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Love for *Maiti*: Theme in the Folklore of Uttarakhand

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Abstract:

This research paper examines the profound significance of '*Maiti*' (natal family) for *Dhiyan* (married daughters) in the culture of Uttarakhand. The paper highlights the pivotal role of the *Mait* (natal home) in the lives of women, emphasizing its importance in shaping their identity and sense of belongingness. It reflects how the beauty of Nature evokes nostalgia in married women, transporting them back to their *mait*. Through an exploration of the folklore of Uttarakhand, it examines how the love and yearning for one's natal family is deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Uttarakhand. Even the mythological story of Goddess Nanda Devi illustrates this emotion, reflecting that the love and yearning for one's *mait* is so strong that it influences not just mortals but also gods and goddesses. The stories depict how a married girl, at in-laws' home, considers Nature as her alternate *mait*, as it has always provided her comfort in her dark hours. In return, she has always protected it like a true daughter. It, thus, elucidates that not only the culture, but even the Nature celebrates the bond of love between a woman and her *maiti*.

Keywords: Folklore, Uttarakhand, Women, Natal Family, *Mait*, *Dhiyan*, *Chait*.

INTRODUCTION

A woman is a portrait of emotions painted with different colours of joy, love, sadness, anger, jealousy, sacrifice, devotion, loyalty and resilience. Love is the most beautiful and captivating hue of this masterpiece. Women have been the epitome of love and sacrifice ever since the dawn of history. This love is incomparable when it is associated with their parents and siblings. It remains etched in their heart forever. It is a love that withstands distance and time. It nurtures their sense of identity and belongingness. It gives them hopes through the highs and the lows even when they are far away from their family.

In the dialects of Uttarakhand, '*Maiti*' means natal family and '*Mait*' means natal home. The *Maiti* refers to the family into which a girl is born or from which she originates. It typically includes parents, siblings, and extended family members. The importance of the *mait* lies in its role in shaping a woman's early experiences, values and beliefs. It plays a significant role in the transmission of traditions, customs, and heritage from one generation to the next. Thus, it provides a foundation for identity formation, cultural upbringing and emotional support. The love for *maiti* and *mait* is manifested in all dimensions of folk tradition including ballads, festivals, dance, songs and folktales. Even the mythological story of Goddess Nanda Devi illustrates this emotion, which shows that the love and yearning for one's *mait* is so strong that it influences not just mortals but also gods and goddesses. Love and yearning for *maiti* is deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of Uttarakhand and is passed on from generation to generation.

IMPORTANCE OF *DHIYAN* AND *MAIT* IN THE CULTURE OF UTTARAKHAND

In Uttarakhand, married daughters are called *Dhiyan*. Goddess Nanda Devi herself is worshipped and remembered as *dhiyan* (Sax 491). Chandra Singh Negi points out the belief that the resident deities move with the bride to her in-laws' home and protect her. It keeps her

rooted in her native place since she is bound to the same obligations with her natal god as before (08). *Dhiyans* are called back to their *mait* on various occasions. It serves two purposes: a) to reunite with them and b) to provide them relief from hardships they may face in their in-law's home. William S. Sax remarks, women believe that even after marriage they can never sever their ties with their natal families. Their lifetime requirement at their natal villages on different occasions confirms this belief (491). They are entitled to visit their natal family during the major *Sankrant* festivals (Fiol 122). Also, during the month of Sharad, special attention is paid to *dhiyan*. They are invited and served with delicacies. It is believed that by treating them well, the deceased relatives are reassured that the sisters and daughters of their family are being cared for even after their death. A *dhiyan* is "entitled to certain privileges while in the village, including the freedom to roam about and served without doing housework" (Fiol 122). Whenever she departs from her *mait*, she receives a warm farewell. *Kaleyeu* is the gift of eatables that is given to the daughter every time she leaves her *mait* for her in-laws' home (C. S. Negi 11). It is not just food items but a bundle of love and emotions of her family. It shows the deep respect and affection of her *maiti*.

