



Tyuni: An Archetype Of Jaunsar-Bawar Tradition And Culture

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Abstract:

Tribal groups are the earliest settlers in any civilization. Their culture manifests in their Oral tradition as a part of their socio-cultural need which perpetuates their wisdom and knowledge across the time. Tribes share their knowledge as a part of community resources. Oral- tradition popularly known as folklore is a part of the social function and social control in tribes. The tradition is popular in Jaunsari culture. The Jaunsari are a small community found in Northern India more specifically in the Jaunsar Bawar region of Garhwal Division. Jaunsari people trace their ethnic origin from Pandavas of the mythological tale 'Mahabharata' which has a tremendous social and religious impact. Jaunsar has the belief that the Pandavas spent their final year of exile in the Jaunsar region of Garhwal, and that the Pandavas made their final ascent to heaven through the Himalayas. The major vehicle by which Jaunsari express and explore their understandings of Mahabharata is Pandav lila, a local tradition of ritual performance. It is more precisely described as a "ritual drama." This representation is visible in their local fairs, festival, food, dress and culture. The present paper discusses the importance of the oral tradition of Jaunsar in this modern era with special reference to Tyuni, a place in district Dehradun of Garhwal Division.

Key Words: Tribal ,Jaunsar, Mahabharata , Mahsu Devta

'Tyuni' in Jaunsar-Bawar is a hilly region in Uttarakhand. It is located in the north-west of Dehradun district near the border of Himachal Pradesh. Ethnically, Jaunsar-Bawar comprises two regions, inhabited by the two predominant groups: Jaunsar, the lower half, and the snow-clad upper region is called Bawar. Geographically adjacent, they are not very different from each other because of their unique culture and traditions retained till present.

Tyuni has become area of interest due to its peculiar cultural tradition and practices quite change from other culture.



Image: (1) Road map of Tyuni

Where the construction of the Jaunsar area is concerned it can be evaluated and could be seen on the basis of religious, social and historical background. The history of Jaunsar-Bawar is not easy to accommodate in a few pages. This is an age-old tradition and can be divided in for periods:

- (a) Pre-Gorkha Period -1168-1803(Mughal Period)
- (b) Gorkha's Attack -1803-1815 (Gorkha Period)
- (c) British Reign -1815-1947 (British Period)
- (d) Free India -1947-onwards (Modern Period)

For the very first stage it was the unit of Himachal Pradesh (Pre Punjab) Sirmor Empire. In February 1803 Gorkhas came from Kumaun and Garhwal and Captured Sirmor and Jaunsar-Bawar areas. The Maharajas of Sirmor took the support of Britisher's against Gorkhas. British Army General Lord Martindale and Ludalo released this Sirmor from Gorkhas. A severe battle took place at Jamna fort, a few kilometres ahead from Nahan. In this battle Gorkha lost the war but many British soldiers died so in place of this lord Martindale demanded a sum of Rs 2 lakhs from king and kept the Jaunsar bawar area till the reimbursement of expenditure in this war was returned. King was not having this much of amount so in place of this he gave a region between tons and Yamuna river i.e. Jaunsar-Bawar paraganas to the Britishers, so it remained under British jurisdiction and lost its identity from Sirmour kingdom, the region was later merged by Britishers in Meerut commissionery and later when India became republic no one even thought to put back Jaunsar-Bawar region back to Sirmour district, but now Jaunsar-Bawar comes in Dehradun district of Uttarakhand, but its culture and tradition is similar to those of Shimla and Sirmour region i.e. area lying in western side of Giri river, comprises Rajgarh, Paonta, Renuka, Nahan, pacchad and Shillai tehsils. These people are also known as Hatti, and has similar culture like Jaunsari people. Till 1815 the Jaunsar Bawar area was the part of Sirmor but after the war it was merged in (1928) in District Dehradun. The village 'Mandal' depicts the traces of the same era. Second stage starts from 1815 and captain Breach was the first administrator at that time but 1872 was the time as arrangement for scattered parts of the 'Parganas'. But after independence under panchayat raj act 1953 all these parganas were distributed in to different Gram panchayat and Nyaye panchayat. The struggle and bravery of Jaunsari community spread the same spirit to other community living other side of river 'Tons'.

