

Bhojpuri Native Idioms and Sayings: A Mirror of Literature & Culture

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ABSTRACT

We know that the idioms and sayings of a particular region are the true embodiment of the contemporary tradition and the historical consciousness. A minute and subtle study of these sayings also show the political, social and cultural atmosphere of the society. But what matters most in these sayings and idioms is the literary and metaphorical aspects which has always been on the canter stage. The thoughts, ideas and visions of the unlettered rustic villagers are always suffused with the colors of great art, literature, and religious scriptures. The main objective of this paper is to dive deep into this great sea of sayings and idioms and dig out the pearls and jewels in the form of epigrammatic and condensed language so that the modern materialistic and mechanical world may take the lesson from the great culture and ethics contained in these life-giving sayings and idioms.

Keywords: *Bhojpuri, Idioms, Proverbs, Metaphor and Culture.*

P. B. Shelley once said that history is a cyclic poem written by time upon the memories of men. This I think has a close conformity with the Bhojpuri native idioms and 'kahavats' which very metaphorically, brilliantly, and historically present the contemporary men, manner, customs, rites and a number of other cultural and social activities which need to be explained in the modern context. Some of the sayings of Bhojpuri are so full of morals and metaphors that they appeal even to the modern readers very much. These sayings are very much concerned with the contemporary history, natural geography, social atmosphere including caste, class and creed, agricultural activities, health and hygiene, philosophy and religion and, above all, native beliefs and conventions. If they are analysed critically and objectively, they seem to come in the category of classics even today because they present a dialogue between the past and the present with an eye to future. We know that the idioms and sayings of a particular region are the true embodiment of the contemporary tradition and the historical consciousness. A minute and subtle study of these sayings also show the political, social and cultural atmosphere of the society. But what matters most in these sayings and idioms is the literary and metaphorical aspects which has always been on the centre-stage. The thoughts, ideas and visions of the unlettered rustic villagers are always suffused with the colors of great art, literature and religious scriptures. The main objective of this paper is to dive deep into this great sea of sayings and idioms and dig out the pearls and jewels in the form of epigrammatic and condensed language so that the modern materialistic and mechanical world may take the lesson

from the great culture and ethics contained in these life-giving sayings and idioms. I think, the way science is marching towards progress by leaps and bounds treading under its callous feet the age-old culture, courtesy and civilization, the day is not far when all our cherished ideals enshrined under the native folk songs and sayings will be consigned to ashes and the next generation will be known as the man of mobile and machine rather than the man of culture and creativity.

The proverbs of Bhojpuri are short sentences drawn from long experience of men, rites, customs, culture and several other first-hand experiences of the people. They may be called guiding oracles which guide the man what to do and what not to do. Encyclopaedia Britannica defines proverb as:

A short pithy saying in common and recognized use; a concise sentence often metaphorical or alliterative in form, which is held to express some truth ascertained by experience or observation and familiar to all. (The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature And General Information 10)

This definition lays stress on three significant qualities of a proverb, that is, search for truth, the experience and observation of man and the expression or the metaphor familiar to all the people of the society. Selwyn Gurney develops this same idea with some imagistic variations saying:

A proverb in my opinion is a racial aphorism which has been, or still is in common use, conveying advice or counsel, invariably camouflaged figuratively, disguised in metaphor or allegory. (The Encyclopaedia Britannica: A Dictionary Of Arts, Sciences, Literature And General Information 11)

The Bhojpuri proverbs can be studied on different levels—historical, racial, cultural, individual, geographical, moral, agricultural and social. These proverbs are so vast that they cannot be examined and explored in this short research paper. So, in this paper, my humble attempt will be centred only to the literary and cultural aspects of the religious and philosophical proverbs.

Family of Indian society plays a very vital role. It is the family which teaches the basic knowledge of culture, religion, and morals of life. Some of the proverbs are concerned with the family, kiths and kins.

Let us see some of them:

1- Badhe dhan pita ke dharme, kheti upaje apne karme

Meaning: The son progresses by the religious earnings of his father and the agriculture is fertile by dint of one's own labour.

2- Na mama se kana mama achha

(One-eyed maternal uncle is better than without any maternal uncle.)

3- Mai ke jiyara gayi jaisan, kaputwa ke dil kasai jaisan

(The heart of mother is just like a cow; but the heart of a son is like that of a butcher.)

4- Mai nihare thathri, joyia nihare motari

(When the son comes home after earning, the mother looks at his health, while the wife looks for his bag.)

5- Jayisan mai woisan dhiya, Jayisan kakari woisan biya

(As the mother so is her daughter; as the cucumber, so are its seeds.)

Man is a gregarious animal; naturally he prefers to live together with various animals. So, most of the proverbs are related to his environment both flora and fauna. This cordial relation with nature and animals shows our paganism and wordsworthian attitude towards everything in natural and animal world. Let us see some of them.

