

Block

3

**FOLK LITERATURE: SOURCES, CHARACTERISTICS,
CLASSIFICATIONS AND FUNCTIONS**

UNIT 8**Folk Narrative Poems and Folk Songs** **5**

UNIT 9**Myths, Legends and Tales** **23**

UNIT 10**Proverbs, Riddles and Speech** **37**

UNIT 11**Archiving and Documentation** **55**

UNIT 12**Adaptation and Interpretation of Folk Literature in Modern
Times** **74**

EXPERT COMMITTEE

Late Prof. U.R. Ananthamurthy
Eminent Writer

Padmashree Prof. Manoj Das
Eminent Writer

Prof. Indranath Choudhury
Eminent Writer

Prof. K. Satchidanandan
Eminent Writer

Prof. T.S. Satyanath, Formerly Professor
Dept. of MIL and LS, University of Delhi

Prof. Satyakam
Director (SOH).

English Faculty, SOH

Prof. Anju Sahgal Gupta

Prof. Neera Singh

Prof. Malati Mathur

Prof. Nandini Sahu

Dr. Pema E Samdup

Ms. Mridula Rashmi Kindo

Dr. Parmod Kumar

Dr. Malathy A.

COURSE COORDINATOR

Prof. Nandini Sahu
Professor of English
School of Humanities, IGNOU

BLOCK PREPARATION

Prof. Nandini Sahu

Dr. Durbadal Bhattacharya
Assistant Professor
Department of English, LPU

Dr. Sutanuka Ghosh Roy
Assistant Professor, Dept. of English
Tarakeswar Degree College
University of Burdwan

Dr. R. Janatha
Assistant Professor, Department of English
Sree Ayyappa College for Women, Tamil Nadu

COURSE EDITORS

Prof. Nandini Sahu

Dr. Banibrata Mahanta

Secretarial assistance:

Mr. Sandeep K. Tokas,
C. O. (SOH)

PRINT PRODUCTION

Mr. C.N. Pandey
Section Officer (Publication)
SOH, IGNOU, New Delhi

June, 2018

© Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2018

ISBN : 978-93-87960-56-5

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph or any other means, without permission in writing from the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

Further information on Indira Gandhi National Open University courses may be obtained from the University's office at Maidan Garhi, New Delhi-110 068 or visit University's web site <http://www.ignou.ac.in>

Printed and published on behalf of the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi by Prof. Satyakam, Director, School of Humanities.

Cover Design by : ADA Graphic

Laser Typeset by : Tessa Media & Computers, C-206, A.F.E.-II, Okhla, New Delhi

Printed at :

BLOCK 3 FOLK LITERATURE: SOURCES, CHARACTERISTICS, CLASSIFICATIONS AND FUNCTIONS

This block deals with the ethical, moral, cultural, literary and social models of archiving and documentation of folk material. How is folklore documented as it is such an integral part of human existence? Opportunities to observe, elicit and document it are limitless. One need not travel to exotic places, seek out some pre-selected segment of the human population or wait until some special time to find folklore. Folklore can be documented in numerous ways. The oldest and most fundamental way is simply remembering what one has experienced. Jokes, riddles, jargons, gestures, rhymes and simple songs and melodies can be readily committed to memory. When recollected, these examples of folklore can easily be characterized, either orally or in writing. Secondly, folklorists make written records. The words a singer sings or a storyteller speaks can be represented fairly accurately in writing. Whether they are verbatim transcriptions of riddles or myths, summaries of epics or ballads, or sketches of house plans or body decorations, written records are more permanent than human recollections, hence the need and birth of folk literature. It has served as the folklorists' primary document since the inception of folklore as a discipline in the early 19th century. This block will introduce you to Folk Narrative Poems and Folk Songs, Myths, Legends and Tales, Proverbs, Riddles and Speech.

19110U
THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 8 FOLK NARRATIVE POEMS AND FOLK SONGS

Structure

- 8.0 Objectives
- 8.1 Introduction
- 8.2 Bengali Folk Poetry
- 8.3 Punjabi Folk Poetry
- 8.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 8.5 Notes
- 8.6 References and Further Readings
- 8.7 Check Your Progress: Possible Questions

8.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- appreciate what we understand by the term folk, both in terms of ‘people’ and ‘folklore’, and what we mean by ‘narrative poems’ in literature;
- understand the meaning of the terms ‘folk narrative poems’ and ‘folk songs’ and how they are related to folklore; and
- gain insights into how the people of India perceived their world of folklore and its functions and phenomena.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

What are ‘narrative poems’ in literature?

Now that you are doing this unit on the broad theme of ‘Folk narrative poems in Literature’, the first thing that you need to ask yourself is, what are ‘narrative poems’? What does the word mean? Narrative poetry is a form of poetry that tells a story, often making use of the voices of a narrator and characters as well, and the entire story is usually written in metred verse. Narrative poems usually do not follow rhythmic patterns. The poems that make up this genre may be short or long, and the story it relates to may be complex in nature. It is usually dramatic, with objectives, diverse characters, and metre. Narrative poems include ballads, epics, lays and idylls.

The focus of narrative poetry is often the pros and cons of life. Some narrative poetry takes the form of a novel in verse. Epic poems are very vital to narrative poems, although it is thought that narrative poems were created to explain oral traditions. Speaking in terms of narrative poetry, a romance is a narrative poem that tells a story of chivalry. On the other hand, shorter narrative poems are often similar in style to the short story.

What are ‘folk narrative poems in literature’?

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary says that “folk” means “people in general”. According to the Macmillan Dictionary it means “people of a particular type or from a particular place”. In India majority of ‘people’ or ‘folk’ are non-

literate: they cannot read and write, and their learning is dependent on what they see and hear, remember and imitate. Folk narrative poems are formed and transmitted from the perspective of time and space and are passed on from generation to generation. Furthermore folk narrative poems are an essential part of the social and cultural life of India. Generation after generation, people narrate these poems, relish them, interchange them and enrich them. Over the centuries, the unsaid things were said in the folktales as well as in the folk-songs in India. A folk narrative can have both a moral and psychological scope. It has a distinctive entertainment value, depending upon the nature of the teller, the style of telling, the ages of the members of the audience and the overall context of the performance.

8.2 BENGALI FOLK POETRY

Bengali is an Indo-Aryan language possessing a history and tradition of many centuries, and has a rich tradition of folklore and folk literature. Folk rhymes form an important part of this century-old tradition. The origins of many Bengali folk rhymes are obscure, no doubt, but are often thought to be of considerable antiquity. Folk rhyme exists in many Indian languages, but is often of secondary importance compared to other forms of folk literature, such as folktales and ballads. In Bengali folk literature, however, rhyme holds a place of equal importance to these other forms. Bengali folk rhyme is not simply an instrument for the amusement of children but a subject which requires serious study; it essentially bears most of the important characteristics of folk tradition: anonymous and collective creation, dynamism, textual variation, and social function.

Bengali has a rich tradition of folklore and folk literature. This tradition is the creation of the rural folk, transmitted orally from one generation to another. In addition to the rhymes, Bengali folk literature includes such forms as folktales, riddles, proverbs, maxims, and songs. Folk rhymes exist in one form or another in most areas of the world. Common examples are the nursery rhymes of Europe, the Mother Goose verse of America, and the *warabe uta* and *komori uta* of Japan. The origins of many Bengali folk rhymes are obscure, a large portion of them are known to have existed in the oral tradition for several centuries at least. This is a characteristic they share with the folk rhyme traditions found in most other cultures. Siddiqui quotes the famous folklorist M. Bloomfield:

There are many popular rhymes which cannot be definitely assigned to any specific moment in history. The very same popular [144] rhyme may have been in existence for decades, each time adopting itself, now to one and now to another manifestation of actual life, and being subjected sometimes to slight, sometimes to very extensive changes. (1963, 203)

Like many other folklorists, Bloomfield considers rhymes to be “striking examples of the poetic primitive” that existed as early as “primitive archaic” times. Many scholars consider rhyme to be the “genesis of all songs” and hence older than even the earliest of songs. This opinion is shared by experts on Bengali folk rhymes as Rabindranath Tagore, Sukumar Sen, and Muhammad Shahidullah (Shahed 53-54). On the basis of available evidence, Bengali folk rhymes appear to be at least as old as the Buddhist mystic verses *charyapada*, which are considered to be the earliest literary works in the Bengali language. If this hypothesis is proved correct, Bengali folk rhymes share the thousand-year history of the Bengali language itself.

Jawaharlal Handoo in his book *Folklore: An Introduction* divided the growth of Indian folklore studies into three distinct periods: the missionary, the nationalistic,

and the academic (127-44).

