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**Revitalizing Societal Identity Through Folk Culture**

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**Abstract:** *Human identity attains a place of immense significance in the context of the positioning of one's self. It is the inherent identity of a person which renders their existence meaningful. Considering various denominators, attributes of the culture of a particular group of people or a society at large appear to be paramount in ascertaining one's identity. Folk elements, irrespective of them being songs, lyrical notes, or general chants about religion, craft items, etc., are considered pivotal in establishing the significance of a specific category of people. From personal elements to powerful political and ideological depictions, attributes of folk make a group of people situate themselves in the larger context of human civilization. What is noteworthy about the general culture surrounding folk tradition is that various songs act as carriers of human aspirations, which get transported to individuals, making one realize how an individual's identity is embedded in those lyrics. Thus, various tendencies involved in human existence are reinstated whenever such songs appear to restructure an individual, thereby establishing themselves as pivotal artifacts. This paper is a humble attempt to explain the inherent connection between the identity of individuals and the nuances of folk. It critically attempts to re-establish how various songs reiterate visions of an individual by denoting the ramifications of one's culture. The paper uses the idea of dual identity by Erik Erikson to showcase the connection between societal elements and identity concerning human beings.*

**Keywords:** *artifact, civilization, folk, identity, tradition*

**Introduction:** When it comes to comprehending the intricacies of an individual's self, it is the underlying identity that denotes his or her essence. Without a significant identity of an individual, the position of the self attains a place of fluctuation in that it can no longer assert its position in society. Identity has always attained primary importance in various academic circles, where it has been explained to various literary experts, scholars, and critical thinkers to understand its connection with society. In this context, a person's identity has become inextricably tied to various dynamics, which, in turn, formulate various societal

promulgation. As far as elements of culture are concerned, traditional attributes and symbols that have attained statures of artifacts act as linchpins that thread the needle for understanding one's identity. About folk, the rudimentary understanding pertains to different melodious songs tied to the customs and faiths of a particular group of people. Through numerous lyrical melodies, various messages get conveyed to people who find their positions within larger spectrum of physical spatiality. Women have generally and traditionally been associated with folk songs, which appeared to be their expressions of desires, aspirations, hopes, and dreams. Moreover, different folks connected to tribes can be considered indispensable in the context of these becoming notions of cultural reiterations. It sometimes indicates "a mark of superior literary or artistic achievement or even superior breeding" (Pei 206). Tribal groups act as a notable category, particularly in the country's Northeastern regions, with states like Assam and Manipur consisting of various tribes that lead their lives through folk culture. In a nutshell, folk cultural depictions can easily be connected to implicit meanings of traditional living of individuals, which, over time, reflect ideological stances to certain degrees.

A particular folk song can be performed at any physical location. However, its more extensive inscription gets placed in connotative meanings of cultural features of a society as "culture is the sum of products created by human activities in society and products depending on human and social life" (Pufendorf 4). As far as folks in villages are concerned, a particular woman chanting a song can be attributed to her way of expressing herself, her inherent identity, and the multiplicities of her goals and aspirations. In some cases, such songs can also be used as a counter-means of domination by male members either in a household or at workplaces. Thus, folk songs play vital roles in granting the identity of a person because they reflect the traits of dynamics associated with a particular society. Considering the contemporary period, ideas related to the identity of people have attained changes and transformations, as identity today is not restricted to physical features. It is the society and external societal spaces that are very important in the final culmination of the identity of a person because it is amalgamation with one another that paves the way for the exact formation of one's identity. Thus, one can sense the presence of two notions of identity of a person- something which falls in line with opinions put forward by Erik Erikson. He opined that a human being is always born with an innate identity that remains intact regardless of age. However, with the growth of a person, there is also the formation of another identity that is mainly the result of different structures of physical interactions with various individuals in a society. Thus, it can be stated that an individual, in the present scenario, does not consist of a concretized notion of being. There are various other factors apart from the self which play individual roles. Erikson states that identity connected to a person attains the definition as

A subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unselfconscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality. In him we see emerge a unique unification of what is irreversibly given--that is, body type

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and temperament, giftedness and vulnerability, infantile models and acquired ideals-with the open choices provided in available roles, occupational possibilities, values offered, mentors met, friendships made, and first sexual encounters. (22-23)

These arguments aptly unmask how a person's identity, in the contemporary scenario, gets validated and structured by different features of a society at large. Erikson primarily stresses the idea that identity has attained a contextual stance as it relates to different situational contexts, subsequently leading to the formation of multiple identities. In this context, folk is essential because it entails different processes that lead to the expression of traits of a particular group of people in a society. A group always consists of various characteristic features garnered by ritualistic traditions, which echo the cultural attributes. As far as the role played by folk in sustaining the values of individuals is taken into account, these not only act as solid bases for the formation of norms and truths of people but also, equally, are handy in erecting formulations that echo unity amidst differences of identity of various groups. India is an utterly diverse land, considering its multifarious presence of ethnic and tribal groups. The broader texture and outlook of various societies become the result of the amalgamation of various traits and features of multiple groups, which, in turn, denote the creation of one compact society. In such a contextual depiction, folklores significantly strengthen a society's foundational pillars that bind every individual together. It also has to be ascertained that different ritualistic traditions echo different intricacies related to the identity of a specific group. Thus, folklore tends to heighten the importance of specific groups and vividly aids the processes in making each group stand out on its own, with different traits and qualities manifested in full potential.

