of Kadamba
 Under its shade Krishna was playing with ball
 The ball bounced and went into Yamuna
 Krishna jumped into Yamuna

This Angika folksong captures the myth in a well-woven manner. However, Krishna, a human form controlled the cobras. This act itself reveals the manner in which human beings little by little started controlling and taming nature. In ancient ages, they controlled biodiversity, in order to protect themselves, but gradually their hunger heightened. Human beings started exploiting nature in order to get the best living style. The figure of Krishna controlling the cobras thus becomes a symbol of men taming nature. Krishna used to captivate human beings along with flora and fauna through the sound of his flute:

*Sheetal mand sugandha vayu bahe
 Jamuna theer bahatiya
 Khag mrig vindhya mugudh vanshi sun
 Surabhi na doob charaiya* ^[5]

..

Pleasant smelled breeze was blowing
 On the banks of Yamuna

On listening the tune
Birds and deer got mesmerized
Cows stopped grazing grass

Human beings controlled nature even in old age. Nevertheless, the bond of love connected them with nature. This connecting aspect is missing in modern times. We as Homo sapiens only know how to control nature forcibly and destroy it blindly. The traces of such relationships of human being in the past with nature could be seen in these Angika folksongs.

2.3 Ecological Protection through Folklore

We get such connection of human beings with nature in many of these folksongs. In past ages people felt one with nature; they loved animals and plants in a manner that we do not do now. One of the Bhojpuri (one of the regions of Bihar) songs recorded by the first author runs as follows:

Chal ropein bargad aam neem tulsi
Murjhal man hariyav ho rama
Birva laga ke

...

Let us go and bow the plants of neem, mango and basil
Our dry hearts will be green
On planting them

The folksong quoted above reflects on the oneness of human beings and plants. Another essential observation is that the people in the past considered the whole nature as one being. Unlike the human beings of today, they believed that nature is incomplete if any one of its components goes missing. In present times, common people love nature for entertainment; environmentalists love nature for their profession; scientists learn nature for exploration; and industrialists love it for exploitation. However, as these folksongs reflect, the past generation of this region loved nature for the sake of nature itself. The folksong quoted below yields its proof:

Ek sai amva lagvani, sava sai jamun ho
Aho rama tabahu na bagiya sohavan
Ek re koili bin ^[5]

...

I have planted one hundred mango trees,
And one twenty-five blackberries
O god, even then my garden looks not beautiful
Without a cuckoo bird

Some Angika folksongs also contain the description of common hawk cuckoo (Papecha). One of the recorded songs runs as follows:

Bhinsara ke pehra, pee-pee rate papiha lagal
Aail chait mahina, falgun rang ura ke bhagal

...

In the time of dawn, the hawk cuckoo is cooing

March has come; February is gone with all its colours.

Such talk of the singer with nature is prevalent in the Angika folksongs. Our scriptures also included such interaction of human forms with the natural surroundings. According to *Ramayana*, when Ravana abducted Sita, Lord Rama (God in human form) went on asking about her from all of the living creatures of the forest:

Hey khag, hey mrig, madhukar shreni
Tum dekhi sita mrig nayani ^[10]

...

O bird, o deer, sweetest beings
Have you seen doe-eyed Sita?

The proximity of past generations to mother nature is reflected in these quotes taken from from *Ramcharit Manas*. Along with the flora and fauna, climate played a crucial role in determining the feeling as well as mindset of the singer. Nature acted as a prophesying agent for the human beings. It acted like a mother to the people. Watching the dreams of birds, fruits, trees et cetera mattered a lot for the human beings of the past. One of the Angika folksongs moves as quoted below:

Saasu anganva me dekhlo re kalasva
Ta amva gharad fare ho
Haye re bahua kalasva ta tohre ahivat
Ta amva santati hove ho ^[5]

...

O my mother-in-law, I saw a brass pot in my dreams

And a mango tree full of ripe mangoes
O my daughter in law, it is a lucky dream
You will get a child now

Various dreams connote the happenings of the future. Here natural and metaphysical elements join in order to inform the dreamer about his or her future. The fact that human beings placed themselves within the context of nature could very well be seen in various mythical texts of India. Folksongs and folklores also contained such proofs of oneness of nature and men. Many Angika folksongs depict human beings talking to rivers, flora and fauna. In the marriages of Bihar, folksongs play a leading role. One of the songs of marriages runs in the following manner:

Sindoor pethar leke aam Mahua bihayab re gouri
ke leke
Santhi lelan sindur pithar he gouri ke leke
Aam Mahua viyahi sakhi sab
Ghar- ghuri aayil ho gouri ke leke ^[5]

...