Allocated in the lap of Himalayan range, Tiuni as a part of Jaunsar Bawar is known for its natural treasure as well as for its age old religious beliefs and tradition. The traces of its religious identity is found in 'Skand Puran'. Based on the life and history of Four deities 'Four Mahasu Devata', Shergul Devta and goddess Durga and Goddess Kali, Mahabharata also has glimpses of all the deities to this region. Jaunsar-Bawar region is very famous for the powerful impact and appearance of deities in common being. The impact of this kind of miracle are still believed and prevailing in the Jaunsari community. Their belief in occult and supernatural powers mesmerizes the local and surprises the new comers officially or unofficially coming over here. The negative impact of supernatural powers is believed to be minimize by calling the soul of deities in the affected person and the cause of disturbance is solicited.



Image (2): Mahasu Devta Temple



Image(3) : Rituals in Jaagda festival

The Jaunsari's are classified as Hindu for administrative purposes, but their religious practices differ considerably from mainstream Hinduism. Jaunsar-Bawar natives believe in their own deities and no idol of Hindu God is found in the temples. Related to the Mahabharat era this region is famous for Pandava's activities. The natives of Jaunsar believe that they are the descendents of Pandavas. Mahasu Devta is believed to be the incarnation of Lord Shiva incarnated in order to eradicate the devils in kalyuga who holds, guides and protects the natives of Jaunsar. All of the villages in Jaunsar-Bawar contain Mahasu Devta and Pandavs temples (Singh). Mahasu Devta is not recognized in Hindu holy texts and is not worshiped elsewhere in India. The cult of Mahasu Devta dates approximately to the ninth century CE (Jain). The temple at Hanol dedicated to Mahasu Devta, is located on the Tyuni-Mori road at Hanol.

In Jaunsar-Bawar, every household and village worship deities unique to them, but Mahasu extends hegemony over all other deities, nature spirits, and other supernatural beings. The worship of Mahasu Devta extends throughout the western Himalayas from Jaunsar Bawar, Jubbal, Utroch, Bishar, Simur, Garhwal, and into district of Shimla in Himachal Pradesh. Mahasu Devta has four aspects, described as four brothers. The most important form of Mahasu Devta is located in Hanol (Botha Mahasu); the other three incarnations of Pabasi, Basik, and Chalda Mahasu are moved throughout the region in cycles of six months, six years, and twelve years (Majumdar). The nature of the cult of Mahasu Devta in these other regions is beyond the scope of this present study. The four Mahasu Devta re-unite in Hanol for a particular day of Jagra. Mahasu Devta is the holder of the social order, he prescribes the functions of the castes, cures for diseases, and punishment for those who have transgressed the social order (Majumdar). Mahasu Devta's cosmogony contains a number of important features. First of all, the five Pandavas are linked with tribal or non-Aryan cults through the connection of physical geography with a spiritual geography. A clear example of this is a large round stone boulder in the temple compound at Hanol, which is purported to have been used by Bhima (one of the five Pandav brothers) as a toy. In other variants of the Mahasu myth, Bhima initially vanquished the demons, which returned following the death of the Pandavs (Majumdar). The myth also recounts the formation of the most prominent geologic features of the region, ranging from mountains to rivers to valleys. This sacrilized geography is a fundamental component of local belief systems, accounting for the importance of possession rituals and belief in the immanence of divinity, and explains to a certain extent the importance of Mahasu Devta in economic, personal, and cultural matter.

During the evening puja the voice of Mahasu Devta is heard through bakis, individuals in whom the deity enters. The religious practices observed at Hanol, seem to be a strange combination of tribal beliefs with a veneer of Hinduism. There is little oral or textual records of the region's history before sixteen century; however, a number of resources and archaeological findings represents religious and cultural practices described in ancient Sanskrit text. The Jaunsar region is also known for the witchcraft or sorcery. Hanol and Lakha mandal are the two most important religious sites in Jaunsar, where puja ceremonies are enacted three times a day. These Temple of Hanol-Mahasu Temple is open to all. But the females are not allowed to visit the inner side of the temple. Instruments like 'Ransingha', 'Karnai', 'Bhairai', 'Beemu' are played to invoke the Deities. These ceremonies always involve one or several pujaris (priests) and at least one Bajgi. During the puja, priests offer ritual oblations to the deities enshrined in the temple's inner section. These instruments are further kept in a place named 'Nagyarkhana'. Invocation of deities is done in three phases-'Namati' (morning), 'Puja'(Noon) and 'Deual' (देऊळ) in the evening. In this region, jagarana (trance) is an important component of localized historical consciousness, as ancestral characters from the Mahabharata, and a host of deities take up occasionally residence in human form through the medium of music. It is believed that certain deities descend from the sky, while other spirits enter into the mediums' feet from the

earth. In the case of the puja drumming at Hanol, only the designated bakis are ever

possessed with Mahasu Devta. The temple quadrangle contains statues and round stones that represent deities and the attendants of Mahasu Devsta, as well as shrines that appear to be reconstructed out of pieces of rubble, and hand painted signs indicate the results of archeological excavation.