During the month of *Chait* or spring season, the beauty of Nature evokes the sense of nostalgia in a woman and transports her to cherished memories of childhood. The season elicits the feeling of joy and rejuvenation, reminiscent of childhood days spent at the natal home. Govind Chatak in *Garhwali Lokgathayen* writes:

In Uttarakhand, the month of *Chait* is associated with *Khud*, i.e., anxiety, yearning and longing for one's natal family. During the spring season, as the earth blossoms and the mountains are ablaze with red flowers of burans; the edges of farms are blooming with yellow flowers of fyunli, and the forests are filled with the songs of birds, a married girl living beyond seven mountains and dark clouds becomes restless and pines for her natal family amidst the hardships at in-laws' home (201).

The line by singer, Narendra Singh Negi, “*Aayo mahina chait ko, baato battai diyo mait ko*” very well captures this phenomenon. Chatak further explains:

During the month of *Chait*, *Aujis* from their natal village used to arrive, mainly after the birth of their first child. The *Aujis* used to give blessings to the married daughters and sing auspicious songs on the beats of a drum, wishing them happiness and prosperity. This ritual was known as *Dhiyan Chaiti*....When the *Aujis* used to arrive beating drums, the women were filled with excitement, anticipating the messages from their *mait*. The *Aujis* were given gifts and in return, the *Aujis* gave blessings and gifts to *dhiyan* and her offsprings. However, the custom is no longer practiced and *Aujis* and their songs exist only in memories (201-02).

The *Aujis* (local drummers and singers) were a very important link between the women and their *mait*. The married daughters used to eagerly wait for the *Aujis*, their hearts heavy with longing. The songs and the messages sung by *Aujis* flooded their minds with the memories of their loved ones.

The folk songs of Uttarakhand also echo this theme of deep love for one's natal family. *Khuded Geet*, one of the main genres of songs of Uttarakhand, are sung by married women when they miss their parents and siblings or their husbands who leave for their jobs after marriage. These songs express their struggles at the in-laws' home and their longing and desire to meet their family and to relive their childhood. The *Khuded Geet* express how the beauty and liveliness of spring season triggers their souls to relive those happy days in their *mait*. The songs preserve the alternate history of hardships and struggles of women of Uttarakhand (Sharma). Narendra Singh Negi, the renowned singer from Uttarakhand, has depicted various themes of the region in his songs, including the theme of love for *maiti*. One of his compositions that deeply resonates with this emotion is noteworthy:

Ghughooti of my parents' home is singing

That spring has come, here it comes

The snow of hills might have melted

Woods would have flourished of my parents' home

Chakhulis would be flying out of their nests

And daughters would be getting ready for their parents' home

Buransh would be blooming at the hills

Fyonli would be smiling at the foothills

Phulaaris would go door to door with basket of flowers

Friends who are fortunate, would be performing Thadya, Chaunfula

Father would be sitting depressed at Tibari

Mother hopefully would be looking forward to see me

When would the Auji of my parents' home come?

And bring the news of my siblings (N. S. Negi 59).

In this song, the music of *Ghughuti* (a bird species) during the spring season, stirs in a married woman the memories of her natal home. She envisions the beauty of her natal place. She is aware that her parents must be sad as well without her. She also anxiously waits for the *Aujis*

of her village to come and give news of her family's well-being. *Ghughuti* is one of the most often occurring motifs in the folklore of Uttarakhand. The bird has a beautiful voice that can be heard throughout the year; however, during the spring season, when the flowers adorn the Nature with the beautiful colours, the music seems even more melodious, reminding women of their *mait*. The women address the bird and try to share their feelings with it. As one of the songs says:

Na baas ghughuti Chait ki khud lagi cha mai mait ki

Daali fulali maa fulon ki, khud lagi chai mai bhullo ki

Baat dekhi da raun baba aal, Chait fulkandi maa meeku lyaal

Na baas ghughuti Chait ki khud lagi cha mai mait ki.

