

A Mirror of Indian Folk Ballads

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ABSTRACT

Simply ballad means a poem or song, narrating a story in many stanzas. It is one of the oldest and most loved forms of poetry. The languages of most of the ballads are usually simple to understand. The Indian ballads are commonly known as 'Folk Ballad' or 'Folktales' or 'Lok Gatha' or 'Lok katha'. In India, there are many famous ballads or folk ballads are present i.e. HeerRanjha, Shobha Nayaka Banjara, Bihulabala Lakhandar, Raja Vijaymal, Raja Gopichand, SohniMahiwal, etc. Among all these ballads, the common aspect is that the story is revolving to the main lead character and this main lead character is the hero or heroine of the story. The main advantage of the folk ballad is people know about the untold stories of our culture, society and history, which may be blurred as the passage of the time. Folk ballad is a combination of stories or tales, which is partially based on the true events and partially created to entertain the society. Whatever the stories of the ballads are, the main thing is people like and enjoy the Indian Folk Ballads, because they are always represented in the form of Music and drama.

Keyword: Folk ballad, Types, Characteristics, Regional Folk ballads

Introduction:

The ballad is a poem that is typically arranged in quatrains with the rhyme ABAB or ABCB. Ballads are usually narrative, which means they tell a story. The 'ballad' derives its name from medieval Scottish dance song or 'ballares' (L. *ballare* – to dance). They were widely used across Europe and later in Australia, North Africa, North America, and South America and also in India. The ballad is one of the oldest poetic forms in English. In India, the ballads are commonly known as "Lok Gatha" or "Lok Katha". We also called them "Indian Folk Ballads" or "Folktales". In India, ballads are always represented in the form of music, that's why people show their interest in them. Hence, the simplest way to think of a ballad is as a song or poem that tells a story and has a bouncy rhythm and rhyme scheme.

F. B. Gum has explained the definition of **Ballad** as –

*“a poem meant for singing, quite impersonal in material,
Probably connected in its origins with the communal dance
but
Submitted to a process of oral traditions among people
Who are free from literary influences and
fairly homogeneous in character.”*

Different scholars have defined 'Folk ballads/ Folktales' in their own words –

- According to G L Kittredge, folktale is a narrative song or song story. He has accepted lyricism and storytelling as the two main elements of folktale.
- According to Dr. Krishna Dev Upadhyay, 'It is very important to have both lyrics and plot in a ballad. The same thing applies in the case of Folktales. Therefore, a Folk Ballad or Folk Tales is a saga or story that told in songs.'
- According to Shriram Sharma, 'Folk tale or folk ballad is a composition with lyrical storytelling, which is continuously developed while travelling from generation to generation in the oral tradition.'
- According to website Study.com, 'Folktale is oral history that is preserved by the people of the culture, consisting of traditions belonging to a specific culture. These traditions usually include music, stories, history, legends and myths, which is passed down from generation to generation and is kept active by the people in the culture.'

A typical ballad consists of stanzas that contain a quatrain, or four poetic lines. The meter or rhyme of each line is usually iambic, which means it has one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. In ballads, there are usually eight or six syllables in a line. Normally, the first and third lines are iambic tetrameter with four beats per line and the second and fourth lines are in trimeter with three beats per line. The stanzas are depending upon the story, i.e. it may be very long or short. Sometimes, there is a refrain found in ballads, i.e. repeated lines. These are present in the last line of each stanza (normally found in folk ballads).

There are some important characteristic features of ballads/ folk ballads are –

- Simplicity is the main characteristic features of a ballad.
- Narrative and morphological.
- It has a simple and dramatic action.
- Presented in the form of Music and dance.
- It has a refrain.
- Descriptive phrases.
- Dialogue used to create character and advance the story line.
- Impersonal language that does not belie the singer's personal feelings or judgment about the ballad content.
- Represent the particular locality or region.
- The ballad often deals with the supernatural or great tales of heroics.
- The main feature of Indian folk ballad, it is written by unknown authors and it is passed from one generation to the next generation and so on.

Types of Ballads:

European ballads have been generally classified into three major groups –

1. Traditional ballads
2. Broadside ballads
3. Literary ballads

But, in general, only two types of ballads are performed, i.e.