The temple structure itself consists of four buildings with pagoda-like structures on their roofs. The temple spires are similar in design to those found on Buddhist stupas. Each building represents a movement closer to the deity; the last houses the inner sanctum, into which only the priest can enter. Musical instruments and others items belonging to the temple are kept in the second chamber. The spatial arrangement of the participants in the puja ceremony is an archetype of caste and social hierarchy. In the first chamber, the Bajgis are seated in order of seniority. The senior Bajgi playing the damau, sits sideways at the entrance to the second chamber. Behind him, the second oldest bajgi playing the dhol faces into the second chamber. Two other bajgis are seated behind him, also facing into the second chamber. A young woman believed to be possessed by an evil spirit and her family was located in the right corner of the first chamber. Low caste villagers, women, and children were located in the left corner. In the second chamber, high caste villagers and sat facing the entrance to the third and forth chambers. The priest conducted the puja ceremony inside the third and fourth chambers.

No culture is complete without its food, festivals, music, dance and rituals, so the Jaunsar Bawar is. People in Jaunsar celebrate festival in accordance with the season, Month of January is called "Maagh Mas" and 'Maroj' is celebrated here. It is marked by an animal sacrifice ritual, which celebrates the killing of 'Maroj', an ogre, which according to local legends, stalked the valleys for years. This offering is shared in house but also in the neighbours which is called 'Baata'. Each house have a guest party for this purpose called as "Paundai" means 'Pahunai' or 'Pahuna' in which guest is invited for 'Bitron' –a dance form comprises of sentiments of love ,bravery etc.

Another very famous festival is 'Bissu'(Baisakhi) in Tiuni and near by Jaunsar area. It is celebrated by offering fresh flowers collected in the morning to the deities.

People share 'Laddu' the dish of rice floor. A famous Ganiyat fair is celebrated over here especially in Chakrata –'Thanadanda'(थानाडांडा) place. The most favourite festival of Jaunsar Bawar is "Deepawali" celebrated after one month of original diwali festival which is called 'Pahadi Dahai or Buddi Dahai'. 'Harul' dance is performed on this day. During festivals, people wear the Thalka or Lohiya, which is a long coat.



Image:(4) Jaunsari Dance

Beside religious belief, orthodox is also present in Tiuni. Like any other tribes Jaunsari people also have faith on witchcraft, magic and rituals. Animal sacrifice is used for the impotency of animals. Worship of Goddess Renuka is in vogue in order to get a baby boy. Every auspicious event like marriage, foundation of house, worship of weapons, release of soul, is handled with the these primary natural treatment from Witch Man called 'Maali'. In Juansar area temple of Shergul Devta is also situated where people reach barefoot. They offer child's hairs to the deity. In Mahasu Temple Pujari offer Rice seeds to the devotees named as 'Kali-pol'. The variation in social structure of this area people of Scheduled Caste worship other deities too as-Kali peer, Sukdal, Kailash, Kamla veer.

Temples of Jaunsar Bawar are two storied. First floor is used a loft called 'dobadi' and second one is used for Devata's Doli. These floors are made with Wood and stones both in order to make them intact even in natural calamities. It is further modified with the passage of time and multiple stories were built as per need. Basically houses were built with man made measurements with hands. Paste of Udad daal was used in lieu of cement along with stones and slates. In order to give strength logs of devadar are used with aesthetics of carving. The common building material used under construction includes wood (generally deodar, due to its abundance and durability), plain stones and other locally available materials like mud and stone slates. One of the important aspects of architecture in the area is the wooden carvings and the slate laden gabled roofs, pagodas or have sloping roofs.

Before Independence, from Himachal to Uttrakhand Jaunsar bawar was under the Revenue of 'Khash' This Khash Society existed before Ramayana Era. This Khas Tribe is known as 'Jaunsari Tribe' now a days. With its peculiar social and cultural structure, underprivileged localities, this area was declared as Tribal Area. The caste system in Tiuni Jaunsar-Bawar is a tripartite system. Most of the villages are multi-caste in structure; however, the caste boundaries are more fluid and less defined than in the Gangetic plains (Majumdar) and can be differentiated as:

- (a) The high caste group, consisting of the Brahmins and the Rajputs, the traditional landowners and cultivators.
- (b) The intermediate caste groups, which includes the artisan class, such as the Badi (carpenters), Sunar (goldsmith), Lahar (blacksmith), Bajgi (drummer), and the Jagra and Nath (religious serviceman and musicians). This tier is by no means homogenous in social rank.
- (c) The lowest class, the Koltas, who are the traditional serfs and leather workers (Majumdar). The Brahmins and the Rajputs dominate the villages both socially and economically.