1- Saheb ka aage aa ghora ke pichhe na jayeke

(One should not go before the horse and in front of the officer)

2- Gadaha dubar sawan mas

(Can an ass be weak in the month of Sawan?)

3- Jav ke sange sange ghuno pisala

(Along with the barley, the grain-worm is also ground.)

This phrase is often used when a good person is punished along with a veteran criminal.

Right from the beginning of the existence of human being, man has fascination for ornaments. So, there are some Bhojpuri sayings in which the use of ornaments has been beautifully presented.

1-Khaye ke kuchh na dari bichhauna

(There is nothing for eating, but there is sheet for the bed.) This satirical proverb is used to show the ostentatious and bragging nature of man, such a man who has little wealth, but longs for enjoying the luxurious things.

2- Nak na kan aa bali ke arman

(There is no nose or ear, but she longs for ear-ring.)

1.Kahawele saiyyad, chorawele chhuchhi

(He is called a Saiyyad, but he steals a nose-pin)

This idiom is used when a man belongs to a rich and respected family, but he does very mean and neglected work.

4- Bap ke gala me gudiya na , beta ke gala me rudraksh

(There is not even a bead in the father's neck, but the son is wearing a 'Rudraksh'). Here bead stands for the income of a low earning father, but the word 'Rudraksh' shows the astentations and boasting nature of the son. It is used in ironical way.

A close critical study of Bhojpuri sayings shows that they are very poetic, rhythmic and to some extent measured. Though some idioms lack proper measured feet, they have an internal rhyme which shows the internal rhythmic flow of the native people. Just take for the following sayings:

1.Chorawa ke man base kakari ke khet me

(The mind of a thief dwells in the field of cucumber)

2-Lare sipahi aa nam hawaldar ke

(The soldier fights, but the credit goes to the captain)

3-Pet kare khaw khaw,mang me tikuli

(The stomach is empty, but there is tikuli, an ornament, on her forehead)

Figures of speech are the ornaments of language. Proper use of figures at proper time and place makes it very effective and impressing. Language without figures in poetry is as worthless as

a flower without fragrance. Judged on this theory, the Bhojpuri idioms are suffused with the proper use of figures. The figure 'Repetition' which makes the language more effective and rhythmic has been brilliantly used in the following sayings:

1-aage ke kheti aage aage, piche ke kheti bhage joge

(The early cultivated agriculture is always fruitful, but untimely agriculture depends upon destiny)

2-Aam ke aam aa guthali ke dam

(One is happy at both ends by eating mango and also by selling its kernel)

3-Jable kari babu babu, table chalai apan kabu

(It is better to use our own strength to do any work than to implore and entreat anybody to do so)

In poetry, Metaphors play a very vital role. Aristotle says that the greatness of a writer depends upon his command over metaphors. In Sanskrit literature Kalidas, the great poet and dramatist, is supposed to be the greatest writer of metaphors. In Bhojpuri idioms and sayings, a brilliant use of metaphors can be observed. Let us see some of them:

1-Bar sojh ta hasuan niar

(He is as bent and crafty as a sickle)

It means he is not a straightforward man but a man of fabrication and misdeeds.

2-Moos motayile lodha bhayile

(If the rat is fat, it will be nothing but a spice crusher)

3-Karja ke khail aa puara ke tapal barabar hola

(To eat the money of debt is just like enjoying the heat of hey-burning)

4- Chor ke dil saraso barabar hola

(The heart of the thief is just like the mustard-seed)

Sometimes, the words used in a saying indicates the other inherent meanings. Bhojpuri language is abundant with such type of idioms:

1-Aaghayil bakula pothiya tit

(For a belly filled crane, a pothia (a small fish) tastes bitter)

2-Kutta ke pet me ghiw na pache

(Ghee or the cream of milk cannot be digested by the belly of a dog)

3-Apna duara kutto bagh hola

(Even a dog behaves like a tiger on its own door)

A deep and profound study of these sayings and idioms shows that the early people of the villages were in good terms with all the members of the society and also with nature, animals and the customs and conventions. The true picture of the contemporary men, manner and society, the variety of the races and cultures, the simplicity and honesty of the native villagers have been beautifully projected through these idioms and adages. But what matters most is its natural colour and quality of poetic taste and sensibility which has survived even today in the age of computer and technology. Culture is not a thing to be produced instantly; it came into existence after passing through numerous obstacles. Prof. Humayun Kabir rightly defines Indian culture:

Culture, on the other hand, is the resultant of such organizations and expresses itself through language and art, through philosophy and religion, through social habits and customs and through political institutions and economic organizations.³

Thus, this critical survey reveals the fact that the Bhojpuri idioms and sayings are concerned not only with the contemporary culture, custom, history, myths and legends, but also with rich moral and philosophical observations full of poetic beauty and aesthetic appeal. They are not simply the collection of facts and figures, but they are very poetic, integrated, and captivating making the reader forlorn for a while in the past days of village atmosphere and natural beauty.

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