1. Folk or Traditional Ballads
2. Literary Ballads

Folk or Traditional Ballads: It is a kind of ballad, which was developed by anonymous poets in the ancient times and handed down to our generation by word of mouth. There is no written evidence of folk ballad, although these ballads are passed through the customs of the society. It is a verbal sort of poetry, which underwent reasonable changes during the course of time due to new circumstances and conditions. The traditional or folk ballad had no single author rather it was the product of many poets. The author of the traditional ballad may be a common man, or a shepherd or a farmer.

Literary Ballads: It is actually an imitation of the traditional ballad. The only difference between the two ballads is the authorship. The author of the literary ballad is known personality. The poet is the legal owner of his/her ballads.

Different types of folk ballads are present in India. It is difficult to classify all of them. However, on a concrete basis, it may be categorized as its size, shape, or subject. According to its structure, it may be classified as small sized ballads and large sized ballads. But the actual classification is based on subject matter, which it is relates to. According to Dr. Krishna Dev Upadhyay, Folk ballads are mainly classified into three parts-

1. Romantic Folk Ballads
2. Heroic Folk Ballads
3. Adventurous Folk Ballads.

- In Romantic Folk Ballads, the story is mainly based on a romantic theme or love stories. The story deals about all the situations (either good or bad) of a couple's journey from the beginning to the end. Example – Dhola Maaru, Sohni-Mahiwal, Chandrawal-Chandana, Sorthi, Shobhanayaka Banjara, etc.
- In Heroic Folk Ballads, the story is based on the bravery work done by a man or woman, who is the real hero or heroine of the story. It describes how he or she act/ react/ behave and deal with the drastic situation.
- In Adventurous Folk Ballads, the story is based on thrill or adventurous journey of a person.

Regional Folk Ballads of India:

