

# Folklore

**Asstt. Prof. Dr.Ku. Priyamvada Dinesh Bhat**

M.A., M.PHIL., PH.D. (ENGLISH), B.B. Arts, N.B. Commerce & B.P.Science College, Digra445203,  
Dist. Yavatmal

## **ABSTRACT:**

All folklores are oral traditions, the lore, traditional knowledge and beliefs of culture often having no written language and they are transmitted, generally, by word of mouth. Like the written literature they contain both prose and verse narratives in addition to myths, dramas, rituals etc. Folklore gives us the wisdom to understand the moments from different point of views. It showcases that all of our problems and successes happen in every culture and throughout different periods of history. We are unique as individuals, but we are all connected through these moral truths.

## **Introduction:**

Folklore is the generic name used to denote those traditional beliefs, superstitions, manners, customs and observance of ordinary people which have persisted from earlier into later periods and which, in fragmentary, modified or comparatively unchanged form, have continued to exist outside the accepted pattern of contemporary knowledge and religion, in some cases, down to modern times Folktales, traditional ballads, folksongs, and proverbs also come under this heading and by a recent extension of meaning certain aspects of material culture originally excluded by definition.

Folklore is the body of expressive culture, including tales, music, dance, legends, oral history, proverbs, jokes, popular beliefs, customs and so forth within a particular population comprising the traditions of the culture, subculture, or a group. It is also the set of practices through which those expressive genres are shared. The academic and usually ethnographic study of folklore is sometimes called folkloristic. The word 'folklore' was first used by the English antiquarian William Thomas in a letter published by the London Journal 'Athenaeum' in 1846.

## **A Brief History of Folklore:**

The concept of folklore developed as a part of the 19th century ideology of romantic nationalism, leading to the reshaping of oral traditions to serve modern ideological goals, only in the 20th century did ethnographers begin to attempt to record folklore without overt political goals. The Brothers Grimm, Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, collected orally transmitted German tales and published the first series as Kinder-und Hasmarchen ("Children's and Household Tales") in 1812.

The term was coined in 1846 by an Englishman, William Thomas, who wanted to use Anglo-Saxon terms for what was then called 'popular antiquities'. Johann Gottfried von Herder first advocated the deliberate recording and preservation of folklore to document the authentic spirit, tradition, and identity of the German people; the belief that there can be such authenticity is one of the tenets of the romantic nationalism which Herder developed. The definition most widely accepted by the current scholars of the field is 'artistic communication in small groups' coined by Dan Ben-Amos, a scholar at the University of Pennsylvania, and the term and the associated field of study now include non-verbal art forms and customary practices

## **Types of Folklore**

Folklore can be divided into four areas of study artifact, describable and transmissible entity, culture, and behaviour. These areas do not stand alone however, often a particular item or element may fit into more than one of these areas.

### A) Folklore as Describable and Transmissible Entity:

Folklore can contain religious or mythic elements, it equally concerns itself with the sometimes mundane traditions of everyday life. Folklore frequently ties the practical and the esoteric into one narrative package. It has often been conflated with mythology, and vice versa, because it has been assumed that any figurative story that does not pertain to the dominant beliefs. Thus Roman religion is called "myth" by Christians. In that way, both "myth" and "folklore" have become catch-all terms for all figurative narratives with the dominant belief structure.

Sometimes "folklore" is religious in nature, like the tales of the Welsh Mabinogion or those found in Icelandic skaldic poetry. Many of the tales in the 'Golden Legend' of Jacob de Voragine also embody folklore elements in a Christian context; examples of such Christian mythology are the themes woven round Saint George or Saint Christopher. In this the term "folklore" is being used in a pejorative sense. That is, while the tales of Odin the Wanderer have the religious value to the Norse who composed the stories, because it does not fit into a Christian configuration it is not considered "religious" by Christians who may instead refer to it as "folklore".

Folktales are general term for different varieties of traditional narrative. The telling of stories appears to be a cultural universal, common to basic and complex societies alike. Even the forms of folktales take are certainly similar from culture to culture, and comparative studies of themes and narrative ways have been successful in showing these relationships. Also it is considered to be an oral tale to be told for everybody.

On the other hand, folklore can be used to describe accurately a figurative narrative, which has no sacred or religious content. In the Jungian view, which but one method of analysis, it may instead pertain to unconscious psychological patterns, instincts or archetypes of the mind. This may or may not have components of the fantastic (such as magic, ethereal beings or the personification of inanimate objects). These folktales may or may not emerge from a religious tradition, but nevertheless speak to deep psychological issues. The familiar folktale "Hansel and Gretel", is an example of this fine line. The manifest purpose of the tale may primarily be one of mundane instruction regarding the forest safety or secondarily a cautionary tale about the dangers of famine to large families, but its latent meaning may evoke a strong emotional response due to the widely understood themes and motifs such as "The Terrible Mother", "Death", and "Atonement with the Father".

