CHAPTER III

SOCIO-CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITY OF MITHILA
Culture, in Mithila, is closely interwoven with its social structure. It is based on the twin concepts and practices of *Kulinism* and *Panji-Prabandha*, where emphasis is placed on maintaining the pristine purity of race and to keep scriptural religion and culture intact, as assigned to each caste, or *Varna* by the Brahminical tradition of Hinduism. Though this applies to every caste of Mithila, it is the most prominent and strictly followed, in social interactions and marriages, by the Maithil Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas.

*Panji* is a system of maintaining and keeping a detailed and exhaustive genealogical records to prohibit marriages within a forbidden degree of relationship as well as to instill a sense of pride among the individuals in the institution of family, its traditions and achievements (ancestral). Gradation of sub-castes or sub-sub castes is generally based on birth, religious accomplishments and character. This also decides the social status of a person, especially of a Maithil Brahmin and Karna Kayasthas. These considerations also lay down the foundation of *Kulinism* in Mithila. The practice of maintaining genealogical records and subsequent gradation within a caste was, for the first time, scientifically institutionalized by the last great Ksatriya ruler of the Karnata dynasty of Mithila Raja Harisimhadeva.
On the basis of the performance of daily religious rituals and the learning of religious scriptures, the Brahmins have broadly been divided into four sub-castes, those who perform the *agnihotra* sacrifices and who devote their time from dawn to dusk in the performance and observance of religious rites and rituals are *srotriyas*, and are ranked first in the scale, followed in order by *Yogyas, Panjibadhas* and *Jaibaras*. Similarly, the Karna-Kayasthas are also divided into two broad divisions: (1) the *Kulina*, i.e., of the high birth, and (2) the *Grahastha*, i.e., of ordinary birth. So far the other castes of Mithila are concerned, they too are divided into various sub-castes in order to avoid marriage within a forbidden degree. However, in this case, divisions within a caste is not exclusively due to any particular religious considerations as one finds among the Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas.

The ideology of Kulinism, i.e., maintenance of racial, social and cultural purity, has left an indible mark on the social and religious life of Mithila. It has obstructed the process of social assimilation of common culture and consolidation of a separate cultural identity, even though there exists many distinct cultural patterns which are regionally exclusive to Mithila, that is, those not found elsewhere in India. Kulinism has meant the perpetuation of caste consciousness which under the pressures of agrarian
politics and economics resulted in the occurrences of many caste-based conflicts in the region. Historically, the feudal structure of society witnessed the convergence of culture and economics in the selected few castes, resulting in the growth of two separate and parallel cultures - 'high culture' of upper castes, and unrefined, but simple and highly rich culture of lower castes. Interestingly what is until known as the Maithili culture to the outside world is the selected cultural patterns of Maithil Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas only.

One finds a caste wise variation in the performance of religious and cultural practices in Mithila. While the cultural patterns of Maithil Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas resemble closely with each other, this is not particularly true with the other higher castes and lower castes of Mithila. It is in this context that Dr. Amarnath Jha in his paper *Mithilanchlak Jatiya Sanskritic Vikas* (1985) says that in Mithila cultural diversity has got a caste basis. This also varies from village to village.

**Caste and the Formation of Territorial Community**

Cultural diversity, however, does not inhibit the Maithili people from forming a territorial community. While the Maithil Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas constitute exclusive territorial groups in terms of their close cultural
similarity, the other castes, especially backward castes, constitute a Maithil territorial community in terms of their own cultural traditions, customs, and belief patterns. Significantly there are adjoining line between 'high culture' and 'low culture' which manifests in the realm of material culture of Maithils.

Protagonists of Maithili movement define Maithil community as those living within the territorial boundary of Mithila. They are called 'maithils', irrespective of their belonging to different sociological denominations. They are imagined as a distinct Maithil community because they share common history, language and certain common cultural traditions which are essentially 'of Mithila'. In a recent memorandum submitted to the Government of India, Maithil community is constructed and construed by prefixing regional and linguistic denominations like 'Mithila - Maithili - Maithil' before each category of sociological differentiation, such as caste and religion. It appeals to the people of Mithila to call themselves Maithil Brahmins, Maithil Yadavas, Kurmi, Maithili Muslims etc. This is an attempt to give the people of Mithila a separate territorial and linguistic identity.

Religious Outlook of Mithila

Mithila, in Hindu mythology, is described as one of the important Sakti Peeths for salvation. Though different
religious systems found favour in Mithila, in the gradual course of evolution tantricism became predominant in the religious belief of the people of Mithila. Thus Siva, Sakti and Vishnu became the main inspirers of the people. It has, therefore, been "pointed out that three fold marks on the forehead of a Maithila represented the following symbols - the horizontal lines, marked with ashes, represents devotion to Siva; the vertical sandal-paste in white represents faith in Vishnu and the vermilion red mark represents veneration for Sakti". In the contemporary period Vishnu is relegated to the secondary position and now it is only Siva and Sakti worships that have assumed salience in the religious life of Mithila. In every house, Siva and Sakti, in different images and names, are being worshipped. There are two modes of their worships - one is devotional or Vaisnavism (i.e., seeking union with Sakti through bhakti) and other is tantric. The basic object, however, remains the same, that is of obtaining Moksha. Here the specific mention can be made of tantric cult as prevalent in Mithila. It is a yogic exercise in which Siva or Sakti is conceived by performing certain rituals (Puja) over a Yantra. The tantric rituals laid stress on five elements, essential to tantrik siddhi known as Panchamakaras viz., madya (wine), mamsa (meat), matsya (fish), mudra (parched grain) and maithuna (sexual intercourse). Panchamakara is invariably attached with
every tantrik puja in Mithila. The main aim of Tantra is sublimation through rationale and symbolism. The ultimate objective of a tantrik is, therefore, moksha. Once a person achieves moksha, he is no longer a subject of rebirth. There are many stages involved in tantra sadhna and each stage is an elaborate procedure of different types or techniques of siddhi. Only by successfully completing each stage of tantrik sadhna that a person can seek complete submergence in the formless energy - that is the mother of creation.

The prevalence of Sakti cult in Mithila can be gleaned from the following social customs:

"i. Gosuni Puja in every household.

ii. First verse taught to a child is in praise of Sakti.

iii. Aripana is closely associated with the Tantric Cakra.

iv. Paga is also associated with the Tantric belief.

v. Patari ceremony, i.e., feeding of Kumaris (generally Brahmanas) on all auspicious occasions.


vii. Worship of Siva-Linga, the Matrakpuja and Naina-Yogin sport and the custom of taking Diksa from Guru.
viii. The association of Mithilaksara with tantric Yantra... The Varnodhаратantra and the Kamadhenu tantra give a succinct account of the peculiar development of the Varnas.

ix. The predominance of Vamacara and Dasa-Mahavidya in Mithila.

