

ISBN : 978-81-928760-3-0

# Oral Traditions and Literature:

A Compilation of Research Articles

# Literature



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● **Publisher** : **Dr. L. S. Matkar**  
**Principal,**  
New Arts, Commerce & Science College, Shevgaon  
Dist. Ahmednagar - 414502 (M.S.) India.  
**Website:** [www.newartscollegeshevgaon.com](http://www.newartscollegeshevgaon.com)  
**E-mail:** [newartsshevgaon1@yahoo.co.in](mailto:newartsshevgaon1@yahoo.co.in)

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● **Printing by** : **Success Publications**



Radha Krishna Apartment, 535, Shaniwar Peth,

Opp. Prabhat Theatre, Pune - 411030.

Contact - 9422025610, 020-24433374, 24434662

Website- [www.sharpmultinational.com](http://www.sharpmultinational.com)

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**ISBN - 978-81-928760-3-0**

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## Impressive Expression of the emotions of women in Folklore of Rajasthan

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Literature is a manifestation of culture of a particular nation. Literature is said to be the mirror of the society. Literature depicts the social life, psychology, religion, economic, politics and other important aspects of a nation.

In India there are lots of states and every state has its own rich literature, Rajasthan is one of them. There are lots of parts in Rajasthan which has its glorious literature. And literature of a particular place depicts the reality of the particular place.

India has many culture areas. In other words, each area is inclusive of its own ethnicity. Language or dialect is one of the parts of ethnicity. Other parts include castes, customs, folkways, festivals and ceremonies. The similarities which specify a particular ethnic structure constitute a simple culture area.

In Rajasthan the culture areas are divided into Marwari, Shekhawati, Dhundhari, Mewari, Vagri and Brij. This is the differentiation of ethnicity which qualifies a particular area as the ethnic or culture area [Doshi]. Rajasthan has been divided into three zones by the late folklorist Padamshri Komal Kothari- the Bajra Zone, the Jawar Zone and the Makka Zone, depending on weather, soil and rainfall.

### Benjamin A Botkin defines the folklore:

Folklore is a body of traditional belief, custom and expression, handed down largely by word of mouth and circulating chiefly outside commercial and academic means of communication and instruction. Every group is bound together by common interest and purposes, whether educated or uneducated, rural or urban, possesses a body of tradition which may be called its folklore. Into these traditions enter many elements, individual, popular, and even "literary", but all are absorbed and assimilated through repetition and variation into a pattern which has value and continuity for the group as a whole'. (1938)

Like every literature, the folk literature of Rajasthan is no exception in terms of richness, variety and vitality encapsulating folk songs (Lok Geet), ballads (Lok Gatha), folk tales (Lok katha), folk plays (Lok Natya) and Lok Subhasit which in turn includes many maxims, proverbs, sayings and idioms.

An impartial approach, without a subjective view, is the hall mark of the love stories of Rajasthani folk literature with no place for sycophancy or discrimination on the materialistic grounds. Like many realist writings, the character rules the world of these stories with a refined and elegant portrayal of true feelings, emotions, beliefs and values with a keen insight in the soul of man.



Learnt orally and preserved traditionally, folk songs depict the inheritance from one generation to another while mirroring the social responsibilities, local dialects, ambitions, exceptions, societal responsibilities, familial cohesion, ethnicity etc. Passing from grandmother to grand children these tales of kaleidoscopic range encompass plots of animal characters, mango characters, whims and fancies besides supernatural while inviting the attention of children with the same delicacy as of the matured.

Needless to say, the feminine world in form of mothers and grandmothers ensures the perpetual cycle of value system while grooming of generations.

Remaining aloof and non-influenced by overseas invaders and other foreign tyrants the women of Rajasthan have brilliantly emerged and established themselves as preserver of ethnicity and traditional values and customs. Folklore besides shaping and shading the behavior and perspectives have been an incessant source of providing them amusement and an escape from the monotony as well as from unavoidable societal structures. Besides, the folklore for and by the women evolved overtime due to the unpleasant pressures of social structure, is also clearly observed.

