

INTER-ETHNIC MARRIAGE AND LOVE IN THE TRIBAL SONGS OF THE TAMANG COMMUNITY

DR. KAUSTAV CHAKRABORTY

Associate Professor, Department of English, Southfield College, Opposite to Bhanu Bhawan, Darjeeling, West Bengal

Abstract

Tamang community is a tribal community of Darjeeling Hills, Sikkim as well as in other Northeast Indian states in India. The main image that the non tribal people have about the tribal community is that, they are martial people with rigid tribal norms. However, this study of the six Tamang songs reveals that the tribal community is very romantic in nature. Moreover, they prefer love over rigidity. Inter-ethnic community marriage and relationship is sanctioned as revealed by these Tamang songs. The paper is divided mainly into three parts. The first half is a short introduction to the Tamang tribe and the mythology related to their song and dance. The second part contains the song in original Tamang as well as in English translation. The last part is the discussion.

Keywords: Tribal song, Tamang, Love, Inter-ethnic marriage

INTRODUCTION

Tamang is one of the tribal communities who reside in the Darjeeling Hills as well as Sikkim, apart from other states of North East India. There are different speculations regarding the origin of the Tamang and accordingly some scholars have stated their varying opinions. According to Dor Badhur Bista, the Tamangs can be regarded as one of the most ancient tribes within the Himalayan families. The Tamangs are one of the major Tibeto -Burman speaking communities who were originally called “Bhote” meaning Tibetan. Later on the term ‘Tamang’ was attached to them because they were said to be horse traders. In the Tibetan language “Ta” means horse and “Mang” means traders. Another view is that the word Tamang is said to have originated from the Tibetan word “Tamag” meaning “mounted army” of the king. In course of time the word “mag” is believed to have been corrupted as “mang”.

MYTHOLOGY RELATED TO TAMANG SONG

Songs and dances of the Tamangs have their origins in mythology, according to the Tambas (Poet-Historians of the tribe). Tamang songs (whare) and dances (shyaba) have originated from the time of lord Shiva. The Tambas, while narrating about the creation of Dampfu (an one sided finger beating tambourine which is the main musical instrument of the Tamangs), take the name of Peng Dorjee (symbolically Peng Dorjee refers to Lord Shiva). According to the Tamang beliefs, a man called Peng Dorjee (Shiva) and his beloved Ruisang (Parvati) were wondering in the beautiful and dense Himalayan forest, while travelling through the Himalayan forests, and after feeling tired they sat down to rest. Suddenly Peng Dorjee saw a Ghoral (species of Himalayan deer) in the near distance. Immediately he had a desire to kill the deer. He aimed his arrow and killed it. On seeing the Ghoral's suffering his beloved Ruisang was filled with grief. She even scolded Peng Dorjee for his cruelty. Peng Dorjee became stunned seeing his annoyed beloved. He begged for pardon. But Ruisang said that her lover would not be delivered from the sin until and unless he made something memorial for

the poor creature, which had died for no fault of its own. Then Peng Dorjee, confessing his sinful act, assured his near and dear Ruisang that he would create a memorial. Next day he skinned the Ghoral, removed its bristle, and dried the hide in the sun. He then cut a branch of the koiralo tree (*Bahunia Variegata*) and carved the wood to make a circular frame. Chanting the names of different Gods and goddesses, and asking to be absolved of his sin, he stretched the hide across the frame and fixed it all around with thirty two nails of bamboo. He overlaid the wooden ring by the kin and nail around the ring. He also fixed a split cane of bamboo (nearly ½ inch in breadth and 2 to 2 ½ inches long) in the lower part of the ring from outside where the middle finger of the holding hand would give onetime beat. On completion of that musical instrument, he played on it with the three fingers in three beats. The first beat and the third beats he played with his open hand which sounded as 'Tap dhung dhung'. From that day onwards this small drum Damphu still exists in the same form without any change. The oral traditions which exist in the form of songs or dances of a tribe throw much light on ancient past of a race or tribe. The Tamangs have their Mundum i.e. the song which describes their ancient past. They sing this song on religious and social occasions to the rhythmic beats of their dear musical instrument Damphu. Before singing of Tamang Selo (song) the name of Siva the God of all Mongol Kirati tribes is invoked. There are three types of Songs in Tamang Community. 1. Whaee. 2. Rhama. 3. Selo.