'Sakti' worship revolves round the ten-Mahavidyas - (i) Kali, (ii) Tara, (iii) Shorashi, (iv) Bhubneshwari, (v) Bhairavi, (vi) Chinnamasta, (vii) Dhumawati, (viii) Bangalamukhi, (ix) Matangi and (x) Kamala. For each of these mahavidyas, there are separate methods of Upasana. Popularization of 'Sakti' cult in Mithila is also due to the fact that it received patronage from local zamindars such as Darbhanga Maharaj, and Sonebarsa Raj. More or less 'Sakti' worship remained and served as 'court religion' of feudal lords.

Though the Tantric cult and Sakti worship does not discriminate between castes, it, in real terms, remained exclusive to higher castes. On the other hand, even though people belonging to a relatively lower position in the social hierarchy worship and believe in the Sakti cult, they have their own Gods, which personify the image of some historical and mythical figures and personalities. There are four types of Gods and Goddesses found in Mithila. In the first category belong those Gods and Goddesses who are
worshipped universally, such as Shiva, Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Kali, Durga, etc. In the second place comes community Gods popularly known as Grama Devata or village Gods. They are locally named as Dihawara, Brahman asthan, Devi asthan etc. Interestingly, village God, being the protector and promoter of general welfare of the village as a whole, is worshipped by every section living in that village, irrespective of their religious affiliations. During field study, it was found in a village Neur, district Madhubani, that the Muslims offer Cock to Dihabara - a local Hindu village God. They also offer animal sacrifice to Chinnamasta Bhagawati (one of the ten Mahavidyas) in lieu of the fulfilment of their Kabula or Mannata. But they do not eat the meat of obliterated goat. This example may not be suffice, but it can be suggested that the Muslims in Mithila are integrated with the larger Hindu community through popular belief and practices. In other words, it is basically in the framework of folk-culture, tradition and localized belief pattern that the community or religious integration takes place.

In the third category comes Caste God or Goddess. Each caste is having its own God or Goddess. For example, Yadavas worship Basawan and Lorik Chandra; Dusadhas worship raja Salhaesa, Chuhar, Madhukar, Bandautni and others; Doms worship Karu Bir or Karudas, Kodar Katta, Bandautni, Banni,
Raja Shyamsingh etc. Malaha worships Dular Dayal Singh; Mushars worship Dina-bhadree, Ranu Sarkar, etc; Halwai prays to Feku Dayaram, Baba Ganinath; Bantaur worships Genr Singh (who is supposed to be the original ancestor of this caste), Salehasa, Champawati Ukeshwari and Teli worships Mansaram etc. Forms of worships and devotional songs in praise of these Gods and Goddesses have significantly contributed to the growth and development of folk-culture of Mithila.

And lastly, each family has its own Kul Devata - family or 'clan God'. They are known as Gosain, Sokha, Adi Bhagwati etc. However, it is usually the worship of caste and community God which form the basis of the 'folk-culture' among the backward castes/classes of Mithila.

Among the other religious streams which found favour among the Hindus, specific mention can be made of medieval saints Kabir, Surdas and Tulsidas. Kabir is considered as the apostle of peace and unity among the artisan classes of Hindus and Muslims. As a protest against the orthodox Brahminical tradition, Kabir's teachings instilled a sense of self-respect among the ritualistically lower caste Hindus of Mithila. It is worth mentioning here that Kabir's followers belong mostly to the lower castes like Gopas, Dusadha, Khatwes etc. However, "of late, Kabir has attracted Brahmanas also in the villages particularly those who are backward in education". Popularity of Kabirpanths
in Mithila is also because of its followers sing their nirguna in the local dialect and in popular Samdauni.

On the other hand, impact of Surdas and Tulsidas have been confined mostly to the upper and more educated classes like Brahmins, Kshatriya, Bhumihars, Vaisyas and Kayasthas. Interestingly their followers sing their devotional songs in Awadhi and Brajbhasa. The tradition of Ramayana also led to the growth of Vaisnavism and vegetarianism in the socio-cultural life of Mithila. The popularity of Ramayana in Mithila is attributed to Maithili poet Kavishwar Chanda Jha who wrote his own version of Ramayana in Maithili language. So far as the other religious beliefs are concerned, Maithili culture has never been averse to them. Its religious philosophy emphatically lays stress on 'unity in diversity'. Therefore, other religious systems have not only flourished, but also substantially contributed to the growth and development of a composite culture of Mithila. Thus Buddhism influenced greatly the growth of Tantricism especially its yantra aspect in Mithila. Muslim religious belief pattern added to the growth of Vaisnavism through Sufi Silsila. Though Muslims are ultimately devoted to 'Allah', Pir or mazar worship is very common among the ordinary Muslims. One can find several Pirs, dargahs in Mithila such as Mazar of Samarkandi, Bhimha Shah Sailani, Darbhangikhan in the Darbhanga town etc. Hindus also
worship and offer chadar on these mazars. In fact, worship of village Gods and Pirs across the religion form the real basis of social and communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims in Mithila.

Islam’s emphasis on ‘equality’ and ‘social democracy’ has greatly influenced the medieval Hindu thought in Mithila. Vidyapati’s Vaisnav thought is considerably influenced by Islamic philosophy and sufism. At the existential level, Islam’s emphasis on equality and social democracy was a substantial reason of conversion of subjugated Hindu artisans into Islamic faith. Cordiality and interaction between these two religious systems find expressions in many realms of human activities and belief patterns. This has been beautifully noted down by Radhakrishna Chaudhary in the following words:

The basic unity of the Hindus and Muslims expressed itself in attempts that were made at synthesis of Hinduism and Islam. Such synthesis is borne out by the fact that a large numbers of Arabic and Persian words find place in the Maithili vocabulary since the days of Jyotirisvara Thakur. The titles like Khan, Choudhary and Baksi etc., among the Hindus are the direct results of such contacts. The ‘Muharram’ is observed both by the Hindus and the Muslims alike. Sir G.A. Grierson observed, the ‘Kunjras’ (a caste of vegetable sellers among the Muslims) worshipping a Hindu deity, known as Rama Thakur and Hindus worshipping Panchpiriya that is, Ghazl Mian and four other Pirs. The famous Imana and Firdausa ragas, invented by Amir Khusrau, find mention in Locana’s Ragatarangini. Muslim poets have composed Marsiyas in Maithili literature. Inspite of the declared conservatism of Mithila, the fusion of the two communities has
been complete and instances may be multiplied to prove this contention. The Hindus, while worshipping a deity called Balapira, sacrifice a cock for this God. Muslims are similarly found singing a Maithili devotional songs.\textsuperscript{8}

Kunjaraboli spoken by the low caste Muslims is in fact, an extended variety and a dialect of Maithili language. The national Maithili era is a Fasli era, as started by Akbar. At the folk level, the cultural interaction between them is almost complete. They participate together with immense vigour and intense desire in the folk activities. It can be said that though Islam in Mithila did not acquire any regional specificity, Muslims in Mithila have assumed and acquired specific regional outlooks and personalities in terms of language/dialect, customs, traditions, popular belief, food habit etc. On these counts, they can be easily differentiated from the Muslims living in other regions. They are Maithil - a territorial community, and contribute to the growth and development of a separate Maithili culture. They maintain their separate religious identity amidst broader framework of common Maithili regional identity. Regional identity is neither imposed nor dictated on a particular religious identity, rather regional outlook is self-acquired gradually in the process of regional/territorial community formation, necessitated by the realization of a common socio-economic and political objectives and interests. From socio-economic
integration proceeds broader cultural integration, based on sharing of common social values and norms. Contents of social values can be drawn from the humanistic framework and ideology of any two different religions. This in other words, may amount to 'community building'. Thus, in the community-building, the first stage is of socio-economic integration. And the second stage consists of exchange of cultural norms. This is also true with the formation of a territorial community across religions in Mithila. Muslims and Hindus, living in Mithila, share common socio-economic problems. Commonalty in this aspect of life facilitates interaction in other aspects of human life. This assumes significance in the broader framework of 'federal-nation-building' approach where national identity is a construct of multiple regional identities. Further in this framework, regional identity is itself composite in nature.

Religious Ceremonies
Besides major festivals like Durgapuja, Kali Puja, Ramnavmi, Holi, Shivratri, Iid, Bakrid, Moharram etc., the localized popular festivals, mostly performed by Hindus' womenfolk, are Nag Panchmi, Godhan Puja, Jitiya, Jur-sital, Bharatridwitiya, Kojagara etc. Some of these festivals are caste specific as well, for example Kojagara is performed by Maithil Brahmins only.
Paintings

Religion and religious belief finds symbolic and creative expression in the styles of painting. The subject matter, quite often, deals with the cultural canvass of the people. Since it is inseparable from the Maithili cultural life, painting serve as an essential symbol of Maithili regional identity. Maithili paintings is unique in the sense that it is quite natural and original in its styles, drawings, colours' use and selection of themes. Mithila has made two special contributions in the fields of paintings. The first is Aripan or floor painting and second is the Kohabra or wall painting.

Aripan\(^9\) represents the traditional folk art of Mithila. On any auspicious occasions, Maithili women sketch drawings in the courtyard, door front and other places of the house. It is mostly associated with the tantric designs and Sakti cult of Mithila. On the other hand, Kohabra or 'wall painting' is drawn on the walls of a house where "newly married couples enter after marriage for their first meeting". Themes are drawn from folklore and mythology, representing love, erotic etc. Significantly wall painting is also environmentally conscious. It generates a positive outlook towards the different creatures of nature. It is also worth mentioning that herbs, plants, animals are symbolically attached and integrated with popular belief and
culture of Mithila. Therefore,

the bamboo tree and the ring of lotuses represent
the diagrams of the sexual organs; parrots
symbolise the love bird; turtles diagrammatise
the lovers' union and fishes the emblem of
fertility and sun and the moon symbolise the
life-giving qualities. The supernatural colour
and splendour in a figure, which is hardly seen
in ordinary life, is partly dictated by religious
canons.10

Besides, the above two important forms of arts,
R. Chaudhari11 divides Maithili home art broadly into four
classes: (i) Aripan or line drawing on the ground; (ii)
Kohabara or wall painting; (iii) Terracotta figurines and
dolls of other materials; (iv) Utility articles in colourful
forms.

While the upper caste women, especially Brahmin and
Kayastha, specialize in the first three category, the last
one is being specialized by lower castes, especially
Kumaharas.

Like religion, Maithili painting is also gender and
caste specific. On gender basis, it is only the women who
specialize in different styles of painting. The reason is
partly sociological and partly religious. The joint family
norms, headed by a male member, relegated women in the
household activities only.

In the higher caste, women fulfil their
traditional role not by contributing to the
family income but by displaying keen adherence to
ritual in prayers, ritualistic cooking, child
care and demonstrative care of the sick and
elderly.12
Women only perform marginal rites in the vedic tradition of Mithila.

As mentioned above, Maithili culture varies according to caste and class. This point has been further observed by Devaki Jain in the following words:

Each caste (and sub-caste in some cases) in a village lives by an intricate calendar of rituals whose observance is compulsory.... There are differences of detail between the observance of rituals by different castes, so that each caste or sub-caste has its own sequencing of ceremonies, repertoire of appropriate songs and illustrative drawings.\textsuperscript{13}

Castewise differences in the performance of rituals and other eternal and material culture have also led to the growth of different styles/schools of paintings. There are now four distinct schools of paintings, which vary in terms of the selection of themes, sources, colours and practitioners. These four schools\textsuperscript{14} are:

1. **Harijan Painting**: Practitioners are mostly Harijans of Mithila. They draw themes from their own legends, such as Salehesa etc. They seldom portray vedic Gods, except the Goddess Kali and Karik Maharaj.

   *Gobar* (cow-dung) is used as colouring agent after it has been soaked in water, and red colour is mixed in water along with gum and then it is used for painting.

2. **Brahmin Paintings**: Brahmin women specialise in the Aripan or floor paintings. They use colours of all kinds.
They also produce Kohbar or wall paintings. These paintings are "casual collections of images which nevertheless gracefully coalesce one with another in the picture space. The various figures and objects are depicted in a single flat plane. All are defined by a thin and wiry line which bounds large segments of bright colour. Ribbons and dresses, arms and legs have the waving vitality of sprouting plants, while bodies with their triangular, rectangular and semi-circular shapes take on a geometric dignity."