Let us now discuss some of the Basic Characteristics of Bengali folk narrative poems which are rhythmic in nature:

Folk rhyme may be basically defined as that segment of folk literature or oral tradition that consists of rhyming verse, usually recited or sung. There are certain other characteristics of Bengali folk narrative poems these include:

- a) Short verses with lines that almost invariably rhyme;
- b) A basis in sound, sometimes with a musical setting;
- c) A structure with, generally, no logical idea, story, or continuity of event, but composed rather of a series of images;
- d) Composition in simple meter and language;
- e) Marked by nonsense, fantasy, absurdity, impossibility, etc. – most are free from didacticism and idealism.

This definition of folk rhyme excludes several rhyming forms of Bengali folk literature that do not show all of the essential characteristics of folk rhyme; these forms include mantras, magical rhymes, proverbs, riddles, and maxims (the most popular of which are those of Khona and Dak). The following may be presented as examples of true folk narrative poems:

*Ghumparani masi-pisi¹ moder bari eso,
khat nai palong nai khokar
chokhe boso.
Bata vore pan debo gal vore
kheo,
Khokar chokhe ghum nai
ghum deye jeo.*

Translated into English as:

Oh aunts of sleep! Come to our home,
There is no cot or bed, so be
seated on child's eye.
A tray² full of betel leaf will be
served, eat them with full
mouth,
Sleep has gone away from child's
eye, give him some sleep.

Another example:

*Brishti pare tapur tupur
node elo ban,
Shib Thakurer biye holo tin
konney dan.
Ek konney radhen baren arek
konney khan,*

*Arek konney na khey baper
bari jan.*

Translated into English as:
It is raining *tapur tupur*³, rivers
are flooded,
The marriage of Shib Thakur held
with three brides.
One busy with cooking, another
eating.
The other left for home⁴ without
taking food.

Another example with some of its versions is as follows:

*Agdum bagdum ghoradum*⁵ *saje*
Dhak mridong jhajhor baje
Bajte bajte challo dhuli
Dhuli gelo shei komolapuli.

Agdum bagdum ghoradum saje
Phai mirgel ghaghor baje
Bajte bajte porlo thuli
Thuli gelo komolaphuli.

Agdum bagdum ghoradum saje
Lai mirgel ghaghor baje
Bajte bajte elo dhuli
Dhuli gelo shei komolapuli.

Agdam bagdam ghoradam saje
Dan mecra ghaghor baje
Bajte bajte parlo turi
Turi gelo komolapuri.

Agdum bagdum ghoradum saje
Lai gheghor ghagor baje
Bajte bajte challo dhuli
Dhuli gelo shei komolapuli.

Translated into English as:
Agdum bagdum ghoradum are preparing,
Drum, tom-tom, and gong are being beaten,
The drummer is moving while beating,
The drummer goes to that Komolapuli.

Agdum bagdum ghoradum are preparing,
The drummer is beating the tomtom and cymbals,
The beating continues and blinkers fall [on the eyes],
The blind man goes to Komolafuli.

Agdum bagdum ghoradum are preparing,
Red tom-tom and cymbals are being beaten,
The drummer comes while beating,
The drummer goes to that Komolapuli.

Agdam bagdam ghoradam are preparing,
To the right, *mecra*⁶ and cymbals are being beaten,
The beating continues and blinkers fall [on the eyes],
The blind man goes to Komolapuri.

Agdum bagdum ghoradum are preparing,
Cymbals are beating and [the woman in the] red skirt [is dancing],
The drummer is moving while beating,
The drummer goes to that Komolapuli.

Let us cite another example with its variants:

Chhele ghumalo para juralo
borgi elo deshe
Bulbulite dhan kheyechhe khajna
debo kise?

Moni ghumalo para juralo
gorki elo deshe
Gulgulie dhan kheyechhe khajna
debo kise?

The English translation:

Kids slept, locality silent, looters
came,
Birds have eaten the paddy, how
can I pay the tax?

Baby slept, locality silent, land
flooded.
*Gulguli*⁷ has destroyed the paddy,
How can I pay the tax?

The first of these two variants was collected in the western part of Bengal, while the second version was recorded in Chittagong which is now in the eastern part of Bangladesh⁸. The word *borgi* in the first rhyme has been transformed into *gorki* in the second variant; the other changes are minor. *Borgi* is the local Bengali name for

the Maratha cavalry; they are plunderers, notorious for their freebooting inroads. Their raids into the western part of Bengal in the first half of the eighteenth century led to social and economic disruption (Hossain 11-15), the memory of which is depicted in the first version of the rhyme. The eastern part of Bengal had very little experience of this event, but the coastal areas were frequently affected by the *goriki*, a high tidal wave that flooded the paddy fields and destroyed the rice. This difference in folk experience is reflected in the above textual variations of these rhymes.

Some rhymes are also classified according to function, others according to subject matter or main theme.

- i) The first of these are the Lullaby and cradle songs which the grand-mothers/fathers used to narrate to their grand-sons/daughters:

Ay ay chad mama tip diye za,
Chader kopale chad tip diye za.
Machh katle muru debo,
Dhan vangle kuru debo,
Kalo gorur dudh debo,
Dudh khabar bati debo
Chader kopale chad tip diye
za.

The English translation is as follows:

Come uncle moon! Give a *tip*⁹
Give a *tip* on the moon's [baby's] forehead, O moon!
When I cut a fish I shall give you the head
When I husk the paddy I shall give you the chaff,
I shall give you the milk of a black cow,¹⁰
I shall give you a pot for drinking the milk,
Give a *tip* on the moon's forehead,
O moon!

Another popular one is:

Dol dol duloni
Ranga mathay chiruni,
Bor asbe ekhoni
Niye zabe tokhoni.

The English translation is as follows:

Swing, cradle, swing
A comb in the colourfully decorated bride's head,
The bridegroom will come right now
And take you then and there.

- ii) Folk Narrative poems which sing of the feminine rhymes of marriage and other domestic functions:

Alta para pa'go
Jamai ante ja'goy

The English translation:

O lac-dyed feet,
Go and bring the bridegroom,
The second example:

Jamai ana emni noy
Tinti taka khorochh hoy.

The English translation:

It is not so easy to bring the bridegroom,
It would cost *taka*¹¹ three.

iii) Let us now look at poems used in rituals and folk-religious ceremonies:

Helencha kobmi bbbk lore
Rajar beta pokkhi mare,
Maren pakhi Sukor bil
Sonar kouta rupar khil.

The English translation:

Watercresses are dangling,
The prince is hunting birds,
Hunting birds in the Sukor¹² marsh,
The container is made of gold, the bolt of silver.

A very popular one is,

Laria re laria-haioi
Hatir pithe charia
Hati gelo Korimpur
Peye elo Chompaphul.

The English translation:

Fighter! O Fighter— *haloi*¹³
Riding on an elephant's back,
The elephant goes to Karimpur,
Back with some *champak*¹⁴ flowers.

iv) These are rhymes which are used in games and leisure:

*Shai kabadi Brindabon*¹⁵
Ghori baje thonthon.
*Ghorir kopale phota,*¹⁶
Moish mare gota gota.
Lal ranga ghuri ayna uri
Nil ranga ghuri ayna uri,
Korchhe kemon gata
Porli tobe tui kata.
Royal kabadi Brindabon,

The English translation:
The clock sounds *tthontthon*.
A round-mark in the clock's forehead,
Kills whole buffaloes.
O red kite! Let us fly,
O blue kite! Let us fly,
Are you stricken with nausea?
Then you are cleaved.

- v) Let us now discuss rhymes on weather, nature, and animals:

Khajur pata holdi,
Megh nam joldi.
Ek bira pan,
Jhupjhupaya nam.

The English translation:
The date leaf has yellowed,
O rain, come quickly!
One *bidazo*¹⁷ of betel leaf,
Fall splashingly!

Another one goes as follows:
Chad uthechhe phul phuthechhe
Kodom talay ke?
Hati nachhe ghora nachhe
Ramshaliker be.

The English translation:
The moon has risen, the flower has bloomed,
Who is there under the *kodom* tree?
Elephants and horses are dancing
At Ramshaiik's¹⁸ wedding.

- vi) Some examples of historical narrative folk- poems:

*Sa-re-ga-ma-pa-dha-ni*¹⁹
Bom phelechhe Japani,
Bomar maidhe keute sap
British bole bapre-bap.

The English translation:
Sa-re-ga-ma-pa-dha-ni,
The Japanese have dropped bombs,
There is a cobra in the bombs.
The British shout, *bapre-bap*²⁰

vii) Examples of Folk Work songs and counting rhymes :

O buri o buri suta kat
Kail biane Olir hat,
Olir hatot zabi ni?
Chorka bandha dibi na?