Different regions and their featured ballads-

- Assamese – Manikopar, Phulkunwar, Ajan Fakir, Maniram Devan, Barfukan, Krishak-Vidrohar, etc.
- Awadhi – Shri Ram-Sita, Shiv-Parvati, Raja Bharthari, Shravan Kumar, Chandrawali, etc.
- Angika – Lorik, Bihula Bala Lakhandar, Karubhagat, Rani Suranga, Kunwar Vijaymal, Gopi Chand, Bhartrihari, Meerayan, etc.
- Odia – Satya Harishchandra, Gopi Chand, Savitri Charitra, Satirah, Abhiyogmatmak, Shokatmak, Sukhatmak, etc.
- Kannada – Uttara Devi, Honnadevi, Satyawati Lavni, Kitur Chenamma, Kannappa, Kabir Kamal, etc.
- Kumauni – Krishna Chandrawali, Bala-Haru, Nal-Damayanti, Mallikarjun, Narsa Dhauni, Malushahi, Jamala Bohri, etc.
- Konkani – Shra von, Banwad, Godde Ramayan, etc.
- Gujarati – Mojdin Mahetab, Hothalpadmini, Sati Ganak, Son-Halaman, Lorik-Chanda, Ravdudo, Dhola Maruni, etc.
- Garhwali – Rukmini-Haran, Chandrawali-Haran, SurajKunwar, Kusumakolin, GanguRamola, Bidhni Vijaypal, Baga Rawat, etc.
- Chattisgarhi – Ahiman Rani, Pandwani, Ful-Basan, Kalyan Singh, Sita Ram Nayak, Dhola-Maru, Ful-Kunwar, Lorik Chandaini, etc.
- Dogri–Mata Vaishno, Mata Kalka, Shitala Mata, Baba Kailu, Baba Jitto, Baba Surgal, Baba Nahar Singh, etc.
- Tamil – Alli Arsani Maale, Karal Kudi, Raja Desingh, Maduraiveerankaday, Kaatvarayan Kaday, Pulidevarsindu, etc.
- Telegu – Bobbili Katha, Deshigu Raju Katha, Hari Katha, Burra Katha, Paluraju Katha, Kambhojrajukatha, Katmaraju Katha, Palnoti Katha, etc.
- Tharu – Raja Dhanpal, Sahodara (Bhagwati), Raja Mansan, etc.
- Nagpuri – Shiv-Parvati, Ganesh, Radha-Krishna, Ram-Sita, Durga, Kali, Hanuman, etc.
- Punjabi – Dullabhatti, Shaheed Baba Deep Singh, Heer-Ranjha, Sohni-Mahiwal, Mirza-Sahib, Raja Rasalu, etc.
- Bangla – Gopi Chand, Gorakhnath, Mahipal, Bhogipalkilok-kathayein, etc.
- Bajjika–Lorikaun, Raja Salhes, Natua Dayal Singh, Vijomal, Ganinath Govind Amar Singh, Kewal Singh, Basawan, etc.
- Braj – Aalha, Heeraman, Dhola, Chandrawali, Gopichand, Bharthari, Mordhwaj, Guru Gugga, etc.
- Bagheli – Dhola, Raja Bharthari, Karan Daani, Basaman Mama, etc.
- Bundeli – Aalha, Rachhra, Saranga-Bharanga, Jagdevkapunwara, Sant-Basant, Ram Katha and Krishna Kathaparakaakhyan, etc.
- Bhojpuri –Aalha, Loriki, Vijaymal, Bapu Kunwar Singh, Shobha-Nayaka-Banjara, Sorthi, Bihula, Raja Bharthari, Raja Gopichand, etc.
- Maghi – Aalha, Lorikain, Kunwar Vijay, Reshma, Shobha-Nayak, Saranga, Raja Dholan, Raja Bharthari, etc.
- Maithili – Lorik, Bihula, Salhes, Dina Bhadri, Gopichand, Bharthari, Vijaymal, Harichandar Dani, Dhanpal, Jai Singh, Kanak Singh, etc.
- Manipuri – Khamba Thoibi, Moirangsha, Jiladarbar, Khongjompurv, Sanglalembi, Fambal Kaba, etc.
- Marathi – Vasudev ke Geet, Gondhli Geet, Jagran Geet, Bharadakegeet, etc.
- Malayalam – Unniyarcha, Aaromal, Tachcholi Otenan, Aarom Lunni, Irvikkutti Pilla, etc.
- Malvi – Heed Gaathayein, Bagdawat, Gopichand, Bharthari, Chain Singh, Dugji-Juwarjee, Sona-Rupa, Chandana Kunwar, Raja Nal, etc.
- Rajasthani–Pabuji, Devji Bagdawat, Nihalde Sultan, Dhola-Maru, Prithvi Raj, Jalal-Bubna, etc.
- Santali – Sidokanhu, Murmuhul Gaatha, etc.
- Sindhi – Dodo Chanesar, Mumal Rano, Leela Chanesar, Umar Mal, Laila-Majnu, Dhola-Maru, Shirin-Farhad, Heer-Ranjha, Deepchand, etc.
- Himachali – Negi Dayari, Jagta Pathaniya, etc.
- Hariyanvi – Nar Sultan-Nihar De, Aalha-Udal, Bhura Badal, Jaimal Fatta, Bhauka Saka, Amar Singh Rathor, Veer Jawaharmal, etc.

The folklore of India is distinguished from classical Sanskrit literacy traditions by its colorful local bias. Stories and oral epics glorify local heroes and places and are expressed in local languages and dialects. Folk-tales are an important part of the folklore. In fact, folk-tales dominate all other parts of the folk-lore.

Folk-tales or folk ballads evolve over the centuries. They are the essence of the soil. Generation after generation, people narrate these tales, relish them, interchange them and enrich them. Over the centuries, the unsaid things were said in the folktales as well as in the folk songs. Folk ballads (folktales) of India present a very authentic mirror of the tribal, traditional and rural mindset. They have been an integral part of the Indian culture since time immemorial. Our country with diverse religions, languages and cultures, presents a very wide horizon of folk tales. The range is remarkable.

Conclusion

Ballads are the part of our customs. It shows the present situation of the societies. The beauty of the ballad is 'the long story telling' without knowing the name or the identity of the author. But, this long story telling will never bother you, because it is presented with the art of music. Music is the essential part of ballads. The sentiment, emotions and the feelings of the ballads are expressed through the songs and music, associated with them. It passes from generation to generation as custom of the society.

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