3. Kayastha Paintings: In this style of painting, colour plays little role and their strength lies in their line. "The brilliant blues, yellows, pinks and reds of Maithil Brahmin painting give way to bluish grey, ochre, madder and black, the last two colours being predominant. The figures no longer float in space but are tightly bound into panels with patterned frames or ranged in long processions round the walls. Each panel is filled with a strong vigorous design executed with energy and precision. The figures instead of being wraithlike fairy tale shapes are fleshy, muscular and round and have an air of sensual energy and quick compulsive power. Firm lines bound the forms which are decorated with hatching and spotting. The chief subjects are pictures of the Gods, elaborate lotus circles and complicated patterns."
4. **Tantric Painting**: It is a combination of line as well as colour paintings. The main focus is religious acts. A geometrical diagram *yantra* is drawn. Each God has different *yantra*. *Yantra* is a geometrical abode of God or Goddess on which *mantra* is chanted and mediated to attract or to draw the attention of particular God. *Tantra* is a geometrical progression in which each stage is marked by particular *Siddhi*, ultimately sublimating and merging oneself in the ‘final energy - *sakti* - the creator of universe’.

**Tantra=Yantra+Mantra**

Though Maithil Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas are the chief exponents and trend carriers of Maithili paintings, the other castes, such as Rajputs, Sonars, Ahirs and Dusadhs etc., also do wall as well as floor paintings.

Besides, caste specification, Maithili painting has another important characteristic. Initially, the *Aripa* and *Kohbra* arts of Mithila were first noticed by W.G. Archer in 1934 and he characterised them as Maithili painting. Since nodal points of representative Maithili paintings are clustered around the township of Madhubani, Maithili paintings have gradually become popular as ‘Madhubani Painting’. Madhubani township and villages, like Jitwarapur, Harinagar, Ranti, Mangrauni, Bacchi and other villages, around it serve as ‘nuclear region’ of Maithili culture and identity, where culture is practised in utmost purity and
sanctity. Nuclear region nourished both the 'great
tradition' of upper caste Hindus and the 'little tradition'
of the lower caste Hindus. And it is almost through the
'little tradition' that the Muslims, especially lower
castes, are integrated in the socio-cultural structure of
Mithila. As a part of 'little tradition' of Mithila, low
caste Muslims also do their crude mud wall paintings. Of
course, the theme selected here is not religious as in the
case of paintings done by the Hindus. Their subject matter
is usually the animate objects of nature. Like Hindus, they
also make symbols on the entrance wall of their house to
prevent devils.18 Moreover, they have yet to develop as a
distinct category of Maithili paintings. Lower caste
Muslims help in making colours and dyes for Maithili
paintings.

Besides painting, Maithili women (both Hindus and
Muslims) specialize in the domestic arts like needle work
and Sikiwork.19

Music and Dance

Music and dance in Maithila is intimately connected
with the religious beliefs and practices of the people. In
form, they are devotional and depictive of the religious
and other mythological figures.
Even in this field of art, there are two distinguished patterns of 'great tradition' and 'little tradition'. For great tradition, Vedas, Puranas and other religious scriptures serve as the basic sources, but in the 'little tradition', it is popular belief and popular stories of mystique figures from which theme is usually deduced. This is particularly evident in the field of dance and drama and the Maithili songs. However, once again it may be pointed out that like painting, both these traditions, are regionally exclusive, distinct and special to and 'of' Mithila, and together they constitute Maithili identity.

Distinct exposition of Maithili music finds place in Vidyapati's Gorakasavijya; Jyotirisvara's Varnaratnakar and Dharutamasagama; Umapati's Parijataharan, and most exquisitely in Locana's Ragatarangini and Nanyadeva's commentary on Bharata's Natyasastra. In these works references are made of different ragas as prevalent in their respective ages and periods. They are Nataraja, Malva-raga, Vasantraga, Baradiraga, Lalitraga etc. "In Mithila, each raga comprises the distinctive notes associated with a particular mode and emotion elicited universally in the cyclical recurrence of seasons and hours in human heart. Each raga comprises of five or six raginis."20 The distinguishing characteristics of Maithili lyrics are - "(i) extraordinarily musical; (ii) directness and spontaneity;
length is invariably suited to the expression of one powerful mood or emotion; (iv) range is wide and unlimited; (v) chief sources of inspiration are the events and experiences of everyday life; (vi) sanskrit stories and legends, and (vii) sanskrit poetics and erotic conventions provide eternal background to its colour and imagery.\(^2\)

Folk dances and dramas are performed on some special occasions. Each actor or actress, and symbol used in dance and drama, represents certain social tradition and popular belief of Mithila. They are sometimes of the ritualistic significance as well. Some of the important dances and dramas are Dasaut or Ghaskatti (related with marriage ceremony and limited to some of the upper castes of Mithila only) Kirtaniya, Shama-Chakeva, Nayana-Jogin, Salehesa Puja (most popular among backward castes especially Dusadha), Kamla Puja (a river symbolizing water Goddess and is usually worshipped by the Mallahas), Kosi Puja and above all Ramalila and Krishnalila are other favourite dances and dramas of Mithila.

Besides above major dances of Mithila, there are other minor, but important, dances which are usually performed by the lower castes. Some of these are Goraiyan dance among Dhanukas and Musharars; Sapera among Nata; Rahu among Camaras; Dinabhadri among Musharas and Bikhari Thakir etc. Among Muslims Marsia and Jari dances are very popular.
Maithili Songs

There are four distinct classes of Maithili songs:

1. love lyrics;
2. devotional songs such as Nacari (Nacharies) and Gosanuni are very popular;
3. occasional songs, suited to special occasions like marriage, Upanayana etc; and
4. there are the "songs of the riddle' called "Kutas".

In terms of food habit and dresses, Mithila has some unique features. Though one can find an elaborate list of food in Jyotirisivar's Varnaratnakar, the unique of them are Tilkora (a leafy item usually fried and dished out among the guests on some festive days), curd, parched rice, Makhana, Pana (Betel) and Fish22. Due to the prevalence of tantrik cult, non-vegetarianism, finds natural favour among the people of Mithila.