The English translation:

O old lady! spin some thread.
The Olir-bazaar is tomorrow morning,
Would you go to the Olir-bazaar?
Would you mortgage the spinning wheel?

viii) Let us now discuss folk narrative poems which are extensively used in folktales, fairy tales, etc.

Amar kothati phuralo
Note gachhti murlo,
Keno re note muroli?
Goru keno ghas khay?
Kenore goru ghas khas?
Rakhal keno choray na?

The English translation:

Thus my story ends
The Natia-thorn withers,
Why do you wither, Natia?
Why does the cow eat grass?
Why do you eat grass, cow?
Why does the cowboy not let me graze?

Bengal has a rich treasury of folk literature, of which folk narrative is an integral and important component possessed in its own universe and notable in terms of both quality and quantity. In many Indian languages and cultures, folk narrative poems and songs are of secondary importance in comparison with folktales, ballads, etc., but in Bengali folk literature narrative poetry and folk songs hold a place of equal importance. Bengali folk narrative poetry is not simply an instrument for the amusement of children but a subject worthy of serious study, bearing most of the essential characteristics of folk tradition: anonymous and collective creation, dynamism, textual variation, social function, etc. (Bungi 101-103). Local culture and folk experience play a dominant role in the composition and variation of these poems. The origins of most Bengali folk narrative poems are obscure, possibly sharing the thousand-year history of the Bengali language itself. Classification of folk narrative poetry as well as folk songs is difficult and still in a fluid stage, although certain hypotheses have been drawn up by many experts of this field. The collection and compilation of Bengali folk poetry in a systematic way has a history of a millennium. It was inspired by the worldwide interest in folklore collection on the one hand, and by the rise of Bengali nationalism and cultural consciousness on the other. However, that is not the purpose of our discussion.

8.3 PUNJABI FOLK POETRY

Punjab, Land of Five Rivers, (*Panj* is five, and *ab* means water) now lies divided between Pakistan and India. It is united by a common language, *Punjabi*. While South India has preserved the ancient arts, classical dances, rock cut temples, sculptures, and rituals, Punjab has stronger secular and folk culture. The Punjabis usually are not preservers of tradition but breakers of it. They are uninhibited, extrovert, explosive people. They believe that folk poetry is essentially collective and anonymous. People compose spontaneously while involved in their ordinary daily activities. It is primarily a verbal art. A village woman's speech in rural Punjab is full of images, proverbs, poetic flashes. She improvises her curses and her lullabies and her wails. Farmers while tilling the land, women at their spinning wheels, girls embroidering shawls, artisans at their crafts, sing and compose. Those poems touch all aspects of life: love, hate, birth, death, marriage, murder, infidelity, war, famine, theft, rain, splendor, poverty. In India our poems are sung. The word and the music are inseparable. For centuries folk songs have been passed orally from generation to generation. Every village has a large number of people who preserve this oral tradition by memory. At festivals and fairs, contests are held even today where village bards and troubadours compete through the night. They recite hundreds of poems from memory on a theme and spontaneously compose new ones. At domestic functions, marriages and births, young girls sing and compose in competition with each other. Their imagery is startlingly fresh, evocative, and picturesque.

Folk poetry openly portrays human conditions. It does not camouflage emotions. It reveals the bare truth which sometimes comes as a shock. Punjabi folk poetry has many meters, many variations, but the most popular is a two-line short poetical form, the *tappa*. It is like a miniature painting, and could be compared to the Haiku of Japan which etches out a picture in a few strokes. The folk poet sings his lines. Our poets were always singers. The great gurus of the Sikh religion, who composed brilliant poetry imbued with metaphysical truths, set the raga and the tala of their compositions. Even today, a literary poet mostly sings out his poem to the audiences. So does a folk poet. Here is a *tappa* poem. It describes the heroism of a famous bandit whose name was Jagga. Hundreds of poems have been written about his valor.

Pakke pul te laraian hoieyan

Chhavian de kil tut ge

It means:

On the stone bridge, they clashed

And the nails of their hatchets broke.

It is a difficult process to capture the meaning of the original. You must be aware of the fact that every word carries a stream of consciousness – hundreds of associations and images. The same word which in the Punjabi language lights up areas, when translated, becomes opaque. The music is lost and all the smells and sensations become dead. The poem gives the picture of the bandit who is running away on horseback, perhaps eloping with his beloved or escaping after robbing a rich, corrupt moneylender, and he is being pursued by the police. Suddenly he stops at the narrow bridge and turns and challenges his pursuers. Their hatchets clash and sparks fly. We see their grinding teeth and bloodshot eyes. The poet sums up this entire fury by describing only the hatchets.

Here is another poem:

Teri sajari par da reta
Chak chak lavan hik.

It means:

Your fresh footprints on the sand
I gather and press them to my heart.

A lover is either going to the war or to a distant city to earn money leaving his beloved behind. She follows him and collapses kissing his footprints on the sand and pressing these to her heart. This describes the entire saga of their separation. Another popular folk poem is

Rann nha ke chhappar vichon nikli
Sulphe di lat vargi

It means:

The woman emerged from the pond
Like a flame shooting out of an opium pipe

To a man who knows Punjabi life, the picture would be of a pond on the outskirts of the village where women and cattle come to bathe. A *sadhu* (hermit) sits nearby in meditation before his holy fire smoking a small clay pipe. The worshippers of Shiva are often addicted to smoking *ganja* (cannabis). This lifts them above humdrum reality by generating false euphoria, and gives their eyes a hypnotic glaze. In the folk song the woman is described coming out of the pond, her clothes dripping, her body gleaming in the sun. She is compared to the flame of the hermit's pipe. The flame sways and dances and is temperamental. So is the woman. These poems touch almost every social activity. There are poems about the love of mother and son, sister and brother, bandits, money-lenders, elopements, and even about political themes. Some poems are about Gandhi. These were composed by peasant women when they followed him in the freedom movement. Here are a few of them:

Saano de ke khaddar da bana
Aap Gandhi kaid ho gia

It means:

Giving us rough *khadar* to wear
The Old man, Gandhi,
Sits comfortably in the prison of the British.

And another poem translated as:

The fine English muslin
Has strangled the throat of our handspun shawls.
A farmer has been arrested.
His wife sings out in anger:
I shall sell my gold bracelets
And get you released from the jail.

This song is quite old. Originally perhaps it was about a woman whose lover was imprisoned for theft or murder. There is a subtle implication that the lover fought with the husband who got him jailed. The woman defies her husband, sides with her lover and hires a lawyer by selling her bracelets. The songs often mock the religious prudes. Village people are earthy and react emotionally to situations. They might invoke the gods in anger, gratitude, or helplessness. But their compositions are not religious in the traditional sense. They often mock the priests and well-fed ecclesiasts. This famous *tappa* is known to everyone:

*Singh bhul gia guru di bani
Jhanjaraan di gaj sun ke.*

This can be translated as:

The devoted Sikh forgot the Holy Scriptures
when he heard the jingle of ankle bells.

Another poem describes a mendicant who is on his rounds in the village asking for alms. The women never turn a monk away from the door without giving him some food. But there are many lazybones dressed in orange-colored garments of a monk. One such lecherous monk is described thus:

*Kithe chalia en boobana sadha
Chher ke bharind rangian*

It means:

Where are you slinking away
You rascally monk
After disturbing a nest of hornets?

Here the hornets are village women who will not tolerate a fanny-pincher, but will beat him up.

In folk poetry, we have songs not only of valour and love, but also of pathos. Women express their pain in their songs. They are not conscious of their meter; and cannot analyze; they pour out their heart spontaneously. In villages, the songs of joy and grief are sung collectively. When someone dies, the women hold a session of collective mourning. Generally the barber woman conducts this mournful gathering. She stands in the center while wailing women, with their hair loose, stand in a circle expressing their sorrow loudly. This collective mourning is called "siapa". The barber woman, like the conductor of an opera, controls the form, the beginning, of the mournful chant, the refrain, and inspires women to compose spontaneous new dirges. She injects fury and pathos in the harrowing ritual of grief. But our most expressive poetry is that of love and war. These reflect almost the entire social life. Here is a *tappa* on war:

*Mahi mera lam noo gia
Nale dhar kadhan nale rovan*

My lover has gone to the battlefield
I milk the cow and weep

Here is another *tappa* on war. It has pungent comment. The soldiers from Punjab during the British rule went abroad to fight without knowing where they were going. The poem is translated as:

He went to earn
And what did he earn?
A handful of red bangles
His wife wept at night
And her tears stained the bed.

There are many poems celebrating a woman's beauty. Here is one of the songs:

With silver crescents in their ears
The two women walk the village path
Like vermilion-painted elephants
Graceful and swaying.
The sly old hag watches them from behind a door
The hag who could patch the torn skirt of the sky
The moneylender's fat wife crochets a shawl and peers
through the window.
The young Preeto comes
Her eyes black like night
And she dances
All the women clap and say
She is the queen of the dance!