In these lines, a woman requests *Ghughuti* to stop singing as its song reminds her of *mait*. She misses her siblings and anticipates her father's visit during the month of *Chait*.

THEME OF LOVE FOR ONE'S *MAITI* IN THE FOLKLORE OF UTTARAKHAND

"The Tragedy of a Flower" in Dr Arun Pant's translation of Govind Chatak's *Uttarakhand ki Lokkathayein* is a story of a girl named Fyunli who spent her childhood in the woods. She was as beautiful as Nature itself. One day, she came across a prince who had come for hunting in the forest. The prince fell in love with her. When she gets married to the prince, she initially enjoys the luxury of the palace, but later she starts missing her life in forest. She missed the animals, the birds and the flora of the forest whom she had always considered her *maiti*. Even the life of the palace could not charm her. She became seriously ill and finally died. Her last wish to her husband was that he should not hunt in the forest where she lived and that he should cremate her at the top of the mountain in the forest where she used to live. Her wish

was fulfilled; and at the place, where she was cremated, a beautiful yellow flower bloomed, which was named as 'Fyunli' (83-87).

The story depicts the immense love, a woman has for her natal family and place. The prosperity and grandeur of a palace is nothing in front of that love. For her, the true wealth lies not in gold or jewels or majestic palaces, but in the unwavering embrace of her natal world. In this story, the Mother Nature is the only *mait* that Fyunli knew in her childhood and her last wish to her husband illustrates her profound love for *mait*. As a true daughter of Mother Nature, Fyunli is an embodiment of quality of life-giving and nurturing. Even at the death bed, she is selflessly concerned about other creatures and eventually transforms into a flower and becomes a part of the Mother Nature.

Folklore is the mirror of any culture. "Folklore is *autobiographical ethnography*- that is, it is a people's own description of themselves" (Dundes 471). The story of Fyunli reflects the cultural values of women in Uttarakhand, who have consistently expressed their love for Mother Nature. The Chipko Movement stands witness to their love and emotional attachment to Nature. It was a non-violent movement during 1970's wherein women of Uttarakhand hugged trees and prevented them from being cut down by loggers. The movement aimed to protect forests, promote ecological awareness, and assert community rights over natural resources. The women's culture is a blend of both male culture as well as female culture, as they are not only the nurturers but also the redeemers (Urvashi 05). The story of Fyunli and the Chipko Movement are testament to their role as redeemer or saviour. They transcend traditional gender role to become the saviour.

In another story "Sadai" translated by Dr Arun Pant, Sadai was married at an early age. The geographical terrains of her husband's home did not allow her to visit her *maiti*. She planted a sapling of *Shilang* at a mountain, nurtured it and considered it as her *maiti*. She always

prayed to Devi Maa for a brother who could come and escort her to her parents' home. Her prayers were answered and back at home, a boy was born to her parents. He was named as Sadau. One day, when he grew up, he expressed the desire to meet his sister and escort her home for a few days. His mother warned him of the difficulties he may encounter on the way to his sister's village, but he could not be convinced. Finally, after walking miles for many days through the dense forests, crossing rivers and mountains, Sadau reached his sister's village. On seeing her brother, Sadai was extremely happy and expressed her gratitude to Devi Maa for her brother's visit. However, Devi Maa tried to test her devotion and asked for the sacrifice of her brother. Sadai instead promised to sacrifice her twin sons in place of her brother (100-04). The story is also narrated in ballad form by Dr Govind Chatak in *Garhwali Lokgathayen* as one of the *Chaiti gathas*. In this version of the story, Sadai's brother is served with food mixed with poison by her husband's second wife. Sadai, in her deep cries, addresses Devi Maa and pleads for her brother to be brought back to life. Devi Maa answers her prayer but, in return, asks for the sacrifice of either her brother or sons (216-18).