So far dresses are concerned, Paga (head gear) is unique among Maithil Brahmins and karna Kayasthas. Every maithil is supposed to carry with him a dhoti, lota (water pot) patra (almanac) and other religious book with him. While men usually wear Dhoti and carry Angocha (thin Towel), women, even Muslim women, wear Sari. However, one cannot overlook the class differences in this aspect of Maithili life.
Conclusion

Cultural identity is a construct of religious practices, customs, traditions, food habits and dresses. They together provide a region specific identity. But in the case of Mithila, culture is internally diversified and diffused even though they can be said, in any sense of the term, as the 'native culture' of Mithila. There exists two parallel cultural identities - elite cultural identity of 'great tradition' and folk cultural identity of 'little tradition'. While through the practice of Kulinism, 'great tradition' lays emphasis on caste, cultural and racial purity, the culture of 'little tradition' is highly flexible, simple and accommodative laying much of the emphasis on community building. Both these 'traditions' are in conflict and harmony simultaneously, subject to the exigencies of overall political process and the socio-economic factors.

Maithili identity is not a uniform and homogeneous. It is a composite regional identity. Therefore, it is not difficult to decide what is Maithili, instead of who are maithils? This should always be borne in mind in any analysis of the successes and failures of Maithili movement. In the initial phases of Maithili movement, as it may appear from the analysis in the subsequent chapters of the present work, the protagonists of Maithili movement emphasised on
the cultural identity of ‘great tradition’ only. It is only recently that the leaders are trying to include and attach significance to ‘folk-culture’ of little tradition in order to achieve the political objective of a ‘Maithili state’ in north Bihar. Moreover, leaders have yet to construct an universally accepted and internalized maithili cultural identity, given the fact that there is no dearth of symbols of regional identity among the common people of Mithila.

Mithila has a composite and distinguished ‘native cultural’ identity which is different from other regional identity. Another feature of Maithili cultural identity is that it has never been conflicting to the broader composite identity of India.

Linguistic Identity of Mithila

The earliest name by which the language of Mithila was known seems to be ‘Avahattha’, a derivative from apabhrasta, a synonym of Apabhramsa. It is believed that Apasbhramsa (word) signified in Mithila the Desa-Bhasa as distinguished from classical Sanskrit and Prakrts. Maithili has also been referred as Tirahutiya in Alphabetum Bramhanticum (1771). But it is H.T. Colebrooke, who in his famous essay on the Sanskrit and Prakrt in the Asiatic Researches (1801) referred the language of Mithila as Maithili (spelt as ‘Mithelee or Mythili’).23
Linguistic Boundaries of Maithili

Mithila is bordered in the West by Bhojapuri, Bengali in the east, Nepali or Kura in the north and Magahi in the South. Within its territory, there also exists tribal enclaves or non-Aryan languages, such as Santali and Munda.

Districts where Maithili is spoken are: Madhubani, Darbhanga, Samastipur, Khagaria, Begusarai, Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Dumaka, Muzaffarpur, Vaisali, Sitamarhi, Motihari, Betiah, Saharsa, Purnea, Katihar. "In the district of Champaran it is current in its eastern part, and it merges into Magahi in the eastern parts of Patna and the northern parts of Santal Parganas districts...."24 More or less Maithili is prevalent in whole of North and North-Central Bihar.

Dialects of Maithili

On the basis of linguistic purity and variation, Grierson25 has mentioned six dialects of Maithili. He observes that standard or pure Maithili is spoken by the Brahmans of the north of Darbhanga (i.e., Madhubani) and Bhagalpur districts and by those of Western Purnea. Here, it is interesting to point out that the core region of Maithili language and culture consists of the present districts of Madhubani, Darbhanga and Saharsa. Among these districts, Madhubani can be described as a ‘nucleus zone’ of
Maithili language and culture. The significance of a 'core region' lies in the fact that it preserves the cultural identity in its pristine purity, and becomes a reference point for further cultural spread and popularization of regional identity.26

Southern Standard of Maithili

It is spoken in south of Darbhanga "with some purity, but with more signs of the wearing away of inflexions in the south of Darbhanga district, and in those portions of the Monghyr and Bhagalpur districts which lie on the northern bank of the Ganges."27

Eastern Maithili

It is prevalent in the old Purnea (now Purnea and Kathihar) district of Bihar, where "it becomes more and more infected with Bengali, till, in the east of that district it is superseded by the Siripuria dialect of that language which is a border form of speech, Bengali in the main, but containing expressions borrowed from Maithili, and written, not in the Bengali character, but in the Kaithi of Bihar".28

Chhika-Chhiki boli

In the south of Ganges such as Mongyr, Begusari and Bhagalpur "Maithili is influenced more or less by the Magahi spoken to its west, and partly also by Bengali. The result is a well-marked dialect, locally known on Chhika-Chhiki
boli from its frequent use of the syllable Chhik which is the base on which the conjugation of the verb substantive is conjugated".29

However, the Chhika-Chhiki boli, which is most popular in the Bhagalpur division of Bihar, is also referred as Angika language.30 This nomenclature is based on the historical and scriptural references such as Mahabharata where this region has been described as the Anga Pradesh with capital at the present day Bhagalpur. Though culturally people of the Bhagalpur and Darbhanga divisions are not different, the linguistic differentiation, based on the historical entity of the region, may lead to the demand for the recognition of separate Angika language and Angika Pradesh.

Western Maithili: "The Maithili spoken in the Muzaffarpur district and in the strip of country on the eastern side of Darbhanga is strongly infected by the neighbouring Bhojpuri, spoken in various forms in the adjacent district of Saran (now Chapra, Siwan and Gopalganj) and in the greater part of Champaran".31 Because of the enmeshing of words, styles and structures between two languages in a dialect shift zone it is difficult to differentiate the two languages - Bhojpuri and Maithili from each other. Interestingly, attempt is now being made to give a separate name to the language prevalent in this region.
The language is named after the Vajjian as Vajjika Bhasa. Its independent existence is now being asserted at the cultural, social and political levels of the peoples' existence. Culturally, western Maithili is evidently associated with the Bhojpuria culture of Bihar than the Brahminical culture of Mithila. But in terms of linguistic tradition and preferences, even now Vajjika can be clubbed with Maithili and may be called a sub-dialect of Maithili.

Jolaha Boli

Though the upper class Muslims, such as Sheikh, speak Hindustani language and are more closely associated with the culture and traditions of Awadha, the lower class, such as Kunjra (vegetable sellers), Dhunias (weavers) and others speak Jolaha Boli. It is a dialect of Maithili which includes many Persian and Arabic words in its vocabulary.