8.4 LET US SUM UP

- Narrative poetry is a form of poetry that tells a story, often making use of the voices of a narrator and characters as well, the entire story is usually written in metred verse.
- Narrative poems usually do not follow rhythmic patterns. The poems that make up this genre may be short or long, and the story it relates to may be complex in nature.
- “Folk” refers to “people in general”. It also means “people of a particular type or from a particular place.”
- Folk narrative poems are formed and transmitted from the perspective of time and space and pass on from generation to generations.
- Over the centuries, the unsaid things were said in the folktales as well as in the folk-songs in India.
- A folk narrative has both a moral and psychological scope. It has a distinctive entertainment value, depending upon the nature of the teller, the style of telling, the ages of the members of the audience and the overall context of the performance.
- Folk narrative poems are an essential part in social and cultural life of India.

- Folk rhyme exists in many Indian languages, but is often of secondary importance compared to other forms of folk literature, such as folktales and ballads.
- In Bengali folk literature, rhyme holds a place of equal importance to these other forms. Bengali folk rhyme is not simply an instrument for the amusement of children but a subject which requires serious study. It essentially bears most of the important characteristics of folk tradition: anonymous and collective creation, dynamism, textual variation, and social function.
- While South India has preserved the ancient arts, classical dances, rock cut temples, sculptures, and rituals, Punjab has stronger secular and folk culture.
- The Punjabis believe that folk poetry is essentially collective and anonymous. People compose spontaneously while involved in their ordinary daily activities. It is primarily a verbal art.
- A village woman's speech in rural Punjab is full of images, proverbs, poetic flashes. She improvises her curses and her lullabies and her wails. Farmers while tilling the land, women at their spinning wheels, girls embroidering shawls, artisans at their crafts, sing and compose. Those poems touch all aspects of life: love, hate, birth, death, marriage, murder, infidelity, war, famine, theft, rain, splendor and poverty.

8.5 NOTES

- 1) The phrase *ghumparani masi-pisi* in this rhyme has many textual variations, such as *ghumparanir ma* and *nindorolir ma*. Sometimes these lines indicate that the common people in Bengal imagined a supernatural power that controlled sleep and was able to distribute it to the masses.
- 2) The word 'tray', which suggests a flat-surfaced container, does not convey the full meaning of the word *bata* in Bengali. The traditional *bata* used for betel leaf has a cylindrical shape and is usually made of metal, with three or more compartments separating the betel leaf, lime, nuts, etc.
- 3) The sound of the rain as traditionally imagined in Bengal.
- 4) The journey of a bride to her parent's house after marriage is a ceremonial one. The journeys usually continued at regular intervals, and were known as *naior*. It is apparent from many folk narrative rhymes that the bride never considered her in-laws' house as her own, and used to return to her parents' house whenever undesirable incidents occurred.
- 5) *Agdum bagdum ghoradum* has no apparent meaning, but it has been explained in this unit as follows: Dom is a lower-caste Hindu whose responsibility is to burn dead bodies and look after the crematorium. Fishing and playing musical instruments are their alternate professions. *Agdum* means "Advance, Dom soldiers"; *bagdum* means "sideline Dom soldiers"; *ghoradum* means "Dom cavalry" since *ghora* means "horse" (Bhattacharya 1962, 228). Bhattacharya relates this rhyme to a Dom-Brahmin war (294).
- 6) Meaning uncertain; perhaps a type of musical instrument.
- 7) Yet to be identified; it may be an imaginary creature. Another possible explanation is that the sound "gulguli," which sometimes means rolling, may suggest the advancing form of a tidal wave.

- 8) Horizontal differentiation of Bengali dialects is very extensive both in terms of the number of regional dialects that occur and in terms of their mutual divergence. The extreme eastern dialect of Chittagong, for instance, is unintelligible even to many speakers of other eastern Bengali dialects (Klaiman 511).
- 9) The most common meaning of *tip* is a finger impression of vermilion on the forehead common to Indian women. But here no actual impression is made. The reciter of this rhyme stretches his or her hand toward the moon and then, turning the fingers, puts an imaginary impression on the forehead of the child whom he or she is trying to lull to sleep.
- 10) It is generally believed in Bengal that the milk of a black cow is superior.
- 11) The monetary unit of Bengal is known as *taka*.
- 12) In Bengal almost every household, bazaar, marsh, tank, pond, etc. has a popular name. *Sukor bil* and *Olor hat* in these verses are examples.
- 13) '*Haloi*' is a popular refrain used in rhymes and songs.
- 14) The *Michelia Champaca*, a flower of the magnolia family, common in rural Bengal.
- 15) *Shai* is the corrupt form of *shahi* which means royal, *kabadi* is the name of the game, and *Brindabon* is a sacred place in Mathura (near Delhi) associated with Radha-Krishna.
- 16) The literal meaning of *phota* is a drop or blob of liquid, but the word has a special connotation in Bengal. A *phota* or roundish mark on the forehead symbolizes a victorious person. Sometimes it is used as a sectarian mark for religious preachers like Vaishnavites.
- 17) *Bida* means a bunch of twenty leaves. In Bengal there is a tradition of counting things in which twenty (*kuri*) is the highest number.
- 18) A *shalik* is a special kind of black sparrow with a yellow beak. *Ram* is an adjective meaning big or large, a usage that derives from Rama of the epic *Ramayana*. A number of folk beliefs center around the sparrow in Bengal. For example, it is believed that the appearance of a yellow sparrow indicates the imminent arrival of guests.
- 19) It is the Indian equivalent of *do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do*.
- 20) '*Bapre-bap*' is a common exclamation in Bengal indicating fear or surprise.

8.6 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Bhattacharya, Ashutosh. *Banglar Lokosahitya* [Folk Literature of Bengal]. Vol. 1. Calcutta: Calcutta Book House, 1962. Print.

Bhattacharya, Ashutosh. *Banglar Lokosahitya* [Folk literature of Bengal] Vol. 2. Calcutta: Calcutta Book House, 1957. Print.

Bungi, Lungenyi-Lumwe Maalu. "Invention in Oral Literature." *Culture* 4.3 (1977): 101-17. Print.

Handoo, Jawaharlal. *Folklore: An Introduction*. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 1989. Print.

Hossain, Hameeda. *The East India Company and the Textile Producers in Bengal*. Oxford: Oxford University (unpublished doctoral thesis). 1982.

Klaiman, M . H . “Bengali.” *The World’s Major Languages*. Ed. Bernard Comrie. London: Croom Helm, 1987. Print.

Shahed, Syed Mohammad. *Chharai Bangali Somaj o Sanskrity* [Bengali Society and Culture as reflected in Rhymes]. Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 1988. Print.

Shahidullah, Muhammad. *Bangla Sahityer Katha* [The Story of Bengali Literature]. Vol.1. Dhaka: Renessas Printers, 1953. Print.

Vredenburw, Edric. *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*. London: Pan Books Ltd, 1917. Print.

In this unit, all Bengali poems have been translated to English by Ashutosh Bhattacharya; and all Punjabi poems have been translated by Balwant Gargi.

8.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Note: Your answers should be in about 300 words.

1) What do you mean by the term ‘folk’?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) What is a narrative poem in literature?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) What are the various dimensions of a folk narrative poem? Give your answer with reference to the folk narrative poems illustrated in the course.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) "Folk poetry openly portrays human conditions. It does not camouflage emotions. It reveals the naked truth which sometimes comes as a shock." Comment.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5) Write a note on Bengali folk poetry.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6) Who is the author of the book, *Folklore: An Introduction*? Why is it a seminal book on folklore studies?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7) What are the salient features of folk rhymes in Bengali folk poetry?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

8) Write a note on Punjabi folk poetry.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Folk Literature: Sources,
Characteristics,
Classifications and
Functions**

9) How do the issues of a Punjabi woman's life intervene in Punjabi folk poetry?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

10) What do you understand by the term *borgi*?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



UNIT 9 MYTHS, LEGENDS AND TALES

Structure

- 9.0 Objectives
- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Folktales
- 9.3 Myths
- 9.4 Legends
- 9.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 9.6 References and Further Readings
- 9.7 Check Your Progress: Possible Questions

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- know about myth, legend and folktales;
- identify unique characteristics of myths, legends and folktales;
- evaluate the significance of myths, legends and folk tales;
- understand the differences between myths, legends and folktales; and
- know more about the cultural value of India through folklore studies.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Folklore can be described as traditional art, literature, knowledge and practices that are passed on in large part through oral communication and example. The information thus transmitted expresses the shared ideas and values of a particular group. British antiquarian William Thoms is generally credited with coining the term ‘folklore’ in 1846. Elliott Oring states that folklore is the part of culture that lives happily ever after. Folklore is a tradition based on “any expressive behaviour that brings a group together, creates convention and commits it to cultural memory” (Haring 1). Folklore is passed from one generation to another, what we hear about village life often confirms our impression. Carl Wilhelm von Sydow noted that folklore varies from region to region and suggested that this indicates the communities’ adaptation to their own cultural environment.