In Uttarakhand, the harsh geographical conditions and societal norms did not allow a girl to visit her *mait* on her own. Brothers played a pivotal role in escorting their sisters to their natal homes and back to their in-laws' homes (Chatak, Garhwali Lokgathayen 202). For many years after her marriage, Sadai had not seen her natal family. She was yearning to see them. However, without a brother to help her cross the difficult terrain between her *mait* and her in-laws' home, it remained impossible.

O lofty Mountains please bow

O pine trees please bend low.

Far from maika this life is full of sorrow

Hope remains to see father's desh every morrow

(Chatak, The Folk Tales of Uttarakhand 100).

In the lines above, Sadai requests difficult landscapes to be kind to her and yield to her desire, which reflects her deep yearning and desperation to reunite with her *maiti*. Her heart ached with longing when she watched other women depart for their natal homes. While cooking meals “she felt herself to be like the rice grain boiling in water” (Chatak, The Folk Tales of Uttarakhand 101) which very well expresses her agony. Sadai prayed every day for a brother who could come and escort her to her *mait*. In her moments of vulnerability, the *Shilang* tree offered her support. The plant, much like a *maiti*, absorbed all her pains and sorrows, and offered her solace in its presence. Also, the story exhibits the extent to which a girl could go for the sake of her love for her *maiti*. Her willingness to sacrifice her children in order to save her brother’s life, illustrates her loyalty to her parents and brother. It shows her devotion and love for her family as she grapples with the conflict between her love for present family and past family.

Another *gatha* in *Garhwali Lokgathayen* narrates the myth of Nanda Devi. Nanda Devi, the consort of Lord Shiva, expresses her desire to visit her *mait*. Every day and night, she was pining to see her family, but Lord Shiva, unable to understand her desire, denies her wish. Once, a yajna was being held at her natal village by her father. All the sisters except Nanda Devi were called home. In a fit of rage, she curses her family. As a result, misfortune befalls her natal village. When the family realises that it was because of the curse of their daughter Nanda, they send her brothers to escort her. Nanda Devi became very happy upon seeing her brothers and managed to convince Lord Shiva to permit her to visit her natal home. However, she was not treated well in her *mait*. She was offered a meal of *Kandali* in place of rice and milk. Disheartened, she leaves her natal village and returns to Mt. Kailash. When Lord Shiva asks Nanda Devi why she returned so soon, she replies that she was missing him. She claims to have been fed rice and milk. However, Lord Shiva contradicted her, stating that she had been fed

Kandali, and not rice and milk. To prove her wrong, he asks her to expel and show what all she had eaten in her *mait*. When Nanda Devi reveals all she had consumed, it was only rice and milk everywhere (Chatak, Garhwali Lokgathayen 149-59).

The *gatha* opens with the lines expressing the deep yearning of Goddess Nanda Devi for her *mait*:

Char din Swami, mi mait jayondu.

Raat din gaura tweeku kanu mait hoyi?

Byali sanjh bodi mi mait jayondu,

Aaj raati bodi Swami mi mait jayondu.

Sanjh ku saber Nanda tyari Kano mait hoyi?

Bhai bhatijon ki Swami khud lagi rayn,

Budya bwai Babu ki Swami khud lagi rayn

(Chatak, Garhwali Lokgathayen 149).

In these lines, Nanda Devi seeks permission to visit her *mait*. However, Lord Shiva, though almighty, struggles to understand the depth of female emotion of yearning for *mait*. Nanda Devi expresses that she is intensely missing her *maiti*. It reflects that the desire to reunite with *maiti* transcends even the boundaries of divinity. She resented the struggles and hardships of her husband's home at Mount Kailash, yearning day and night for her natal family. The hardships faced by Nanda Devi at Mt. Kailash are very similar to the state of women in Uttarakhand. Therefore, these women are referred to as "present day Nandas" (C.S. Negi 117). Moreover, what could be more beautiful than a sister seeing her brothers after 12 long years. Her heart fills with joy and an overwhelming desire to give her all to her brothers.