Since the very origin of mankind the subordination of female to male counterpart is easily understood and perceived as well, specifically from a feministic approach that opines a systematic organization and conduct ensuring female subordination in familial, societal, financial, political, and perhaps every possible domain. Simone de Beauvoir strongly believes that the prevailing concepts of gender are cultural constructs. Her famous utterance: "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman...." is applicable more or less to all human societies. Thus women are not considered at par with man in any of the civilizations anywhere around the globe. Nevertheless, her derogatory, deteriorated and secondary condition in the west cannot be blindly considered as same everywhere.

Pro. Naresh K. Jain, in one of his article writes that the representation of women does not always conform to the prevailing gender stereotypes. Women are not necessarily the docile, submissive, tongue-tied, powerless creatures a majority of Indians accepts them to be. He suggests that because of folklore's nearness to mother earth and also because of its greater freedom from the constraints of decorum and propriety, folklore is capable of surprising us with unusual portrayals. He goes on saying that these representations may be more realistic than what we come across in classical literature; they may interrogate, even subvert, conventional man-woman relationships; or with the help of a humorous inversion, call the entire rhetoric of romantic love into question<sup>2</sup>.

This paper would focus on love legends of Rajasthani folklore to depict the explicit and impressive expression of the emotions of women that refutes the modest, embarrassing, ornamental intercultural behavior as portrayed by some outside views. Moreover, the voiceless ness and submissiveness is also not the perennial feature of the women. They are courageous enough to protect themselves as stated by Susan s. Wadley in *Dhola: A North Indian Folk Genre*:

Folk traditions are very clear that if father and husband are unable to properly nurture and protect their women, the woman may act for herself<sup>3</sup>. (Asian Folklore Studies)

The folktale of Jasma Oddhan is the tale of courage of a chaste woman who sacrifices her life to preserve her chastity from Rao Khangar, the ruler of Malwa. When her hand is held by Rao



then she threatened him by saying, "I will break your head if you take a single step forward. You don't know the power of a virtuous woman."

Bharmali- Maldev tale is a classical example of the strong and unconventional steps taken by a daughter against her father on realization of his ambitious and cruel intentions against her husband. On discovering the conspiracy of her father, the king of Jaiselmer, to kill Maldev, her prospective groom, so as to confiscate/seize his kingdom she at once send her confident maid Bharmli warning him of the conspiracy. She was shocked to hear her father words that described the life of a daughter meaningless. He said "the interest of the state should come before our daughter's welfare."

She was taken aback on realizing that how keen and heartless the male dominated society was to impose widowhood on her just to satisfy the material gains.

Deeply rooted in folklore traditions, Dhola-Maru is a romantic tale of Narvar prince Dhola and Poongal princess Maru that deals with a typical women behavior in case of sharing of love by trying utmost to initially hold and finally get back her husband love.

Much like Othello, the Mumal-Mahendra love story depicts the blind, sudden and passionate love of Mahendra, the prince of Amarkot for Mumal - the most beautiful woman in that region and later the suspicion that clouds the fidelity and chastity from Mumal's side. It ends with Mumal giving reasonable support to prove her true love and devotion for Mahendra

The love story of Nagwanti- Nagji very well encapsulates the themes of love, sacrifice, courage and boldness of a woman who to prove loyalty of her love confronts patriarchal conventions and challenges male chauvinism. She asserts, "It's the women who give their loves for men. Has any man ever given up his life for a woman? It's the men who remarry even before the wife's ashes have cooled."

#### To conclude:

The folklores express not simply as images of shy and submissive creatures; they are bold and defiant and can go to the extent of raising questions on the authority and dominance of men. They are not hesitant in asking for their rights in property, equality in partnership with men, freedom from the suppressing and suffocation environments. It breaks the myth about a woman's image that is timid, submissive, introvert.

This present study is an only a little effort towards doing justice to this topic. This study will help researchers to investigate more issues in depth.

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978-81-928760-3-0