Folklore is a broad field of study that concerns itself with the ways in which people make meaning in their lives. According to folklorist Alan Dundes, a folk group is a group made up of two or more people with at least one attribute in common. For example, there are religious folk groups, which are made up of people who belong to the same church or share the same beliefs; occupational folk groups are of people who do the same kind of work at the same place; and regional folk groups, who share an identity that is tied to that place. Folklore is, Alan Dundes says: “Myths, legends, folktales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, chants, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults ... tongue-twisters, and greeting and leave-taking formulas” (387). Sandra Dolby Stahl in *Literary Folkloristics and Personal Narrative* explains folklore as “hearing tradition in personal narratives is a professional response made possible through a literary folkloristic methodology” (120). Folklorist William A. Wilson

avers that “the study of folklore is not just a pleasant pastime useful primarily for whiling away idle moments. Rather, it is centrally and crucially important in our attempts to understand our own behaviour and that of our fellow human beings” (203).

Story telling is common to every culture. Most people enjoy listening to stories. Story tellers have catered to the need for a “good story” since the beginning of the civilisation. Most people have their own favourite story from childhood and, often, these tales are both fascinating and frightening. These stories include legends, myths and folktales. Genres of folklore include folktales, legends and myths which are old stories written for adults and children. Legends, myths and folktales have won a special place among the great folk traditions of the world. They represent the distillation of the best of this remarkable tradition, toned over many centuries by the skill of the oriental storyteller.

Myths, legends and folktales are hard to classify and they often overlap one another. Esther Lombardi says, “Fairy tales, myths, legends and folklore are terms which may seem to mean the same thing: fanciful tales” (Web). Myths, legends and folktales are types of stories originally passed by word-of-mouth, but are now found in writing. They vary in their subject matter, from explaining the natural world and delivering life lessons, to exaggerated events and people grounded in history. These stories, told and cherished for countless generations, fire our imaginations. While it is true that the terms may refer to bodies of writing that are related at their most basic level as stories, they each present a unique reader experience.

9.2 FOLKTALES

- **Introduction**

Over a hundred languages, ten major script systems and seven minor ones, many old religions with innumerable sects and cults, racial mixtures over millennia, a variety of landscapes and climates have contributed to an incredibly complex braiding of traditions and counter traditions. Nothing exemplifies the variety of Indian scene better than the languages. The traditional stories around the world represent “the things that are valued most highly, fear most deeply, and hope for most ardently are valued, feared and hoped for by all people. Still, while the same yearnings are expressed, each culture has a unique response made richer by details from its society and the local ecology” (Web). Whatever the explanation may be, stories that have been told and cherished for countless generations are bound to be good. They fire our own imaginations.

A folktale is a story or legend forming part of an oral tradition. Folktales are generally passed down from one generation to another and often take on the characteristics of the time and place in which they are told. Folktales speak of universal and timeless themes, and help folks make sense of their existence or cope with the world in which they live. A folktale is “a poetic text that carries some of its cultural contexts within it; it is also a travelling metaphor that finds new meaning with new telling” (Ramanujan Preface).

A folktale is a tale because of its socio-cultural functions within a society. Similarly a folk expression operates in correspondence with other folk experiences, cultural practices and social mobility. The social system where the folk expressions concerned are practised becomes the basic text of any analysis. The particular grand narrative includes all the streams of a society, oral and written, great and little traditions. To

define verbal folklore of India is to say, “it is the literature of the dialects, those mother tongues of village, street, kitchen, tribal hut and wayside tea shop. This is the wide base of the Indian pyramid on which all other Indian literatures rest” (Blackburn xvi).

- **Importance of folktales**

Anyone studying the culture of India needs to study not only its written classics, but its oral traditions, of which folktales are an important part. These tales are meant to be read for pleasure first, to be experienced as aesthetic objects. An old Chinese proverb says “Birds do not sing because they have answers; birds sing because they have songs” (qtd. in Blackburn xiii). The songs of course have territories, species, context and functions. Folk texts are pervasive, behind, under and around all the texts of the society and in all its strata, not merely among the rural and the non-literate.

Proverbs, riddles, stories and tunes, motifs and genres of songs and dances are not confined to a region, even though they may be embodied in the non literate dialects and may seem to be enclosed in those mythic entities called self-sufficient village communities. It is well known that such folklore items, like many others sorts of items in cultural exchange, are autotelic, they travel by themselves without any movement of populations. A proverb, a riddle, a joke, a story, a remedy or a recipe travels every time it is told. The languages and regions in India have, therefore, a large stock of shared folk materials; collections can be made of proverbs, riddle and tales common to widely separate and distant regions of the subcontinent. Cultural performances of every kind, whether they are plays, rituals or games, contain texts written and oral. In a sense, every cultural performance is a text in itself. Past and present, what is “pan Indian” and what is local, the written or the oral, the verbal and the non-verbal, all these are engaged in reworking and redefining relevant others.

Similarly a folktale goes on changing from teller to teller; the structure of the tale may remain constant while all the cultural details change; parts of different tales are combined to make a new tale which expresses a new aesthetic and moral form characteristic of the culture. When the same tale is told again in a different time or place, it may come to say fresh and appropriate things, often without any change in the story line.

Evidences of the folktale can be found all over the world; they are quite ancient, and they arise from different conditions, depending on place and time. The folktale arises from a need experienced at a certain stage of development in human society. It is the circumstances which generate a folktale, which informs its conception, its shape and its narrative style, and as long as these circumstances prevail, the folktale will endure. They all have something in common.

Folktale also stem from an oral tradition, passed down by the “folk” who narrated them. The term “folklore” is often used interchangeably with fable, since folktales can have a lesson at the end. Folktales are different from fables because they feature people as their main characters, but often with a twist. Every country has its folktales. Sometimes, countries as far apart as China and France can have a very similar traditional tales. The story of “stone soup” is one told all over the world.

Schossberger opines that there are three principal factors essential to the existence of the folktale, and their interrelationship forms. They are, “Traditional, communicational contribution of the past bearers of the tradition, the present story telling community, the narrator” (49). The traditional folktale which enters the life

of a community at a given moment thus acts as a model. It does not have an author; the folk community – or, as Anikin calls it, it is the chain of “collective authorship” that produces it. Mechtilda Brachetti exhaustively treats the question of whether folktale is a communal creation. Even though it was originally created by an individual, “the folktale is collective lore not according to its origin but according to its fate...because it mirrors the collective psyche of a community” (Web).

- **Contexts**

Tales are told in different contexts and function in a variety of ways. To contextualise a tale fully, one should know the teller, when, where and to whom he or she narrated the tale, what he or she and the listeners thought of the tale, how the listeners responded when they heard it and other such details. It is necessary to analyse this kind of ethnography of narrative, a sense of where the tale fits in other texts and performances of the cultural, what is considered significant, how it makes meanings, what’s taboo and what’s not, and the place of tellers in the community – not merely the facts of the telling but the feelings, the meanings and the meaning-making.

- **Why tales are told**

Tales are old, and yet are told and retold today. Tales are told in different contexts and function in a variety of ways. These tales are meant to be read for pleasure, first to be experienced as aesthetic rights. The tales are told often to keep the adult awake; “when farmers gather to watch crops all night or graze cows or sheep all day, or when workers slice areca nuts or roll bidis (cheap local cigarettes) in a factory” (Blackburn xxii). Tales are told to keep the children’s attention and to make them eat more and put them to sleep. It can ease work and serve as recreation after work, or it may simply be an entertaining pastime. Like work songs, these tales beguile time and ease the monotony of long labour by engaging with fantasy. Tales, like proverbs, are also enlisted to make a point to find precedent and authority in political speeches, religious discourses and legal discussions.

- **Who tells these tales?**

In South India, singers and tellers travel from place to place, their performances being engaged by families or organisations. Tellers of epochal stories from *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata* or the stories of gods from the *Puranas* and from Hindu mythologies highlight the spiritual dimension. Tales are also told by cooks in the house, and servants from another class would also tell stories, bringing one in contact with another class and caste. Grandfathers and senior male figures were also tellers; they did not tell stories in the kitchen but in the outer parts of the house and they would have audiences of children from other families as well.

In villages, there are bardic troupes that perform epics about caste heroes or local gods and saints. The bard will intersperse his recitation – which may be performed serially for hours, and/or over several nights – with shorter tales and anecdotes as well as poems and songs, just as he will introduce references to current politics. Thus ancient tales and epics are given contemporary relevance. In families, there were mealtime stories as well as bedtime stories.

