

An Affinity towards Folklore Hero is the Indigenous Language/Folklore of Subalterns

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INTRODUCTION

125 years back Britishers ruled India. Today's Maharashtra's districts Jalgaon-Dhule used to be called 'Khandesh' under British India. The Satpura mountain ranges are adjacent to Khandesh. To its North is Holkar Rajya boundary and the southern part is ruled by Shinde rulers. In British India Col Ward had been appointed as "special commissioner operation Tantiya" (Bhand 75). This was new designation generated by high British officials to catch hold of Tantiya Bhil a dauntless, notorious and fearless dacoit (Dacoit said by British government). In subalterns belief Tantiya was a freedom fighter- a rebel against the British government. In the history of Indian freedom struggle no rebel, criminal or political activist had that impact on British government what Tantiya Bheel had. Nobody bothers the government so much that they have to create a post on the name of the culprit. Tantiya run a parallel government in forest to give justice to subalterns against Malgujars and sahukars(financers), who used to threaten the Bhils. Tantiya Bheel was a hero of 19th century India ruled by Britishers. He was simple fellow like any other Bheel. Bheels were the tribes downtrodden by higher caste people said Joshi.

Tantiya's family land has been taken away by Patil (an upper caste Financier of the village) due to overdue of the loan taken by the Tantiya's father. Though Tantiya wanted to pay back the loan but Patil conspire against Tantiya to snatch away the land. Patil plot a false criminal case against Tantiya and send him to jail. On the completion of punishment of three months imprisonment Tantiya without any ill will started working as a daily wage. But Patil was insecure with Tantiya, so he again with the help of villagers through him out of the village. Patil's daughter Yashoda had soft corner for Tantiya or more she had pity on him because she knew that her father was too unjust towards Tantiya. Second time again Tantiya got imprisonment on false case.

Tantiya always wanted to lead a peaceful life. But the so called upper caste people and Britishers' injustice and dreadful torture forced him to rebel. He started to burgle 'Malgujars' and 'Sahukars'. "He also attacked police stations. Government declared him Dacoit but in the eyes of common Bhils he was an angel" (Bhand 56),because Tantiya snatches money from Sahukars and distributes it to needy people of the village. He not only helped the needy Bhils with money but also looted grains from government warehouses and give away to the villagers. He also uses to give loans to the needy people without interest and without any mortgage policy. For women he was their savior. That is why Tantiya become a heart throb. Villagers not

only started liking him but started believing in him. They said, “Tantiya apna Taranhaar hai, apne hit ke liye kaam karta hai. Uska saath dena chahiye”(Bhand 56).

For poor bhils Tantiya was a savior, feeder, sovereign of the jungle. This was the ideal picture of Tantiya bhil in the eyes of commoners. He had become a legend in his lifetime only. In the era when Mahatama Jyotiba Phule working for the social upliftment of the society, Tantiya was single handedly struggling for the rights of Tribes (adivasi Bhil). He was undeclared King of Forest for full eleven years against the powerful Britishers. He troubled the Britishers to extend without any strong support. Just on his mighty shoulders carried chauvinism. He was never against the Indian rulers but only against the English government. Tantiya was the first Adivasi revolutionary but in the pages of history he was mentioned as a dacoit.

TANTIYA AS A FEMINIST

“Tantiya ne sathiyoon ko aadesh diya tha ki, “Sahukaru-Malgojaro ko lotate samay unke ghar ki mahilaon ko haath na lagaya jaye” (Bhand 40).

Tantiya was a rebel dacoit but a true feminist. He always respected women. That’s what the upper lines said about him. He ordered his men to never touch any women or hurt them physically or mentally. He had good relationship with Yashoda Patil’s daughter. The relationship was platonic. He always had a place in his heart for Yashoda, as Yashoda helped him in his adversity. He always respected her. People defame there relation by cooking stories about them. But Tantiya was always had soft corner for Yashoda.

In Bhil community women were treated well pre independence. Tantiya lost her mother early, that’s why he respected every woman. Tantiya was only son of his parents. He did not have any siblings. He missed a sisterly love in his life. So he considered every female of his community like his own sister. There are many examples of his feminist nature. But one is worth mentioning. Whenever somebody got married the bride seems like his sister to Tantiya. He always gifted the brides with expensive jewelry.

Once in there was a marriage ceremony going on in Uskali village near Tapi river. Tantiya reached there and given a gifts to the bride. But she refuses to take those gifts. On enquired by the Tantiya she told that she cannot accept gifts from the one who disrespect a woman. On listening this Tantiya was shocked as he had never done anything which is against women. So he asked his man. A member of his team informed about the incident in which one of his team member snatched jewellery from a woman in some village. Just listening that Tantiya taken out his sword and brutally cut down his team member Layman’s both the hands. This was Tantiya’s justice. That’s why Bhils loved Tantiya.