FIRST SONG: APPA LAI MERO FYAFULJI

Aappalai mero fyafulji

Aamalai mero fyafulji

Aakhelai mero fyafulji

Mamlai mero fyafulji

(Thepale chang chhar lyaechha aappa, thepale chang chhar lyaechha) -2

(Hamro ta thepale lyaeko chang chhar, sarai po ramri rhechha) -2

(Aamalai chang bhani lyaeko maile, tamangsya hoina hoi aama

Bachpanki pyari lyako chhu maile, narisaunu hoi aappa) -2

(Bhityrau chang chhar rit puryai, sikauchhu tamang ko dastur lai) -2

(Taba po pauchhu duniya ko samu, man mili lyaeko chang bhanna lai)-2

(Lhasso hoi lhasso chyangba lhasso) -2

(Helako aankhale nahernu sasu, buhari bhaiyo tamang ko

Sukha ra dukha je bhae pani, sewa garchhu hajur ko) -2

(Buhari chhori aamalai manne chalan ramro tamang kai)-2

(Lhasso hoi lhasso maichyang lhasso) -2

(Lhasso hoi lhasso chyangba lhasso) -2

Translation

Salutation Offered to my father.

Salutation offered to my Mother.

Salutation offered to my grandfather

Salutation offered to my grandmother

(Our eldest son has bought his bride, Dad our eldest son has bought his bride,)2

(And, she is very beautiful)2
(Mom I bought a daughter in law for you. Though she is not a Tamang but she is my love since childhood.
Please don't be sad dad) -2
Let our new bride in to our family with all of our Tamang rituals, I will teach her about our rituals. Then I'll be able to tell the world, that we fell for each other, also we are made for each other.
(Sure Brother Sure...) 2
Don't see me through the eyes of hatred, mother in law because now I be known by the daughter in law of Tamang, I'll take care of you, in every situation, either it's good or bad. The tradition to treat her daughter in law as her own daughter, is the best ritual of Tamang Community..
(Sure sister sister..) 2
(Sure brother sure .)2

SECOND SONG: RATO RATO GALA

(Rato rato gala maichang ko
Rato rato gala
Hera na k piti suhako
Hera na k piti) -2
Soholow hai gumbuk sow jasto
Tapak kai tipera khaw josto)-2
Changba ko jatai nahunea
Changba ko jatai
Arka ko chori lai akha lawnea
Arka ko chori lai
Ekai bachan bolyo ki ta maychang meroy ho vannea
Changba tesi navana
Chyangba tesoy
Afu ni bayman ho jala
Afu ni bayman
Maychang lai changba lea
Nalagea aru ta kaslea laijala
Afu lea mai hu nathana afu lea mai hu
Assang ko changba lea
Yolmo ko chori dolmo lai pawdena timi haru josto lea
Navaneai maichang teseri
Navanea maichang
Chinena na timi lea chyangba lai
Chinenana timi lea
Changba ko maya payew vanea birshinxa appa ra ama lai
Kata ko bani yestai ho keta ko bani
Fakawnu lai khup jannea fakawnu lai
Ramri ta kt lai dekhnuu hunna 10 hattha ubrera ahhai halneaa

Translation

Girl you got a red cheeks , red cheeks, and that suit so good on you
Like a red fresh apple which we use to get in Himalaya
I want to pick it up and want to bite .
Boy your title doesn't match with us, boy your title
Also you are giving your looks to others daughter,
To others daughter
By speaking only a single word, you are saying that I'm yours.
Please don't say to us
Please
Otherwise you'll be on shame, you will be
Girl, if you will not marry by me, then who will.
Please don't feel proud of your own , my uncle young son will
She is Dolmo, daughter of Yolmo's , so you won't get her.
Please, girl you don't say like that
Please don't
You didn't get us
You didn't
If you will loved by this young boy, then you will forget your own mom and dad.
Boy we know your behaviour
Boy your behaviour
To win our heart
To win
Your heart jump 10 feet up , while seeing the beautiful girls..