People everywhere have listened to storytellers with the greatest of interest. They brought news of exciting events, praised heroic deeds and thus aroused interest in history; they provided models of religion and ethical perfection for the people to emulate. The narrators banished the drab monotony of everyday life by entertaining their hearers with exciting, adventuresome and highly imaginative stories. It was from these premises, and before the invention of written literature, that oral narrative forms originated.

A folktale goes on changing from teller to teller; the structure of the tale may remain constant while all the cultural details change parts of different tales that are combined to make a new tale which expresses a new aesthetic and moral form characteristic of the culture. When the same tale is retold in a different time or place, it may come to say fresh and appropriate things, often without any change in the story line.

- **Kinds of Folktales**

Classical folklores and tales can attract people of all ages. These classical tales were supposed to impart some moral advices to its readers, which they could apply so as to live life in a more beautiful manner. However, children love reading these folktales most, since they get a scope to escape to a world of fantasy and ideals and thus in way get a relief from their tedious home works and school schedules.

While myths or legends are transmitted orally or in writing, folk tales tend to be transmitted orally, and though they are transmitted from generation to generation and so their origin is unknown, they are more definitely felt to be stories/fiction. Usually the author is unknown and there are often many versions of the tale.

Different kinds of folktales include fairytales, tall tales, trickster tales, myths and legends. Some tales are based on a partial truth that is lost or hidden or mutated over time. Many folktales written during the 19th century are transformed into fairy tales. Folktales describe how the main character copes with the events of everyday life, and the tale may involve crisis or conflict. Superstitions and unbounded beliefs are important elements in the folklore tradition. Typically folk and fairy tales involve magic and magical creatures and people such as witches, dragons and dwarves rather than religion. Examples are Cindrella and Jack and Beanstalk stories.

Special ritual tales as Vrakathas are told as part of a calendrical ritual and their telling in that context has ritual efficacy. It is believed that both tellers and listeners receive benefits, as depicted in tales like “A Story in Search of an Audience” and “Brother’s day”, and “very often, an ordinary tale may acquire this status by being told in such a context” (Blackburn 10).

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 *Panchatantra* to the *Hitopadesha* and from *Jataka* to the tales of Akbar-Birbal. Not only this, the great Indian epics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, and works like *The Bhagavad Gita* are full of didactic stories inspired by the lives of great souls. Being full of moralistic values, Indian folklore makes perfect stories for children who are required to be instilled with values. All these ancient stories have been passed from generation to generation. Ramakrishna, a religious teacher, genius and saint “...was known to be illiterate and was a treasure house of oral traditions...” (Appadrai 44) created his own parables. Male-centred, female-centred, tales about families, tales about fate, death, gods, demons, ghosts and humourous tales or tales about a jester or clever person, tales about animals and stories about stories, all come under the umbrella term folktales.

9.3 MYTHS

India has been a land of myths. and mysticism. Myth and mysticism kept the readers spell bound once in India. Myths were used by “the writers ... to unearth the rich treasure of myth and mysticism” (Purohit 60). Mrs. Langer avers that legend, myth and tales are not in themselves literature, but fantasies. As such however, they are the natural materials of art. But many of the critics of our time have more boldly

seized upon the connection between myth and literature as providing a new key to criticism.

Myths proper or divine myths focus on the lives and ways of the gods and may be treated as sacred fact by the people telling them. They are set in the remote past, a vague time outside human chronology, often in a world different from the one familiar to the culture's own. Myths explain a society, and its concerns and values, to itself. They provide models of behaviour in times of crisis. Myths never have authors; we just inherit later literary versions of the stories. Myth helps us in "formulating and rendering an image of the universe, a cosmological image in keeping with the science of the time" (Web). Myth helps us in validating and maintaining some specific social order.

Myth gives a religious explanation about the origin of the beginning of a particular custom or the world. There is "no attempt to fix the myth into a coherent chronology related to the present day, though myths or a cycle of myths may have their own internal chronology" (Web). The story is timeless in that the events are symbolic rather than just the way it happened.

Myth, derived from the Greek word 'muthos', means anything uttered by word of mouth. Homer used 'muthos', to mean a narration or conversation, but not fiction. Later the Greeks used 'muthos' to mean fiction. To Plato, 'muthos' denotes, "Something not wholly lacking truth but for the most part fictitious" (Cuddon 71). At present, myth symbolizes fiction but not that which carries psychological truth. Myths are living social events, intelligible only in the context of real humans in real places involved in social interactions. They are commonly described as stories. Myth is defined as a story that explains or justifies and prolongs existing social and geographical boundaries.

'Myth' is considered as a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of a people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events. It carries the cultural values of a culture from one soul to other and from one generation to the next and also from one part of the world to the other. The word, 'Myth', itself conceives mystery with in itself. Myth is a story or an idea that is believed by many people, when something is believed by many people it becomes a part in the cultural life of those people. *Academic American Encyclopedia*, while explaining 'Mythology' states that;

Myths are stories that narrate in an imagination and symbolic manner the total and basic structures upon which a culture rests. Given this emphasis on what is fundamental to cultural meaning and value, the myth may appear to be fantastic and bizarre, because the mythic story cannot be explained in the terms of the ordinary conventions of the culture are understood as having their origins in the myth. (Web)

Myths have always played an important role in every human community. Such everyday phenomena as the weather and the passing of the seasons have been taken by myth makers and carefully woven into form that answers our restless questioning of a confusing and at times frightening world. Myths have gained a prominent place in human culture.

People have always tried to understand why certain things happen. Human beings have a constant quest to understand this world around them which was completely mysterious to his understanding. They had a lot of questions about nature and wanted to know why and how the sun rises and sets, what causes lightning, how the rainbow appears and many other things. Human beings had thousands of questions about

the rain, wind, storm, water, climate change and so many other things they came across. They wanted to know certain other questions also which were related to creation e.g., who created the earth and how? When and where did the first human race appear first? And how did they come into existence. They tried to find out the reasons behind all this, and in the process, formed stories. *The World Book Encyclopedia* states that,

Today, people have scientific answers about theories for many such questions about the world around them. But in earlier time, people lacked the knowledge to provide scientific answers. They therefore explained natural events in terms of gods, goddesses, and heroes . . . such stories are known as myths, and the study of myth is called mythology. In some parts of the world, myths are still used to explain scientific facts about our world. (Web)

Myth serves as a moral teacher who tunes the outlook of a person thereby guiding them to look and lead in a particular direction which was shown for the betterment of every human being. Myth may not be explained in a word, it is a combination of several ideologies which combine the full physical and mental growth of a society. Every culture has its own myth. The origin of these myths may be a great question which is difficult to answer. It is understood that the development of civilization could not have been possible without the help of myths. This mythical principle states that the culture lies on the basic structure of myth or stories. Myth is also considered a fundamental structure of a society which was modelled by values. Strength of a culture depends upon the strength of the myth which was created by them. Even the ordinary conventions of a culture could have been derived from the myth. Hence, it is clearly understood that the culture could have not evolved without the intervention of myth. "The word 'myth' has often suffered a wrong connotation. In general parlance, it means something false, fictitious and far removed from reality, and history. . . . Myth, today, need not be a blatant tale of some fictitious character in some fictitious past; it could be the memory of the past told in a fictitious way", states B. A. Pathan in the Introduction to *Gandhian Myth in English Literature in India* (9).

- **Definitions of myth and mythology**

Distinguished philosophers and folklorists represent opposite extremes in the study of mythology. Efforts are made to fathom the inner meaning of myths because of the authoritative, indeed revelatory function they have for human existence. Mircea Eliade, a historian of religion, emphasizes that myth narrates sacred history. Scholars believe that myth is to be understood as a religious phenomenon and cannot fully be/cannot at all be explained in terms of non-religious (e.g. literary, psychological, sociological or economic) categories. Freud claims that "sometimes myths are public dreams which, like private dreams, emerge from the unconscious mind" (Web).

A myth is a traditional story, which may describe the origins of the world and /or of a people. A myth is an attempt to explain mysteries, supernatural events and cultural traditions. Sometimes sacred in nature, a myth can involve gods or other creatures and a myth represents reality in dramatic ways. A myth is a traditional, typically ancient story dealing with supernatural beings, ancestors, or heroes, and which serves as a fundamental type in the worldview of a people. The purpose of myths is to "account for the origins of something, explain aspects of the natural world, or delineate the psychology, customs, or ideals of society" (Web).