There can be both moral and psychological scope to the work, as well as, entertainment value depending upon the nature of the teller, the style of telling, the ages of the audience members, and the overall context of the performance. Folklorists generally resist universal interpretations of narratives and, wherever possible, analyze oral versions of telling in specific contexts, rather than print sources which often show the work or bias of the writer or the editor.

Contemporary narratives common in the Western world include the urban legend. There are many forms of folklore that are so common, however, that most people do not realize that they are folklore, such as riddles, children rhymes and ghost stories, rumours, conspiracy theories, gossip, ethnic stereotypes, and holiday customs and life-cycle rituals. Adrienne Mayor, in introducing a bibliography on the topic, noted that most modern folklorists are largely unaware of classical parallels and precedents, in materials that are only partly represented by the familiar designation "Aesopica". The Ancient Greek and Roman literature contains rich troves of folklore and popular beliefs, many of which have counterparts in modern contemporary legends.

Vladimir Propp's classic study *Morphology of the Folklore* (1928) became the basis of research into the structure of folklore texts. Propp discovered a uniform structure in Russian fairy tales. His book has been translated into English, Italian, Polish and other languages.

## B) Material Culture:

Elements such as dolls, decorative items used in religious rituals, hand-built houses and barns, and handmade clothing and other crafts are considered to be folk artifacts, grouped within the field as "material culture" Accordingly, figures that depict characters from folklore artifacts, such as statues of the three wise monkeys may be considered to be folklore artifacts, depending on how they are used within a culture

The operative definition would depend on whether the artifacts are used and appreciated within the same community in which they are made, and whether they follow a community aesthetic

## C) Culture as Folklore:

Folklorist William Bascom states that folklore has many cultural aspects, such as allowing for escape from societal consequences. In addition, folklore can also serve to validate a culture as well as transmit a culture's morals and values. Folklore can also be used to assert social pressures, or relieve them, in the case of humour and carnival.

In addition, folklorists study medical, supernatural, religious and political belief systems as an essential, often unspoken, part of expressive culture

## D) Behaviour as Folklore:

Many rituals can be considered folklore, whether formulized in a cultural or religious system or practiced within a family or secular context. For example, in certain parts of the United States one places a knife, or a pair of scissors, under the mattress to "cut the birth pains" after giving birth. Additionally, children's counting-out games can be defined as behavioural folklore.

**Categories of Folklore:** The following are the categories of folklore

- Genres
- Archetypes, stereotypes and stock characters
- Ballad
- Blason Populaire
- Child lore
- Children's street culture
- Counting rhymes
- Costumbrismo
- Craft
- Custom
- Folk play
- Epic poetry
- Factoids
- Festival
- Folk art
- Folk belief
- Folk magic
- Folk medicine
- Folk metaphor:
- Folk poetry and rhyme
- Folk simile
- Folk song
- Folk narrative
- Anecdote
- Fairy tale
- Fable

- Ghost story
- Joke
- Legend
- Myth
- Parable
- Tall tale
- Urban legend
- Games
- Holiday lore and customs
- Mythology
- Riddle
- Sayings
- Maxim
- Proverb
- Superstition
- Taunts
- Weather lore
- Xerox lore

### **Folk Tales:**

The collection and interpretation of folktales has always been an important part of folklore studies and at one time seemed likely to overshadow all other sections of the work. Here, again, some tales are very old and embody in their incidents conditions actually prevailed in the regions where the tale is found at the time of its first telling is not so clear. The striking similarity of many stories found in different parts of the world suggests that they were carried from place to place by travelers. J. Jacob pointed out in his article in 'Folklore' vol 5, 1894, that some of their primitive elements may have been introduced in a particular country only after they have already become universal. On the other hand, it has been argued that if men have passed through some stages of development everywhere they are likely to have embodied the details of that development in stories that are essentially same.

The stories told by the early people, handed down from generation to generation carried by migrating tribes, merchants, sailors and other travelers from one country to another, fall into three main classes-

Myth

Legend and

Popular tales intended mainly for amusement

### **Indian Folktales:**

The folklore and folktales have been an eternal part of every culture since ages. When it comes to Indian folk tales, the country of diverse religions, languages and cultures has a complete range of tales and short stories. Indian folklore has a wide range of stories and mythological legends, which emerge from all walks of life. The interesting stories range from the remarkable 'Panchatantram' to 'Hitopadesha', from 'Jataka' to 'Akbar Birbal'.

Not only this, the great Indian epics like 'Ramayana. Mahabharata' are full of didactic stories inspired from the lives of the great souls. Being full of moralistic values, Indian folklore makes perfect stories for children, who are required to be, instilled with right values. All these ancient stories have been passed from generation to generation, creating bondage of traditional values with present day generation.

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