She pleads with the cow to offer her milk,

Which the cow refuses by saying- ‘what will my calves drink then?’

She then approaches the bird, to yield her milk,

Which again, the bird refuses, ‘what will my chicks eat then (C.S. Negi 122).

It is “absurd- why request a bird to yield milk, one might ask? But then, what is more beautiful remains the sister’s longing, her desire to provide everything in her possession, as well as what she could be able to procure from outside, all to serve her brothers, who have arrived at her home; and thus her endeavour to fetch the little that a bird too can provide her with” (C.S. Negi 122).

Despite not being treated well by her *maiti*, she chose not to speak ill of them upon her return home. Even after being served with *Kandali*, she told Lord Shiva that she had rice and milk. It demonstrates her commitment to preserve the dignity and respect of her *maiti*. As the proverb goes in Uttarakhand “*mait ki kandali pudhki bhi pyaari*” (even the *Kandali* meal of natal family is delightful) (Chatak, Garhwali Lokgathayen 159). The treatment of Nanda Devi by her natal family is quite unusual because daughters of Uttarakhand are typically treated with love and care at *mait* (Chatak, Garhwali Lokgathayen 159). “It is not that the *Dhiyani* is not offered due attention, the attention they deserve; but are taken for granted” (C.S. Negi 123). In another version, Nanda Devi is treated well by her family, upon her arrival. She is escorted back to her in-law’s home with dignity; but on her journey, she starts mourning and complaints about her hardships in Mt Kailash. Then, her father, Rishi Hemant promises to escort her back every year which led to the annual jatra and the Nanda Devi Raaj jatra every twelve years, a religious and cultural pilgrimage in Uttarakhand (Urvashi 10).

“*Bhai Bhuka Lauti, Mai Soyi Rahi*” is a story wherein a married woman, during the spring season, awaited *Bhitoli* (gifts) from her parents’ home. Finally, the day arrived when her

mother sent her younger brother with *Bhitoli*. Before her brother arrived, the woman, worn out from her daily tasks, fell into a deep sleep. The brother was overjoyed to see his sister. But he did not want to disturb her sleep; so, he quietly sat beside her. However, their mother was alone at home and therefore, he reluctantly departed without waking his sister. When she woke up and saw the *Bhitoli* beside her, she realised that her brother had come while she was sleeping. She got anxious and started running here and there, looking for her brother. In her haste, she stumbled and fell off the cliff and died. Her repentance and love for her *maiti*, continued in her afterlife and she became a bird which is still heard in forests singing “*bhai bhuka lauta mai soyi rahi*”. (Brother returned hungry, I kept sleeping) (Pokhariya 19-20).

Bhitoli is a festival mainly celebrated in Kumaon region of Uttarakhand during spring season. During this festival, parents and siblings bring gifts for the married girl which symbolizes that she is still being missed and remembered and is as important as she was before her marriage. These gifts from her *mait* signify that she is still a cherished part of that family, and her identity as a member of that family is upheld and preserved.

My Fair Sister! This month of the love of brother and sister has arrived.

Fortunate person who remains alive to listen to this month's seasonal song!

Who will be able to listen this seasonal song after dying?

Those with a brother, will get a Betholi from his brother

Who will get a Betholi for an unfortunate like me who is brotherless? (Randhawa and Joshi 21).

The above lines express the importance of *maiti* and festivals related to them. The lines highlight how a girl, with no brother, feels herself to be unfortunate. They express her longing and yearning for a brother who could shed his love and blessings during the festival. The above

discussed story delves into the depths of love for one's *maiti*. Here, the woman could not forget her natal family, even after her death. It is a story of eternal affection for one's natal family that transcends even death. The bird's song is a gentle reminder of her love and yearning for her family and her eternal regret for not being able to welcome her brother, who crossed mountains and forests to see his sister but returned without even drinking water. Though time changes but her words remain, which is a timeless tribute to her natal family. This narrative along with the legend of Sadai and Goddess Nanda Devi highlights the bond of love between a girl and her siblings. "These siblings are often 'fellow travellers' through adversity or significant life events..." (White and Hughes). Siblings are the best childhood friends who share common experiences. In moments of joy, they multiply each other's happiness and in times of struggle, they provide strength to each other. It makes them invaluable companions in life's journey. "A woman can have sons again but a younger brother who grows to maturity riding on the back of his sister will not be found again". (Chatak, The Folk Tales of Uttarakhand 103).