Intricacies related to social interaction act as binding forces for individuals to assert their identity while residing in a society. Different adages, proverbs, and sayings contribute a great deal to the final corpus of traditional songs, which find themselves categorized as a culture related to folk because culture “refers to the entire body of behavior, traditions, beliefs and ways of living that are learned through and via the process of socialization” (Robertson 33). What is remarkable, considering the presence of folk in Indian lifestyles, is that it is not based on a specific season or specific month of the year. Folk attains an omnipresent look in Indian societies as it gets further sub-categorized into different types with the presence of songs for celebratory occasions like getting married, songs for lamentation at the death of an individual, songs to idealize Gods and deities, which indicate the inclination towards religion as well. One of the pivotal aspects of folk songs is that they tend to express various happenings of society regardless of those happenings being boon or bane for the more extensive living of individuals. These songs also tend to express ideological notions and motives about powerful groups in society, echoing various regulatory agencies. In this way, cultural manifestations find a notable uncovering as different folk songs do not remain confined within the notions of mere songs but express broader attributes of society. Different ideals that are generally followed in a society also get validated, critiqued, and restructured with the help of these songs as these essentially become the medium that helps sustain the faiths of people from one generation to the other.

Michael Bamberg opines that the identity of a person “designates the attempt to differentiate and integrate a sense of self along different social and personal dimensions such as gender, age, race, occupation, gangs, socio-economic status, ethnicity, class, nation states, or regional territory” (33). It is a vivid explication of how different influences of an individual’s interaction in society, apart from an inherent sense of being, work in tandem to grant a sense of identity to a person. In this regard, it is pivotal to note that there is a daunting complexity at play in forming one’s subjective identity in the current scenario. Of all, folklore and folk songs emerge as notable means of validating the subjective existence of a person because these songs echo the personal traits of a society in which individuals make their living. Thus, there is a general evolvement of the identity of a person, which can be comprehended in the contemporary period, making identity a delicate space that both gets created and recreated within the physical spaces of living. In this sense, identity turns out to be an act of construction by different traits of a society which work together to grant a specific meaning to an individual. Formation of a specific idea and its associated meaning can be regarded as the chief aim which is related to the construction of one’s identity as

the understanding of the body develops in cultural studies through the recognition of the body as a site of meaning . . . The body is not simply there, as a brute fact of nature, but is incorporated into nature. The body is indeed a key site at which culture and cultural identity is expressed and articulated . . . It is through the body that individuals can conform to or resist the cultural expectations imposed upon them . . . Analysis of the body can therefore increasingly see it as a product of social constraint and construction . . . or of the languages and discourses . . . (Edgar and Sedgwick 47).

The above arguments are significant exclamations regarding the human body's societal side, which acts to establish an inherent identity. Every community in this world abides by specific rules and beliefs that act as basic structures that allow individuals to regulate their lives. By using various folk songs in a society, it can also be stated that different tribes and communities have also attempted to preserve their native ritualistic customs. Identity, thus, assumes a critical position in the context of folklore because people of a particular locality adhering to specific faiths and traditional values share almost the same identity with one another. Different experiences and learning of people team up together to grant folklore a notable place amidst a community, as these reiterate their belongingness to a particular physical location. Much like the identity of an individual, the various features of folklore also attain a social outlook as these get produced within the broader landscape of a society, which further gets re-inscribed in the lives of people through various processes of transmission. Along with various experiences of an individual, different parts of folk culture also echo the tendencies and characteristics of a society, which, by extension, can be said to be the documentation of a particular period as well. One can safely argue that culture, society, human experiences, and human identity inextricably amalgamate together to create a veritable mixture connecting different dimensions of folk culture.

Human emotions are said to be best found in rustic lives where tranquility prevails to let an individual enjoy life in its rudimentary form. Hence, village lives depict the most eye-catching folk narrations, which denote accurate individual lives with all hopes and wishes intact. If observed carefully, folk culture acts as a focal means of depicting the knowledge and intelligence of individuals as well because various tenets of an individual psychic depiction also become vivid among other individuals in the articulation of either a folk song or a story. Although sometimes various traditional folk stories come under doubt in terms of their being authentic, most of the time, they are assumed to be true just for the fact that these are replete with information. Moreover, it also needs to be understood that it is a historical factual presence that renders folklore pivotal in the articulation of human lives, sentiments, experiences, and codes of conduct, among others. Myriad facets involving different activities of individuals in a society greatly get unraveled in the delineation of folk, which aids the formation of human identity considerably. Human identity, in this context, gets transformed into a codified document, an inscriptional piece that can be modified and turned according to societal tendency because it emerges as “the capillary structure of social cohesion and conformity. It situates us as individuals and silently legislates the boundaries of what is possible for us to think and say. Above all, it is normative. . .” (Davis 70).

All told it can be echoed that folklore enormously aids in the sustenance of age-old values and faiths of human beings. With the help of various folkloristic traditions, different communities and tribes tend to establish themselves in society as their identity gets re-informed in the larger societal atmosphere. Folk culture both perpetrates the growth of individuals by delineating experiences and also establishes ideological beliefs of a particular group to a considerable extent. A lot of Indian villages have their roots in the tradition of oral form of literature, and this makes the presence of folklore even more vital as faiths get validated and new beliefs get transferred to younger ones from their parents. In addition to the richness of Indian cultural values, what can also be inferred from various folk elements is that they establish the authentic position of every community. Cultural attributes of every community, in this regard, find greater substantiation among people by having specific values that, over time, act as guiding lights for individuals to sustain their lives.

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