Myth also suggests a fresh means by which to study the laws of the imagination. Richard Chase explains that "myth is clearly a value term". "Myth," he writes, "is

only art” (11). Theodore Reik says myth is “not a story told as history but history told as story. . . . In other words it is a narrative of a real experience in the past. What we call myth today is not an imaginary tale but a real life experience of the primordial society” (9). According to Burke, an American critic, “myth is ultimately the expression of non-temporal truths . . . the expression of them in story form . . . story is still what makes myth myth” (qtd. in Segal 85). Myths present the model for behaviour. The word myth is a continuous source of knowledge needed for crucial problems in man’s existence: war and peace, life and death, truth and falsehood, good and evil.

Rudolf Bultmann, the grandest exponent of traditional religious myths, reads myth symbolically. He demythologizes myth – which does not speak about the world but turns out to be about the human experience in the world. In Bultmann’s words, “the real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man’s understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically; but anthropologically, or better still, existentially” (qtd. in Segal 48).

Ira Progoff in *Jung’s Psychological and its Social Meaning* states that, “Myths are held to be the direct expression of the collective unconscious. They are factual tales produced, treasured and controlled by a collective working and thinking of the religious community. Thus myths are the treasure houses of our recorded values of the past” (89). C. G. Jung in the seventh volume of his *Collected Works* states that, “The collective unconscious is the matrix of myth” (339). The “collective unconscious” is a large, amorphous, creative area deep within the person wherein dwell our repressed and forgotten contents. These contents are called “collective” because they are not personal acquisitions but cultural. Sigmund Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams* showed the world that the motives for a behaviour lie not in the rational and conscious mind but in the irrational realm of the unconscious which manifests itself only in the dream.

The relationship between myth and literature has taken varying forms in literature. Every community has a rich mythological heritage and the writers use myths to narrate contemporary events, expose public follies, problems and mysteries of life and death. Roland Barthes in *Mythologies* remarks that “myth has the task of giving historical intension a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal” (142).

The fairy tale tells of extraordinary beings and events and in that respect, resembles myth, though it differs markedly in other respects. The typical fairy tale opens with “once upon a time”, the typical myth begins with “in the beginning”; the fairy tale carries no authority, even if sometimes a moral is presented. Many tales explain the origin of rocks or mountains. Others such as the famous Hindu narrative that states the blue neck of the god Siva is the result of the poison he drank in primordial times, explain iconographic features.

Myths are accounts with an absolute authority that is implied rather than stated; they relate events and states of affairs surpassing the ordinary human world, yet basic to the world; the time in which the related events take place is altogether different from the ordinary historical time of human experience; the actors in the narratives are usually gods or other extraordinary beings such as animals, plants; the very first people, or specific great men who changed the human condition.

The heroes and heroines of epic literature are in many instances the narrative rejuvenation of gods and goddesses in myths. Although scholarly work in this area

is far from complete, it is probably safe to suggest that among the mythical themes that have appealed to epic poets are themes of the cultural hero or bringer of salvation and of shamanism. The epic itself can take on certain mythological functions. The Homeric epic became the basis of education in classical Greece. The great epics of India (*Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*) came to function as encyclopaedias of knowledge and provided models for all human existence.

9.4 LEGENDS

All over the world, there are extraordinary stories – stories that once upon a time were believed to be true but are today limited to the sphere of myths and legends. The question remains whether those myths are some things that existed in the minds of our ancestors, or were they based on true events? It is true that most of those stories appear to the scientific world as fictitious products of vivid imaginations.

Legends are among the most fascinating genres of folk, for they are timeless and universal forms of oral tradition. Legends reach back to antiquity, and they still survive in our highly industrialised modern society. Legends generally explain how a natural occurrence originated from the Gothic, supernatural world. It also refers to anything that inspires a body of stories, or anything of lasting importance or fame. The story is handed down from earlier times, but continues to evolve with time. A myth is a traditional tale handed down from earlier times and believed to have an historical basis. A legend, on other hand is a story which is told as if it were a historical event, rather than as an explanation for something or a symbolic narrative. The legend may or may not be an elaborated version of a historical event.

The word derives in Middle English from the old French “legend”, from Medieval Latin “legenda” i.e. “things to be read” and from Latin “legere”, meaning “read”. Merriam Webster dictionary defines legends as “a story from the past that is believed by many people but cannot be proved to be true” (Web). Macmillan dictionary claims that legend narrates stories about people and things that are admired and respected. Cambridge dictionary purports that “a legend is a very old story or set of stories from ancient times” (Web).

Legends are also stories that have been made up, but they are different from myths. Myths answer questions about how the natural world works, and are set in a time long-ago, before history was written. Legends are about people and their actions or deeds. Legends or sagas are the acts and great deeds of heroes, treated as sacred or secular fact by the people. These are set in the recent past, essentially in the world as the culture knows it.

A legend is a semi-true story, which has been passed on from person to person and has important meaning or symbolism for the culture in which it originates. A legend usually includes an element of truth, or is based on historic facts, but with “mythical qualities”. Legends usually involve heroic characters or fantastic places and often encompass the spiritual beliefs of the culture in which they originate.

While some legends have disappeared over years, new legends constantly are being created. The old legends that have survived generally have been changed a great deal, for legends are readily influenced by changes in historical, social and economic conditions. Since legends are of endless variety in content, length and form, they virtually defy definition. In *Teutonic Mythology*, Jacob Grim writes, “The folktale is with good reason distinguished from the legend, though by turns they play into one another. Looser, less fettered from legend, the folktale lacks that local habituation

which hampers could, but it makes it more home-like. The folktale flies, the legend walks, knocks at your door, the one can draw freely out of the fullness of poetry, the other has almost the authority of history..." (85).

Jacob Grim recognised the important qualities of legend that set it apart from other kinds of folktales. Legend formation often begins with an event or alleged fact and legends frequently serve to instruct or educate. William Bascom's *The Forms of Folklore: Prose Narratives* defines legend, as a traditional old prose narrative that is set in this world in the recent past humans as main characters. It is regarded as fact by the story teller and his/ her audience, and it may be either sacred or secular. Wayland Hand has observed, the strong element of belief in the legend as told, or the individual folk beliefs inherent in the legend, constitutes the hallmark which sets the legend apart from folktale.

- **Categories of legends**

A committee of international folklorists proposed four general categories of legends: aetiological and eschatological legends, historical legends and legends of history of civilisation, supernatural beings and forces/mythic legends and religious legends or myths of gods and heroes. Since many legends are purportedly etiological and historical, including legends with supernatural or religious motifs, the first two categories, while recognising a function and quality of legends, are not especially useful in organising collections of American legends. For e.g. the tentative category of historical legends dealing with people, place and place-name legends are etiological. It is ethnocentric to place supernatural legends in one category and religious legends in another. Alexander H. Krappe pertinently observes that what others believe we call superstition, but what we ourselves believe we call religion. Most religious legends have supernatural motifs, so properly they are supernatural legends.

Since a commonly accepted system of legend classification does not exist, the legends are arranged under four general headings: Supernatural and religious legends, Personal legends, Place legends and Modern legends. In more than a few cases, a particular legend could fall into two or three of these categories.

- **Interesting Legends**

Interwoven with religious myths were a host of legends, traditional stories which though not wholly authentic had, like the tales of Troy, a substructure of fact. There were also all kinds of fables and anecdotes, folktales such as that of Perseus, and allegories and romances which fused with the myths and legends to make a fascinating complex of stories. Examples of legends are stories about Robin Hood, King Arthur and Blackbeard.

Some of the most interesting legends in India deal with premonitions, death and burial, ghosts, haunted houses, good and evil, special powers, witches and monsters or snakes. Omen stories are extremely common in Hoosier folklore, as they are throughout European and American folklore. These brief tales with folk beliefs inherent in them often relate first-hand experiences with prenatal influences, death signs, prophetic dreams, and other premonitions. Some are scary, some are funny and some includes ghost stories and stories of the evil eye.

Strictly speaking, these first-person accounts of encounters with the supernatural are memorates, or pre-legends; however, as these personal experience tales are repeated by other storytellers, they develop into legends. A collection of stories about an admirable person who is the centre of such stories captures the hearts of

the readers. The body of stories of this kind especially relate to a particular people, group, or clan. They personified everything like sky, clouds, thunder, sun, moon, ocean, earthquake and whirlwind. Stories learned in childhood from nurses and grandmas reproduce the most subtle thoughts and expression, and an endless series of complicated narratives, in which the order of incidents and the words of the speakers are preserved with a fidelity nowhere paralleled in the oral tradition of historical events.

9.5 LET US SUM UP

Folklore Studies is, broadly, a field of study that concerns itself with the ways in which people make meaning in their lives. Story telling is common to every culture. Most people enjoy listening to stories. Story tellers have catered to the needs for a “good story” since the beginning of the civilisation. These stories include legends, myths and folktales. Legends, myths and folktales have won a special place among the great folk traditions of the world. They represent the distillation of the best of this remarkable tradition, toned over many centuries by the skill of the storyteller. Myths, legends and folktales are hard to classify and they often overlap one another. While it is true that the terms may refer to bodies of writing that are related at their most basic level as stories, each one of these presents a unique reader experience.