In another story, "*Teen Teetri Teen Teen*" by Dr. Dev Singh Pokhariya, Once, there was a poor widow and her daughter. The daughter was married into a wealthy family, but her mother-in-law was very cruel. She did all the household chores yet was given only three plain chapatis to eat each day. She missed her mother and the warmth and comfort of her natal home. As a result, the girl fell seriously ill within six months of her marriage and became bedridden. When her mother arrived and saw her daughter's condition, she was filled with extreme pain. As her daughter narrated her sufferings, she passed away in her mother's arms. The girl in her afterlife became a bird '*Teetri*' that still sings "*teen teetri teen teen*" (three thin chapatis) (21-22).

The daughters-in-law in the hills of Uttarakhand have long endured hardships at their in-laws' homes. They were deprived of adequate food even after toiling for hours in fields and forests. They were given *Jhangora* and *Mandua* while the rest of the family enjoyed meals

made of rice and wheat flour. Their laughter and outspokenness were discouraged. In some places, they were forbidden from wearing footwear as it was seen as a gesture of disrespect towards elders. The Mothers-in-law passed on their sufferings to their daughters-in-law, as it is a human tendency to give what one has received. This inclination is expressed by Philip Larkin in “This Be The Verse,” where he writes, “Man hands on misery to man. / It deepens like a coastal shelf.” Perhaps, this is why a bride’s cries during her *vidai* (departure) were so loud and painful that even the distant villages could tell that a girl is being separated from her *maiti*. This departure carries profound emotional weight for a girl and her family. She has to be forcibly taken out of her house to be seated in her *doli* (palanquin,) her heart heavy with apprehension about her prospects for happiness and comfort in her new home. The above story shows that the girl, even after death, misses her mother. Her sorrowful words reverberate through the trees, whispering her pain to her mother and to Mother Nature, her alternate *mait*. Nature has always been a ‘*mait* away from *mait*’ for a married woman. The pain and hardships at in-laws home often found vent in forests where women used to meet; relax; share their miseries and sorrows; eat berries and fruits and sing together. It was a place of recreation for them, just like their *mait*, which nourished and rejuvenated their spirit.

“Wait Wait Sister Day” is a story of a girl named ‘Paruli’ who suffered the atrocities of her mother-in-law. Her mother-in-law did not even let her visit her natal family. One day, upon learning that her elder brother was home on leave, she desired to visit her home and meet her family. She asked her mother-in-law for permission to visit her natal home. In return, her mother-in-law cursed her, asking who would do all the work after her. Paruli offered to do the chores for next few days in advance. The mother-in-law then reluctantly gives her leave for four days. However, before going to her *mait*, Paruli was supposed to clean cowdung from seven cowsheds, thresh seven units of rice and cut seven bundles of grass. The sly mother-in-law also reminds her that the basket for picking cowdung was broken, threshing stick was

broken and there were no sickle and rope to cut and tie grass bundles. Also, Paruli could only leave for her home before sunset. The mother-in-law intentionally assigned difficult tasks, expecting that Paruli will not be able to complete them and thus will not be able to visit her *mait*. Despite these challenges, Paruli was very excited and started doing her work. She cleared the cowdung from cowshed with her hands. When she turned towards threshing rice, a flock of birds came and helped her in the task. Later, when she went to the forest to collect grass, some rats helped her in cutting the grass and snakes helped her tie the grass bundles. She completed her tasks and requested Sister Day (Din Didi) to help her reach her *mait*. The sun cooperated and did not set that day until she reached her natal home (Agarwal 56-62). The story is also narrated in *Uttarakhand ki Lokkathaain* by Dr. Dev Singh Pokhariya with slight variations.