On the other hand, Pandit Shree Gobindanath Jha regionally classifies Maithili in five sub-dialect zones\(^3\) -

(a) **Eastern Maithili**\(^2\) is prevalent in the districts of Purnea, Bhagalpur and eastern parts of the Santhal Pargana. This language is influenced heavily by the Bengali speech;

(b) **Southern Maithili** is prevalent in Monghyr and is influenced by the Magahi speech;

(c) **Western Maithili** is spoken in the districts of Muzaffarpur and Champaran, having partial affinity with the Bhojpuri language;

(d) **Northern Maithili** is spoken in the eastern regions of Nepal and
Sitamarhi district of north Bihar, and (e) Central Maithili, the purest Maithili, spoken in the nucleus regions (such as Madhubani, Darbhanga, Saharsa and some parts of Samastipur district) of Maithili language and culture.

**Social Facets of Maithili Language**

Whatever may be its sub-dialectical varieties, it can safely be said that Maithili with some variations in speech from one place to other is a language of north Bihar. Speech pattern, selection of words, forms of salutation and conjunctive sentences vary not only spatially but also in terms of caste and class. There has been a move among the Maithili Brahmin' and Karna Kayastha intellectuals to sanskritize the language which hitherto has had been a folk language of the common people living in this region. Sanskritization of Maithili language has created a comprehension gap between educated segments and uneducated segments.

Another significant aspect of Maithili language is that there are certain words which are exclusively used only by women such as manasa (man), bara (husband), Kania (wife), nua (like Sari), etc. Further distinguishing characteristics of Maithili language is the employment of several appropriate qualifying and modificatory words in connection with particular nouns and adjectives. They are
peculiar in meaning and cannot, in all cases, be substituted even by their synonyms. Thus: \textit{lalə tesa} (extremely red); \textit{ujjarə dapə dapə} (extremely white); \textit{piarə dhabusə} (extremely yellow); \textit{kari khatə-khatə} (extremely black), etc.\textsuperscript{33}

Like Telegu, one more peculiarity of the Maithili Language is that "when women address others and are themselves addressed, the interjections that are used are different from those that are employed by men in addressing men."\textsuperscript{34} Greatest care is taken in the use of article in this sense. For example:

1. \textit{həe} is used in addressing a woman, though inferior, when addressed with some honour: a woman, however, uses it even in addressing men of equal status...

2. \textit{ae} is used in an honorific sense in addressing a woman, who uses it even in addressing men in honorific sense, belonging to her father-in-law's place.

3. \textit{gae} is used in addressing woman without showing any respect to her.... This is, however, used in addressing very affectionately the close woman relative, as for example, one's own mother.

4. \textit{rae} and \textit{rao} are used by women in addressing men in extremely non-honorific sense.

5. \textit{hao} is used in addressing men in ordinary honorific manner. But a woman uses it with references to persons
belonging to her father's place only.

6. ao is used in addressing men in honour. A woman uses it at her father's place.\textsuperscript{35}

But this peculiarity of Maithili interjections have another facet as well. This can be said as the social fact of a language. What is this social fact? Forms of addresses reflect the relative position of a man in the social station and cultural endowment. For example, twice born castes in Mithila, while addressing the people belonging to the lower rung of social hierarchy use rao or rae in a non-honorific sense, a sign of disrespect and disregard for other than the twice born castes.\textsuperscript{36} The reason attributed is the dominance of brahminical culture and religious tradition which classifies people in terms of cultural endowment and the non-articulate, boorish and uncultured mannerism of the lower caste. At the other level of interpretation, this can be interpreted as social enclavement of a language or a dialect. A language can be treated as means of cultural domination of lower class of people by the upper class of people. Moreover, in a politicized caste conscious society, social enclavement of a language by culturally developed caste may adversely affect the language solidarity among the people and the creation and cultivation of a separate linguistic identity.
People of the Maithili region are mostly bilingual. Besides Maithili, they read, write and speak Hindi or Hindoostani. The States' patronage was extended to Hindoostani. Hindi became the medium of instruction in educational institutions. Popularization of Hindi led to the creation of parallel linguistic identity besides Maithili. This is also partly because of the extended loyalty of the people to a broader linguistic family to which both Hindi and Maithili belongs. As a result, though Maithili remained the domestic language of the people, but they opted Hindi for competitive examinations and inter-regional communication. Social enclavement of the Maithili language and the creation and cultivation of parallel linguistic identity retarded the process and growth of Maithili identity consolidation across the different social segments of Mithila.

The Orthography of Maithili

In Mithila, not less than four scripts are employed for writing Maithili. The native and the popular script is called Mithilakasara or Tirhuta which very closely resembles the Bengalee and Assamese scripts. The earliest specimens of Maithili script are found in the inscription of the Mandarhill (Bhagalpur). This was inscribed during the reign of Aditya Sena of the Gupta dynasty towards the end of the seventh century A.D.\textsuperscript{37}
This script is still in vogue among the Maithili Brahmins and Karna Kayasthas, despite the prevalence of nagari script in the region. Another script which is used in the revenue and law courts in the Maithili speaking area is the kaithi. But books do not appear in this script. The script prevalent among the Muslims is persian script.

**Stages in the Development of Maithili Language and the Literary Figures and Personality**

Jayakanta Mishra has divided the development of Maithili language in four periods:

**Proto-Maithili Period (8th-12th Century)**

The origin of Maithili language is traced to this period even though the language had not yet developed in the proper sense of the term in this period. However, it was in this period that under the patronage of Pala kings that Charya Padas in Maithili flourished.

**Early Period (1300-1600)**

This period is known for the development of Maithili as an independent language. The dominant form of literature during the period remained lyric.

**Middle Maithili (1600-1860)**

Jayakanta Mishra observes:

In 1557...the new dynasty, the House of Khandwa was founded in Mithila when the Mughul Emperor Akbar made over the kingdom of Mithila to Maharaja Mahesh Thakur. Once again scholarship,
art and literature found encouragement in the land and Maithili literature began to be cultivated with enthusiasm. The Moghul Emperors in Delhi were too busy in consolidating their position to have time to take care of this small kingdom of Mithila; so it remained in comparative isolation, devoted to learning and art. It was therefore fortunate in developing the arts of music and the drama.39

Modern Maithili (1860 to the present)

Modern period witnesses a change in emphasis. Unlike earlier periods, prose has become a dominant and representative form of modern Maithili literature. Journalism and translation work also got encouragement during this period.