THIRD SONG: AAIRAG SAGUN

Airak Sagun assang lai
Mohor a basia Angi lai
Bihey ko lagan China ko dolmo
Aunea Ta maga ko maina lai losar ko Sayit parera, Dolmo lanchu po damphu bajai.
Khadaina khadaina gargea ko бага lea khadaina
Moti ta likhea ko pakhai ma Ningma li ko ghyang matai.
Hamro ta Appa Lai sagun rakhi elai garsaw,
Dhakmakai
Jamana arkai aisakyo Dorjee
Nagara Berthai asmatai
Sowdai na sowdaina chori lai maita ma sowdaina

Translation

Wine and gift for uncle.
Silver, gold coins for aunty
Dolmo , I have set the date for us, on this upcoming February
On this festival of losar , Dolmo I will take you with the beat of damphu
Yea. I know the tiger who roar , won't eat
Pearls are on the sea bed and

No nuts in nirmali tree
I will present gift to my father and then I'll get kicked you out.
Don't hope the generation has changed
Daughter don't look good at their father's home .

FOURTH SONG : KHA PARYO GHARA GHAYAN MAYCHANG

Kha paryo ghara ghayan maychang
China Jana garung ki
Kutumba ho vanea jhanya maychang pirati lagaw ki
Selo ma vaka milaw dai aja ta dohori gawnea ho
Hami ta sailungea chyangba ho mana mili pirati lawnea ho
Dola ka fela mero ta ghara
Thar chei mero adhakari
Maychang lea hunxa vanea dekhi
Laidew la maya pirati
Moi chori dekhera jayana chyangba ,
Chew hai ma aihalew
Sailungea raicha jayana chyangba parichai dihalew
Thar mero tamang lumba ho
Kalincho ghoomna ayeako
Khari dunga ma aipugda
Geetai ko jhataro ayeako
Sundari gow la Kathmandu parcha ni hajur mero ghara
Chinana Jana ramrati nahudai pirati ki kura nagara

Translation

Girl where are you from
Let's introduce each other
If you have a family let's make a relationship.
Let's exchange the lyrical phrases back and forth on a slavic term.
We are boys belongs from Himalaya, if we owns each other heart , let's make love .
My home is in Dhola fatak
And my clan is Adhakari
Girl if you are agree then let's make love . Seenig a girl, boy you are coming closer
to us
Oh, you gave your whereabouts that you are from Himalaya.
I belong from the Tamang community of lumba clans
I came to visit Kalincho , so when I reached Khari Dunga, I got a hit from the lyrics.
And my place is Sundari gow which is in Kathmandu.
Don't talk about love while we don't know each other.

FIFTH SONG: HAMRO TA SAILUNG LEKHAI MA

Hamro ta lekhai ma hamro ta sailung pahar ko chuchoro bata .hamro ta pahar ko
chewhai mai hai hamro ta sailung,
Hamro ta sailung pahar bata Gomkhola batcha hai Taya bagaha .hai jaha Gomkhola

ra anatai khola milsa hai Gomkhola
Tya ta kalchura chara ko rajya , cha hea kalchura chara
Timro ta jawani payarai maychang
Yo timro sarir dui dina ko lagi matra ho
Teso vayea sadhguni vayera k faia
Hamro ta mritu prabhu ko sampati ho
Akash ma urnea Changi lai hera akash ma urnea ti sabai changi haru
Awli ma Tama ko authi ,mailea ta vanea ko yeti matra hai mailea vanea ko kura hi
Mana ko kura sunnuhos .kk vanxa ?

Translation

From the top of our Sailung mountain,” Down the side of our Sailung mountain, hey,
our Sailung
Mountain,Our Sailung mountain, Flows yonder Gomkhola”
There it flows.
And where the Gomkhola meets another stream,
Hey, the Gomkhola,
And where the Gomkhola meets another stream, Hey, the Gomkhola,
There reigns the kalchura bird- Hey, the kalchura bird.
Dear maiden, this your youth,” Your youth, dear maiden,
And this your body, are but for two days, For two days only.
What’s the use of being virtuous then?
We are the property of the Lord of Death,
The Lord of Death.
Look at the kites flying in the sky,
In the sky,
All those kites flying in the sky,
In the sky,
The copper ring on the finger. What I say is only thisIt’s what I say
Listen to the heart-what does it say.