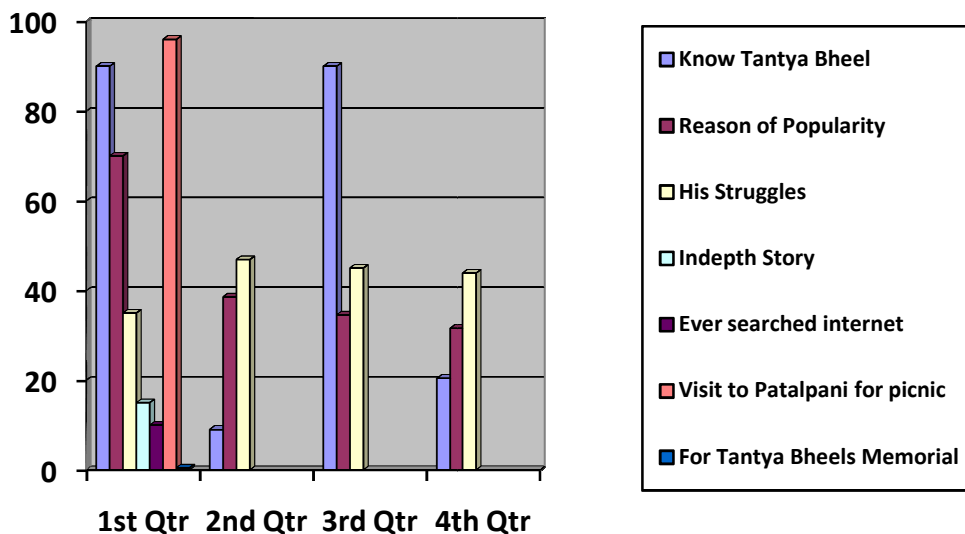
TANTIYA AS A PHILANTHROPIST

Nimadi people use to call Tantiya, ‘Tantiya Mama’(Maternal Uncle). Mama always help in trouble time, he is sister’s savior. Tantiya use to send ‘Mameja’ gifts for everybody in a household. “Mameja is a gift given to each and every family member of the bride or groom. These gifts were given by the Tantiya to every residents of the village in marriage ceremony.” (Bhand 47). He not only helped people with money but do justice for them. Tantiya and his team saved poor villagers from the torture of the upper caste people.

Tantiya was named Indian Robin Hood by the British government. In free press newspaper, “After independence MP government had recognized Tantiya Mama’s struggle and declared him a martyr of freedom struggle. Ex chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Kamal Nath announces an irrigation project worth 1000 cr on the name of Tantiya Bheel” (Free press). On his birth anniversary many pompous programs being hosted by the government and by the adivasi community jointly. Many cultural programs conducted every year at Patalpani near Mhow Railway station.

TANTYA BHEEL’S POPULARITY AMONG OTHER CASTE PEOPLE

Tantiya’s popularity is restricted among adivasi bheels community only. Other caste Indians know Tantiya Bheel but not properly. He was dauntless and first adivasi revolutionary but remain unsung so far. His songs of bravery are sung by few. There is no single hindi song on internet on Tantiya Bheel. Only Nimari folk songs are available everywhere.



A small survey conducted for this study in Mhow, District Indore(MP). I had chosen Mhow as survey ground because it is just 7.5 km from Patalpani which is great legend Tantya Bheel's Martyr ground. People of Mhow and Indore visits Patalpani very frequently as it is a tourist spot also. I myself visited this place many times and observed people and interviewed local villagers. I categorized my survey intentionally in caste system. I have included some intra religion population also. I have done random population survey just excluding adivasis and tribes.

RESULT ANALYSIS

People from Mhow visits Patalpani for picnic as it is a beautiful natural waterfall. But most of them have come to know about Tantya Bheel when they have visited Patalpani only. In such a close proximity even the household or elders never ever informed them about Tantya. Most of the population included in the survey does know the name of Tantya Bheel (90%). 70% people know that he was a rebel against Britishers. But lesser people know about his struggle for 11 years against British government (35%). Very few know his in depth story (15%). After visiting and come across his memorial only 10% of people search internet to know his story. 98% people visits Patalpani for picnic only. Nobody visits Patalpani to pay homage to the great martyr Tantya Bheel.(.5%).

CONCLUSION

My study clearly reveals that Tantya bheel's character is still unexplored in terms of literature. There are folklores in Nimadi language on Tantya but no substantial work exists. There are very few books available in Hindi and English. Folklores are also not been pen down yet. Tantya get recognized by adivasis and tribal people. People living in close by areas are also unaware about his contribution in freedom struggle. Government of MP does have taken some steps in his memory. But that too is not helpful in making Tantya a household name in at least close proximity. This proves that the indigenous languages are still popular among subalterns or natives of the country. In Indian society the caste system prevails strongly. Every caste has heroes to worship or to idolize of the same caste. They are ignorant to other caste or so called lower caste heroes.

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