About the origin and growth of Maithili language

R. Chaudhary writes:

Besides the past heritage of Sanskrit, the laukika (or the folk) aspect has never been absent in the literary tradition of Mithila. The emerging vernacular, Maithili, acted as the vehicle of popular cults. It grew as one of the earliest vernaculars of India. It should be borne in mind... when Sanskrit came to be confined to subtle scholasticism and lost touch with life and reality, Maithili was adopted as the medium of culture and refinement.... In the early years of the fourteenth century A.D., it had developed not only as a finished poetic diction but also the lyrics. When the social and political setup stood shaken as a result of the Muslim invasion, the main spring of literary exuberance shifted from official and aristocratic patronage to individuals and eminent personalities like Umapati, Jyotirisvara, Vidyapati, Bodhidasa and others. They personified the new movement in the realm of language and succeeded in turning the ornamental amorous verse of the old and the middle Indo-Aryan into a poetic while retaining its measured rhythm and pithy picturesqueness.40
Then, Maithili language originated and developed from the laukika or folk language of the common and ordinary masses, who could not understand and communicate in the high scholastic tradition of Sanskrita. "The folk culture had a share in the development of Maithili in the early period and the folk element has never been absent from the cultural contents of the language." The popular cults associated with the village gods and goddesses like Salhesa, Bihula and popular ballards like Lorika have greatly helped in the growth, development and popularization of the Maithili language as lukikabhasa (people's language). The chief characteristics of Maithili folk language and literature are "simplicity, freshness and charm of its genre. At rare moments of intuitive experience, it is at its best and is able to have direct vision into the life of things."42

The lyrical or poetical style, where personal emotion, feelings, attachment, religious stories etc. are usually expressed by singing a song, has greatly influenced the popularization of Maithili. Jayakanta Mishra sums up the characteristics of the Maithili lyric in the following words:

It is extraordinarily musical; its directness and spontaneity are unimpeachable; its length is invariably suited to the expression of one powerful mood or emotion; its range is wide and unlimited; its chief sources of inspiration are the events and experiences of everyday life; and lastly, Sanskrit stories and legends, and
Sanskrit poetic and erotic conventions provide eternal background to its colour and imagery.\textsuperscript{43} The most important and common type of poetry in Maithili is Tirhuti. "It represents the most popular and successful indigenous lyrical expression of Tirhut and is the richest of all classes of Maithili songs."\textsuperscript{44} The Tirhuti is further classified into Batagamni (portraying the nayika in abhisara, sung out in a peculiar melody of which Vidyapati is the most successful writer); Goalarmi (theme is generally the sports and youthful pranks of Krsna in the company of the Gopis); Rasa (deals with Krsna's sportive lilas with Gopis) and Mana (representing "a sort of dramatic lyric depicting the annoyance of the beloved (Stri mana) and the request of the lovers to mend matters and vice-versa (Purusmana). Umapati is the greatest exponent of this type."\textsuperscript{45}

Other important forms of Maithili poetry are represented by Samdauni (farewell song especially sung to bid farewell to the daughter when she goes to her husband's house after marriage); Lagni (sung by village women folk while grinding grains in the early morning); Chaitabara (seasonal song); Malara (seasonal song); Yoga (it is sung to bind the bridegroom and the bride, even lover-beloved, by divine incantations; Uchiti (courtsey song); Sohara (birth song); Barahmasa (represents the state of separation during the course of twelve months); Chaumasa (during the course of
four months). The devotional songs are Nacari and Maheshvani (song prayer for lord Siva and Gauri), and Gosaunika-gita (hymns song in praise of several forms of Sakti).

So far prose is concerned the earliest example is the Varnaratnakara of Jyotrisvara. During middle period one finds two types of prose - documentary and dramatic - which developed elaborately during modern period.

Literary Figures and the Construct of Maithili Identity: Jyotirisvara and Vidyapati

These two legendary figures have become synonyms with Mithila linguistic identity. They are epitome of Mithila's cultural identity as well. They led to popularization of the middle period folk-language into an independent language. They are the centres around which myths of Maithili identity is constructed. Their works have become a reference for the antiquity of Maithili language and culture.

Jyotirisvara Thakur (C 1280-1340): The earliest undisputed writer of Maithili is Jyotirisvara Thakur also known as Kavisekhara. He was known for his poetical talents. He was bilingual. He wrote in Sanskrit as well as in Maithili. From the perspective of the growth and development of Maithili language and culture his famous work -
Varnaratnakara is very important. It is an extensive compendium of conventional prose descriptions, and probably the earliest prose work in any of the modern languages of northern India.

On the other hand, this is an encyclopedic reference to the life-style, cultural activities, social life and composition of the medieval Mithila. "It tells us something about the various castes, the food, the habits and practice of law in those days." Moreover, Varanaratnakar supplied to the succeeding generations of Maithili literatures with stock material for further growth and development. It even moulded definitely the works of Vidyapati. This work stands, therefore, as important land-mark in the literary tradition of Maithili. A reading of this great work becomes easier to establish that Maithili had developed into a full-fledged popular language in the 14th century itself.

Vidyapati (C.1360-1448): Vidyapati's age and works are compared with the works of Shakespeare. His age saw the final rise of modern languages and is treated as the golden age of the Maithili scholarship. A versatile genius, he was the author of many important books.

But, Vidyapati fame rests mainly on his composition of lyrics that:

he wrote in the common language, spoken at that time in his native land, and he modeled his lyrics on the lines that Jaydeva had innovated
about two hundred years earlier in Sanskrit. This is why he was designated even during his lifetime as ‘Abhinava-Jayadeva’ .... 47

His significance lies in the fact that by combining the folk-language with the scholastic tradition of Sanskrit, he paved the way for the development of Maithili language as an independent language. In this sense, he can aptly be described as the progenitor of modern Maithili literature. His genius covered different aspects of intellectual and philosophical inquiry in society, culture, polity, erotics, music, drama, and several other dimensions of human organization. Moreover, in doing so he based heavily on the epic tradition of Hinduism. He beautifully combined the epic tradition of Hinduism with practical experiences of people in their day-to-day activities.

The subsequent period after Vidyapati is marked by its preference for drama and its musical qualities. The Maithili drama took the form of Kirtanya drama, the theme of which was drawn from the story of Radha Krishna, Mahesha (Lord Siva and Parvati). Kirtanya drama is considered as the landmark achievement of Maithili literature, because it not only simplified the poetic tradition of Vidyapati but also it contributed to the popularity, universalization and further development of Maithili language.