SIXTH.SONG:GADE JEBA JHAME GADE

Gade jeba jhame gade chargin hoi
Pongdi namsala Assang la
Wala wala gambai gargewa , tor tor Nala sawrangba.
Hoi Assang hoi Angi
Tila jhamea pinba ki apinba
Hangrem jyaba koichinna
Nabengri hinsai mhar pinna
Ngalai umer yojinji
Aappa se chang bagau bila jinji
Hangrem jyaba koichinna
Nabengri hinsai mhar pinna
Ngalai umer yojinji
Aappa se chang bagau bila jinji

Hoi aasyang hoi aangi
Ela jame pinba ki apinba
Hoi aasyang hoi aangi
Ela jame pinba ki apinba

Translation

Our son and daughter have grown up , their time has come to make a family
Red cheeks which make her look more beautiful
Rough road on the way to Lake .
Hey, uncle aunty will you give me your daughter or not.
I don't know the others people
I want to be with my own
Now it's my age to get married
Also my father was asking me to get a bride
Hey , uncle hey aunty
Will you give me your daughter or not
Hey uncle hey uncle will you give me a daughter or not...

DISCUSSION

The first song is about the marriage. The song is very important because it highlights the inter ethnic community marriage as prevalent in the Darjeeling Hills. Though the bride is not from the Tamang community, the groom is saying that as he has been in love with this non Tamang girl, she should not be hated. Rather from the time after marriage, she needs to be treated as one of the Tamangs. She will be wearing the Tamang dress and would follow all the Tamang rituals. This inter tribe marriage is very important for the peaceful coexistence of various tribal communities in the Darjeeling Hills. The second song also is about the love between a Tamang love and a Yolmo boy. The Yolmo is a different tribal group. Though the girl is saying that there is a difference between them, even then they are bound to fall in love and unite together despite their ethnic differences. In the third song the boy also sings of the upcoming marriage. It describes the way he has to pay to the girl's parents in order to get married to their daughter. The boy also suggest that even if the daughter does not agree to marry, then her father will throw her out of the house, because even though the times have passed since the older days, yet the customs have remained unchanged and as per the customs a grown up daughter need not stay in her father's house but it looks good if she marries and stays with the in-laws.

The fourth song is also about inter tribe love. A non Tamang boy sees a Tamang girl and proposes her. The girl says that she is a stranger to the place, but even then she is so much influenced by the song of the stranger that she cannot, but fall in love with the stranger. The fifth song has a carpe diem motif. It also celebrates the union of two young people as the youth is fleeting and soon old age and death will wreck the beauty of youth. The last song is

also about the love of a boy for a girl. The boy tries to convince the daughter's parents that as he loves their daughter she should be given to him in marriage.

CONCLUSION

The six songs of the Tamang tribe highlight that the tribal people are all for merry-making. They are very jovial and romantic in nature. Though in the 'mainstream' the image of a tribe is mainly that of a hunting group but the Tamang songs would enable us to counter such stereotypes that get associated with the tribal people. Apart from being all for love, the songs also reveal that they are broad minded enough to accommodate the inter-tribe marriage and relationships.

REFERENCES

- Bomjan, M.S. *A Long Struggle of Tamangs for Tribal Status*. Darjeeling: Akil Bharatiya Tamang Buddha Sanga, 2006.
- Narboo Samten. "Migration of the Tamang Tribe from Tibet". *Tibetan Journal*, volume I, 1981.
- Negi, S.S. *Discovering the Himalaya*, Vol. II. Delhi: Indus Publishing Company, 1998.
- Peters, Larry. *Tamang Shamans*. New Delhi: Nirala Publication, 1998.
- Rakesh, Ram Dayal. *Folk Culture of Nepal; An Analytical Study*. New Delhi: Nirala Publication, 1990.
- Singha Badhaur Gishing. *Tamang Pragya Samya*, vol.I. No I, August, 2009.