These castes are not differentiated in terms of status; intermarriages are common between these castes. The Rajputs possess numerical superiority over the other castes (Majumdar). The Brahmins are traditionally assigned work as priest in exception a number of Brahmins are agriculturalists. The Bajgi are the traditional caste of musicians. Their primary functions are to perform during daily puja ceremonies, special trance ceremonies, and during most important events such as weddings, funerals, and

births. The Bajgis are also important repositories of cultural knowledge. They perform such duties as carving the facades of temples and houses. The Koltas are the lowest caste and are essentially serfs. All marriages, with rare exceptions, occur with the same caste (Majumdar). In order to connect this area from main stream many provisions like reservation policy applied. The Jaunsaries exist on the fringes of Garhwali culture and Hindu society in general. Their close association with tribal and primitive practices such as polyandry, magic, possession, and their purported lax moral standards give rise to a defensive stance towards those who wish to explore their culture. There have been many attempts by

missionaries and the Indian government to reform these. Likewise other part of the world Tyuni is not different from the gender issues. Female gender is secondary to the paternal system. Though sex ratio is not too different as from any other state of India. But the condition of woman is still not satisfactory. Male child is welcome more than the girl child Celebration of 'Dashotan' is seen at son's birth in the family. In Jaunsari culture no separate money is given except the money given by her parents at the time of marriage Known as 'Kodhadi Dhan'. Females are pillars of jaunsar family. from house hold work to ,forest animal husbandry ,water all are responsibility of the females. from liberty point of view females are still forbidden to enter in the temple. Though from 22 may, 2014 onwards females are permitted to enter in Hanol temple. Girls before marriage are called 'Dhyatudi' and as a daughter in law she is nicked as 'Rentudi'. Females in Tiuni are having respect and importance in the family. Anykind of ill-words are not acceptable. Cases of Rape, Dowry, molestation and prostitution are not present in this area. Girls are free to select their life partner with their own choice.

Three kinds of marriage systems can be seen in Jaunsar. All marriages, with rare exceptions, occur with the same caste (Majumdar). The joint family system is very prevalent. Traditionally, a single woman would be betrothed to multiple brothers. This tradition is ostensibly originated from the time of the Mahabharata, wherein the five Pandav brothers were married to Drupadi. Other scholars have argued that the practice arose out of economic necessity and the numerical imbalance between the sexes (Majumdar). However, the practice of polyandry appears to be less common, due in part to the modernization programs of the Indian government and to changing economic conditions (Singh). All of the households in the villages are joint families and many contained extended kin in the same household. However, few polyandrous households seen in present.

Unlike most other parts of India, the birth of a baby girl is greeted with joy in Jaunsar. When she has grown up and when considered fit by the village elders to marry-usually at fifteen or sixteen-there will be no burdensome dowry that has to be given to the bridegroom or his family. Instead, it is the boy's family negotiates bride's price to the girl's family before the wedding ceremony takes place. The girl is an asset to the family-helping in the kitchen, helping in the fields, looking after the younger siblings, tending the cattle. Therefore, when a boy wants to marry her and take away an 'asset', he and his family must pay up and compensate the family which has invested in her. Divorces are socially enforced and acceptable in Jaunsar, but in the case of a divorce, if the girl returns to her parents, they must return the bride price to the boy. If the girl does not return to her parents but decides to marry somebody else, then the family she is marrying into must pay the bride price to her ex-husband.

Recently, Uttarakhand Govt. has taken many steps to upgrade Tyuni as a 5th Pilgrimage of Uttarakhand (Panchava Dham). A New Model Degree College Building has been established ready to move in order to enable students to get education as per modern education design. Earlier students of Tyuni and from adjacent area tend to migrate in order to get higher education. But due to Road connectivity and new facility gives a hope to sustain its culture. To upgrade, this area has been declared as tribal area in Uttarakhand and steps have been taken to develop this area.

In toto Tyuni is the artifact of Padava's Tradition and Lord Mahasu's miracles where the flair for celebration , old traditional values ,combined family,gathering in the festivals still pervades. It is a place with unique identity which must be bring into mainstream before it loses its Existential property.

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