The friends of the bride took her to the garden of mango and honey tree
Along with the vermilion box to marry the two tree

They got the mango and honey tree married
Then they came back to the house along with the bride

These acts play a major role in such ceremonies. Each of such rituals done through the nature symbolizes the eternity of marital relationships. The mango tree is an essential element in such celebrations.

Like mango, honey tree or Mahua tree is an Indian species of plants. It shares its position along with the mango tree. Mango connotes liveliness and vigour, whereas honey tree connotes mesmerizing joy. People use the fruits of honey trees to prepare toddy. The fruits of these plants, though small, fall on the ground due to their weight. People, especially women pick these fruits in order to export them to the makers of toddy. Another folksong conveys the mesmerizing effect of this tree:

*Mahua madan ras tapke ho Mahua chui chui jaaye
Mahua beenan wali rasili re jaan mare hamar*^[5]

...

The nectar of honey tree is dripping down; its
fruits are stealthily falling

The girl who is picking the honey fruits is killing me

Therefore, not only the climate but also the existence of flora and fauna in the surrounding environment affected the mood of the people within that zone. This may be the reason why the cultural celebrations of India include the elements of nature. Similarly, coconut acts as the most necessary element in the worships even now. In Chhatha, the devotees offer coconut to the Sun God. This devotion remains incomplete without the inclusion of this fruit. Another song of this festival is as follows:

*Uje patna se nariyalba mangayeb
Bargaon jayeb jaroor
Uje saanjhahi arag dilaiyboo
Subah mangwan jaroor
Uje saat putar ek dhiya
Damaad mangwan jaroor*

...

I will get the coconut bought from Patna

I will go to a bigger village

I will offer water to you, o Sun God in the
evening

In the dawn, I will make wish to you

Please give me seven boy children and one girl

And also a husband for her

Therefore, in the past human beings knew that their whole life was dependent on the environment. They could do nothing without being one with the environment. The importance of various biotic components in celebrations and devotion ensured sustainable development. Because a specific fruit or plant was essential in such devotions taking place every year, people ensured that these species

did not go extinct. Although we as human beings initiated the extinction of such species, our cultural structure was formed in manner that we do not become the enemy of nature. Anand Amaladass, in his essay “*Sustainable Development and Religion: Towards an Econ-Socio-Spirituality*” puts forth that “sustainable development needs spirituality, which is a kind of attitude towards oneself, one’s neighbors’ one’s surroundings and that which transcends all these^[7].” According to Amaladass various rituals “organize social actions” in order to maintain a balance with nature^[7]. India has an ancient tradition of respecting the environment:

Matsya Puran vriksharopan ko das putron ke barabar mahatva deta hai. *Vishnu Dharmattar Puran* our *Varaha Puran* vriksha ko ek ache putra ki tarah parivar ka rakshak mante hain. Paanch aam ke poudhe lagane wala narak nahi jata (*Hindustan: Delhi*)^[8].

Matsya Purana considers plantation similar to the planter’s ten sons. *Vishnu Dharmottar Purana* and *Varaha Purana* find trees to be the savior of a family, similar to a son. The person who plants five mango trees never goes to hell.

This is very clear from Angika folk songs that water—the blue attire of the earth, soil, and its green mantle provide plants that make up the world that support the animal life of the Earth. The earth’s water and vegetation constitute the basic framework of the web of life in which there are intimate and essential relations between plants and water between plants and animals and humans. The above fact could be asserted very well through these excerpts:

*dasha-kūpa-samā vāpī, dasha-vāpī-samo hradah |
dasha-hrada-samah putro, dasha-putra-samo
drumah ||*

Matsya-purāna 154:512^[9]

A pond is equivalent to ten wells

A reservoir is equivalent to ten ponds

A son is equivalent to two reservoirs

And planting a tree gives the result like having
ten sons

3. Conclusions

Culture, religion, and environment were thus related and intertwined with each other in the ancient ages. Nature suffered negligible amount of destruction due to culture and religion. But, the human beings of the present era celebrate through destruction such as burning crackers and pouring flowers and earthen lamps in water bodies. This excessive and reckless exploitation is the root cause of the deterioration of the earth’s environment. As is seen and heard, folksongs recall the traces of such interlinked

relationship between human beings and nature. The world has greatly turned into a mechanical space, which in turn affects the environment. The chaotic nature of the seasons as well as climate is a result of such urbanization leading to pollution. In this situation, folksongs could play a major role in re-asserting the oneness of human beings with nature. It is by being one with nature that we can realize its attributes, understanding which will help in avoiding its further deterioration.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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