During the formative years of Maithili language, one finds a two-way dialectical process of the origin, growth
and development of Maithili language and the establishment of separate linguistic identity of Mithila. Individuals picked up the folk-lore linguistic tradition from the common man and infused it with their knowledge of Sanskrit and made it the court language in a refined way. The refined language of the court-tradition was brought back among the people through different literary and cultural activities. This led to the symbolization of certain individuals as the representative of Mithila’s linguistic and cultural identity. Their works became a reference point for carrying out further educational activities. The language of these works became the language of learning. It crystallized the process of language identity formation.

The tasks of preservation and promotion of Mithila’s linguistic and cultural identity, shifted from individual’s locale of medieval period to the different socio-cultural organizations and research institution in the modern period. The chief of them was Maithila Mahasabha (1910), Maithila Shikshita Samaja (Calcutta, 1919), Mithila Publishing Company, Maithili Sahitya Sabha, Mithila Research Society, etc. The chief object and concern of these organizations are (were) how to cultivate and promote the Maithili language and culture. However,

the cumulative effect of all these efforts was to make the people of Mithila conscious of their unity and past glory. They soon realized that the rise of the new Mithila depended solely on
the progress of their mother tongue. They turned their attention to the study and the publication of old classics of Maithili and also to the writing of new types of literature.48

Special emphasis has been placed on the translation, documentation, lexiographical and journalistic activities to patronize, and popularize the Maithili language. A specific mention here can be made of the journalistic activities and the content of essays. First, the journalism in Maithili.

The Maithila-Hita-Sadhna (1908) was the first monthly periodical in Maithili. Next in row are Mithila-Moda, published from Benaras, 1906; Mithila-Mihira, first published in three languages (Maithili, English and Hindi) from Darbhanga. Later it shifted to Patna. Initially it was a monthly Maithili journal, it became weekly in later years. Its publication has stopped now. It is said to be the mouthpiece for ventilating the grievances of Mithila region, and pioneered the propagation of the demand for Mithila state.

In the second phase, the Maithilis outside the Mithila took up the case of Mithila-Maithili through two monthlies - Maithila Prabha, first published from Ajmer (August 1920 to December 1924) and later from Agra (June 1925 to June 1926) and Maithila Prabhakar from Aligarh (October 1929 to January 1930). Maithili publications outside Mithila served the purpose of establishing a social contact among the Maithils living outside the Mithila region.
Besides, a number of other magazines were published. They are, Sri Maithili (1925 to 1927), Mithila-Mitra (1931 to 1932), Maithila-Bandhu (1935 to 1943), new series 1947 - Mithila Yuvaka (1938 to 1941), Mithila-Moda (1936), Bharti (1937), Vibhuti (1937 to 1938) etc.

In the post-independent period, the important Maithili magazines and journals are: Svadesa (1948), Mithila Jyotii (1948), Vaidehi (1950), Mithila Darsan (1953), Bhaka etc.

The basic objectives and the activities of Maithili journalism are (were) to uphold and promote the historical glory of Mithila, social renovation, public health, commentaries on current topics, literary publications and recreational activities. However, the central theme was to serve the interests of Mithila, Maithil and Maithili.

But unfortunately, due to the lack of economic resources, most of these journalistic ventures could not last long. Another substantial reason is the advent of the Hindi and English journalism with adequate resources. The elite preferred to read publications in Hindi and English. They showed their negligence to the cause of Maithili journalism. This is partly because, they constituted and belonged to the pan-Indian group of new elite formation. Moreover, Hindi and English became functionally relevant for venturing into modern professions. The result was the lack of readership to the Maithili journalism.
Conclusion

Maithili in no sense can be said to be a dialect of Hindi. It is an independent language, belonging to the Indo-Aryan family of the Indian languages. It has a continuous literary tradition and history especially since 14th century. It is still a popular language among the people of Mithila. Despite, this fact, why has Maithili not been able to build a strong linguistic identity? Many factors are responsible.

As discussed above social enclavement of Maithili language and the new trend of sanskritization created a sense of despair and doubt among the people belonging to the caste groups other than the non-twice born. An extreme viewpoint is that language (Maithili) is a precursor of social and cultural exploitation. Thus, the anociation of the language has negatively with caste configuration of the area which affected the cementation of Maithili linguistic identity.

Maithili intellectuals have failed to distinguish and differentiate the interests of Maithil community from those of other linguistic communities.

Politicized social compositions of Mithila have also adversely affected the creation of a strong regional and linguistic identity. Maithili is interpreted as an
exclusive preserve of only two castes/communities of Mithila.

States apathetic attitudes towards Maithili and the gradual promotion of Hindi at the cost of Maithili has slowly created a parallel linguistic identity in Mithila.

Functional relevance and social use of Maithili is too restricted to serve any potential interests of the educated and unemployed youths. This is partly because of the step motherly treatment with Maithili language by the central and state governments.

Lastly, it may be said that the ritualistic culturalism and highly structured social order accordingly is not able to cementize the linguistic identity.
References


5. Ibid, pp.311-12.


7. Ibid.


13. Ibid.


17. He was a subdivisional officer at Madhubani. Mithila was hit severely by the great Bihar earthquake in 1934. In order to estimate the severity of damage, he made an extensive tour of this part of Mithila. Coincidently it was during this tour that he came across with a rich coloured murals on the walls of inner rooms of a damaged house. He was amazed with the sense of imagination and creativeness, which the crude mud wall decoration of painting was depicting. After further investigations, he published his findings in the art journal, Marg in 1949.

18. This author came across with this fact of composite culture of Mithila during his extensive field study and as participant observer of Maithili culture.

19. Siki is a kind of grass. By weaving them in different shapes and sizes colourful domestic articles such as dagra, soop, chitni, etc. are made.

20. R. Chaudhari, op. cit., p.375.


22. Fish along with pan (betel) and Makhana constitute central symbols of religious and material culture of Mithila.


26. This geographical classification of Maithili language and culture is based on the author’s participant observation of Maithili culture and language.


28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

33. Subhadra Jha, op. cit., p. 44.
34. Ibid, pp. 44-45.
35. Ibid, pp. 569-70.
36. This was revealed during the course of field study when many people belonging to lower castes said that they are addressed like this due to their socio-cultural and economic backwardness.
41. Ibid, p. 408.
42. Ibid, p. 419.
43. Jayakanta Mishra, op. cit., p. 34.
44. R. Chaudhury, op. cit., p. 417.
45. Jayakanta Mishra, op. cit., p. 35.
46. Ibid, p. 68.