In the hilly regions of Uttarakhand, daughters-in-law carry an immense burden of household chores that cannot be neglected for even a day. Their mornings begin much before the sunrise, with the first cry of cattle. While the world is still filled with darkness, they return from the forests with the grass bundles. From managing family affairs to tending to the farms and livestock, each task rests on their shoulders which shows their strength and resilience. Therefore, the mere thought of sending them to their natal homes remains inconceivable, establishing their indispensable yet unrewarded role within the family. Even when allowed to go, “she is supposed to complete beforehand her mandatory day-to-day rituals of feeding the baby, in-laws, tending to livestock, and so on” (C.S. Negi 119). Even Goddess Nanda, when requested Lord Shiva to let her visit her *mait*, was reminded of all the works that will suffer in her absence. “O. K., if you have decided to visit your natal place, who would feed your baby? / With whom will you leave him behind? / Who would take care of the livestock, the cowshed Gaura?” (C.S. Negi 120). In the story, Paruli, determined to reunite with her *maiti*, accepted all the tasks given to her and completed them despite the hurdles created by her mother-in-law. Even the Nature became her ally, leading her closer to her loved ones. Mother Nature has

always nourished and caressed the daughters of Uttarakhand. The Maiti Movement is another movement where Nature acts as a tool to bring a daughter close to her natal family. It was founded by an environmentalist, Kalyan Singh Rawat. In this, a bride, before leaving for in-laws' home, plant a sapling in her backyard. Kalyan Singh Rawat, in an interview, says:

In Uttarakhand, there is a unique emotionally strong bond between a mother and a daughter. They are always connected, whether in the kitchen, on farms or in the forest. They share a deep emotional bond and their separation after daughter's marriage is unbearable for them. Therefore, if a daughter plants a sapling it symbolizes her memories. The plant is nurtured not only by her mother but also by her father and siblings. They take care of the plant as if it were their own daughter. This initiative is a preserver of both Nature and culture (17:55-19:30).

Thus, the movement aims to foster harmony between emotions and ecological sensibility.

In November 2015, during a visit of the research scholar to Darjeeling, a local driver, when asked why all the houses were heavily adorned with flowers, gave a delightful reply. He answered- "in our culture, both flowers and daughters hold immense significance. Flowers enhance the external beauty of a house, while daughters enhance the beauty inside the house". This perspective reflects that daughters are revered not only in the culture of Uttarakhand but also serve as the symbols of beauty and honour in the Indian culture.

CONCLUSION

The Women of Uttarakhand are as diverse in nature as it's landscape. They are as strong as Himalayas; as nurturing as river Ganga; as generous as forest; as fierce as a tigress; as beautiful as a flower; as melodious as a bird and as sturdy as an oak tree. They have always proved their merit and strength at home and in society. They are like an ever-flowing river, nurturing people around them with love and sacrifice; but when their *maiti* are concerned they

become the ocean of love. The folklore of Uttarakhand is flooded with the narratives demonstrating their love and yearning for their *maiti* which even transcended the death. Even the Goddess Nanda could not remain untouched by this beautiful human emotion. The spring season, the birds, the forests serve as the markers of memory reminding women of their *mait*. It seems, not only the culture but even the Nature celebrates the bond of love between a woman and her *maiti*. The forests and their flora and fauna have always comforted her in her dark hours behaving as alternate *mait*. In return, she has always protected them like a true daughter.

The Women are wired to function in different roles and capacities but their role as *dhiyan* has a definite and revered place in Uttarakhand's culture and will continue to be so. They come to their *mait* to rejuvenate themselves, but more than that, they come to shower their love and blessings on their family like Goddess Nanda did by these words of blessings, “*Khoob falyaan fulyaan tumaari naat nanthaan poot Santaan*” (Chatak, Garhwali Lokgathayen 153)

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