

## Oral Tradition and Its Influence on our Living

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### Abstract

We are living in the era of Globalization and Information Communication Technology. Though we always insist that we should think rationally and work rationally, somewhere in our life we are influenced by oral tradition and we do follow such myths and rituals which have no any rational end.

In this research paper, the researcher will try to focus on how myths and rituals are part and parcel of life, how our life is influenced by such rites, rituals and myths, how oral tradition help us to lead our life of virtue. Examples are given from Maharashtra culture.

**KEYWORDS:** Oral Tradition, Myths, Rituals, Influence, moral values of life.

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Literature, especially non-fiction in this context, is the source of our expressions, emotions and feelings. We see that literature is influenced by different traditions and cultures. Oral culture or tradition which is transmitted by word of mouth is one of them. Oral tradition or folk literature or folklore may include myths, folktales, folksongs, rites, rituals, proverbs, riddles, story-telling, jokes, customs etc. This folk literature is passed down by word of mouth through the generations.

In his article, "The Extent of Orality", Dr. Grant Lovejoy says that many dictionaries define Oral Literature as 'a reliance on spoken rather than written language for communication'.

Oral literature or folk literature corresponds in the sphere of the spoken word to literature as literature operates in the domain of the written word. It thus forms a generally more fundamental component of culture, but operates in many ways as one might expect literature to do..... (**Web Definition**)

Such stories and rituals are entertaining and containing moral values of our life. At some stage of our life, these rituals and myths help us to explain the mysteries of the natural world, to articulate our fears and dreams and obviously to entertain us. Folk literature can help children to distinguish between good and evil in the world and to follow the good ones. Folk literature espouses the virtues of honesty, compassion, generosity, cooperativeness, humility over the vices of greed, selfishness and excessive pride. (e.g. 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Rapunzel', 'Cindrella' etc).

Rituals help to understand the importance of leading a life of virtue. We see customs and ceremonies in The Vendor of the Sweets written by R.K.Narayan. These customs and ceremonies in the life of people by depicting a pilgrimage to a temple in this novel, when Jagan and his wife accompanied by his parents, go to a temple to prove for a son and the marriage of Jagan and various ceremonies associated with it.

Myths are not merely fanciful stories but pragmatic embodiment of moral wisdom and primitive faith. They are a medium of moral instruction and myth-makers are great philosophers and teachers. Myths not only set exemplary patterns of behaviour but set the scale of values as well as the ideal goals. Human beings imitate the behavior of divine beings and their mythical ancestors. Myths can be said to have the power to change a man's life just as R.K.Narayan shows a gradual change in the life of Raju in *The Guide*.

With the help of these stories we try to inculcate some moral values in our students and children. We make them to set an ideal goal of life in order to be the role model for next generation. We can see the impact of Oral Tradition on contemporary children fiction in different countries like India, Nigeria South Africa etc. In Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* we find rituals of Igbo culture, Yam festivals etc. The themes and moral messages, reflect the values of the society in which the stories are told. These values revealed in the Oral Narratives are honesty, hard work leading to achievement, perseverance, dedication, courage, respect for elders, obedience to the society and consideration for others.

There are many rituals we perform at various ceremonies in our life though there may be difference in performing such rituals. **Rituals at the time of Birth-** On the fifth day of child's birth we do puja that is Pachavi, again on the twelfth day we have Baravi etc. We give pedha if there is malechild and jilebi if the child is girl. Obviously there may be some exceptions to this .We also follow the ritual of giving name of our ancestor to the child that is nav thevane. We light the candle on the cake and say Happy Birthday; it simply means that we are performing a well-known ritual. Another example of such ritual is when we do Aukshan or Owalne. Rituals transform one state of being into another. They carry us from childhood into adulthood, from membership in our family of birth to the creation of a new family through marriage. **Rituals while getting married-**We all are familiar with the many traditions surrounding the wedding ceremony. E.g. seven rounds around the fire, showering of flowers or rice or food grain (jowar or wheat) etc. Marriage rituals can be varied from religion to religion. **Rituals after death-**e.g. washing the dead body, clothing it by new clothes, breaking of bread together, lightening the lamp on the place in the house where that person is died(there may have exceptions to this). Water is a symbol of cleansing and purification. Some people bathe in the holy rivers in order to get rid of our past sins.

In our day to-day life we follow different myths and rituals such as lightening scented candles, incense in front of the God. We pray to the God by putting hands together chanting some mantras. Oral Prayer in keeping with the dying person's tradition, recitation of psalms, reading scriptures. In Islam the Quran is read, and when the final moments arrive there is complete silence. If a well-known person dies, we pay homage by standing clam for one-two minutes in order to may his soul rest in peace. There are many myths and rituals which are still followed mostly in rural areas. E.g. while walking, if the cat crosses the person, s/he goes back by three steps and again continues his way. At the time of festivals we have different cultural programs which are transmitted by the word of mouth through generations. E.g. At the time of Ghatshapna we have Bhondla, at the time of Makarsankranti women goes to the temple and perform the ritual of Owasane, children fly kites, and they swing, at the time of Nagpanchami women do puja of Snake, play phugdi and pher, women keep fast in order to get long life to their husbands and also

consider their husband as God (Pati Parmeshwar). We also have different kind of Bhajana, Kirtan, Ovi etc.

We do teach our children to give respect to elders by saying aho-gao and we make them to touch the feet of elders. We tell various stories to our children to make them learn basic human values through such rituals and stories. E.g. Pride has fall, Honesty is the best Policy, Atithi Devo Bhav, etc.

Walter Ong, a catholic scholar, describes Primary Orality and Secondary orality. We are living in the era of ICT, so we have different strategies for using the new electronic media. Telephone, radio, television and the various kind of sound tape, electronic technology has brought us into the age of 'Secondary Orality'. There are many options to the printing that is video or audio file of the performances of oral culture.

In such a way we see that myths and rituals have become a part of our living. We do follow these and are influenced by such rituals. I would like to mention that though we can't avoid some rituals at some stage of our life we should be aware of its relevance and effects on our living.

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