9.6 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

- Appadurai, A. F. Kerom & M. Mills ed. “In Gender, Genre and Power in South Asian Expressive Systems.” *Towards a Counter-system: Women’s Tales*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987. Print.
- Baker, Ronald L. *Hoosier Folk Legends*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. London: Jonathan Cape, 1972. Print.
- Bascom, William. “The Forms of Folklore and Prose Narratives.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 78. 307 (2006): 3-20. Print.
- Blackburn, Stuart & A. K. Ramanujam. *Another Harmony: New Essays on South Asian Folklore*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. Print.
- , et al. *Oral Epics in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989. Print.
- Chase, Richard. *Quest for Myth*. USA: Greenwood Press, 1976. Print.
- Cuddon, J. A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 4th ed. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1998. Print.
- Degh, Linda. *Folktales and Society: Story-telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community*. Trans. Emily M. Schossberger. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969. Print.
- Dundes, Alan. “Folkloristics in the Twenty-First Century (AFS Invited Presidential Plenary Address, 2004).” *The Journal of American Folklore* 118. 470(2004): 385-408. Print.
- Grim, Jacob. *Teutonic Mythology*. London: George Bell & Sons, 1882. Print.
- Harring, Lee. *Indian Ocean Folktales*. Chennai: National Folklore Support Centre, 2002. Print.

Pathan, S. B. *Gandhian Myth in English Literature in India*. New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 2002. Print.

Progoff, Ira. *Jung's Psychological and its Social Meaning*. London: Routledge, 1972. Print.

Purohit, Gagan Bihari. Representation of Myths and Mysticism in Jayanta Mahapatra's *Relationship – Bibhu Padhi's Choosing Place*. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Literature & Language*. 1.1 (2012): 59-66. Print.

Reik, Theodor. *Myth and Guilt: The Crime of Punishment of Mankind*. New York: George Brazier, Inc. 1957. Print.

Segal, Robert. *Myth: A Very Short Introduction*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006. Print.

Stahl, Sandra D. *Literary Folkloristics and the Personal Narrative*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989. Print.

<<http://www.britannica.com/Academic-American-Encyclopedia.html>> 21 Oct. 2015.

<<http://www.myths-legends-and-folktales.org.html>> 18 May 2015.

<<http://www.classiclit.myth,folklore, legend.com.html>> 09 Jan. 2016.

<http://www.kidsgen.com/stories/folk_tales/.html> 12 Aug. 2015.

<<http://www.macmillandictionary.com/british/legend.html>> 30 July 2015.

<<http://www.dictionary.cambridge.org/english/legend.html>> 26 Feb. 2016.

<<http://www.ancient-origins.net/myths-legends/.html>> 03 Dec. 2015.

<<http://www.teacher.scholastic.com.html>> 12 March 2016.

9.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Note: Your answers should be in about 300 words each.

- 1) Define myth and analyse the characteristics of myths.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

- 2) Trace out the origin of folktales and its relation with society and societal members.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) Categorise the legends and enumerate their functions.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) Who coined the term 'folklore'? What do you understand by the term?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5) Distinguish between a folktale and a fable.

.....
.....
.....
.....

6) State the factors essential to the existence of the folktale.

.....
.....
.....
.....

7) List out the different kinds of folktales.

.....
.....
.....
.....

8) Who are the characters in a folktale?

.....
.....
.....

**Folk Literature: Sources,
Characteristics,
Classifications and
Functions**

9) What is the relation between culture and myth?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

10) How does Grimm describe the quality of a legend?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....



UNIT 10 PROVERBS, RIDDLES AND SPEECH

Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Folk Ballads and Riddles as Protest
- 10.3 Folk Forms as Protest in History
 - 10.3.1 Folk Ballads and Folk Songs
 - 10.3.2 Revolts, Insurrections and Folk Forms
 - 10.3.3 Folk Cults, Bhakti and Protest
- 10.4 Women's Protest Against Patriarchal Authority
- 10.5 Festivals and Folk Expressions of Protest
- 10.6 Folktales of Lovers as Protest
- 10.7 Outlaws and Notions of Protest
- 10.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.9 Activity
- 10.10 References and Further Readings
- 10.11 Glossary
- 10.12 Check Your Progress: Possible Questions

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- Understand the relation between folk forms of expression and protest;
- Distinguish between Open and Covert forms of protest;
- Identify various kinds of protest against power and authority (social, political, religious etc.); and
- Recognize the subversive potential of folk forms whether they are live performances, literature or oral traditions.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Proverbs, riddles and speeches are very important folk forms that capture the collective imagination of a people. They are with, interesting, allegorical, poetic, satirical, humorous with deep undertones. They have the flavours of a culture.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote, "We may discover in these folk-rhymes many a trace of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain...coming down the ages. Entwined in their broken rhymes one may still trace many a tale of hurt and suffering." (*Gramya Sahitya* 1898, Translation, Khsitish Roy). One could add to this the element of protest. Folklore records the real life of the common people with uncomfortable fidelity which also reflects their protest against authority or existing social structures sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. Folk performance including music, dance, religious and non-religious pageantry, puppetry etc. have been used by folk artists to voice their protest against existing power structures.

Folk forms are characterized by simplicity and spontaneity which are their hall marks. These forms arise from, and are part of, the lived life of the performers. Naturally they also register their simple and spontaneous feelings, including those of protest. Folk forms are the artistic expressions of the people. They are produced by and cater to people sharing a sense of belonging with the same community. Sharing the same or similar identity and sharing grievances against some authority or power creates participative forms of expression.

Folklore is not a fossilized thing of a hoary past. Its evolution is a continuous process and therefore can become a vehicle of people's aspirations, anxieties, joys and sorrows arising out of their lived experience. It is because of this that folk forms are capable of lending themselves as vehicles of protest from time to time. As eminent folklorist Sankar Sengupta observes in his book, *Folklore and Folklife in India*, "... sometimes in hardships and struggle also some forms of beautiful and everlasting art emanate." (*Folklores and Proverbs* 65)

10.2 FOLK BALLADS AND RIDDLES AS PROTEST

Protest, broadly speaking, can be of two kinds, open and covert. Open protest can take the form of clearly or openly voiced dissent or gestures of protest. Covert protest can exist in various hues. Lamentation, subversive laughter and ridicule can be some expressions of covert protest. Folk forms spring from the heart of the folk or common people and reach out to the folk. They are alive and sensitive to the feelings and emotions of the folk. Being an ongoing process which records the narratives of an individual engaging with the social space available to him or entire communities seeking to assert and identify themselves, the folk form has great elasticity. Folk forms go on acquiring new strands of thoughts, ideas and issues which sometimes may burst into gestures of protest. Protest can be understood as both the desire to question the authority of social, religious and political structures and the expression of this desire whether spontaneously or through organized display such as protest marches etc. Let us see how Folk forms can voice or constitute protest.

There are instances of registering an open protest. If we look into the social content of the folksongs it becomes apparent. Hemango Biswas writes, "A purely academic and conservative approach to folksongs often overlooks and even ignores one of its most human aspects the 'protest songs', which express in varied forms the struggle of our oppressed people through the ages against an unjust social order". (*Folkmusic and Folklore* 61)

10.3 FOLK FORMS AS PROTEST IN HISTORY

10.3.1 Folk Ballads and Folk Songs

Folk ballads on heroes of particular regions and communities bestow a mythical status on folk-heroes who overthrew powerful rulers, both Indian overlords and colonial masters and their representatives. These ballads valorize protest and defiance as can be seen in the ballad '*Resma*'. This is about Chauharmal, a Dushad hero born at Anjani near Mocama (Patna), who, with the help of goddess Durga, defeated Ajabi Singh, a notorious landlord. Chauharmal is worshipped by the Dushads and an annual fair is held near his wrestling ground. '*Lorikayana*' celebrates an Ahir hero Lorik who killed an evil king Malaygeet. These folk forms are instances of rich communicative ways within a community.

Folk ballads have been greatly effective for articulating as well as spreading protest at various junctures of history. For instance, *Kabigân* in Bengal was used effectively to stir popular protest against the British colonial oppression in Bengal. Mukundadas, an eminent singer, costumed as a traditional folksinger or *Câran*, swept the countryside with his patriotic songs sung in the *Kabigân* style. This style was replete with the simple language-idioms and melodies of folksong. How effective his protest was can be guessed by the very fact that the British had to stop his performance, arrest him, and imprison him.

Similar use was made of popular ballad or ballad-like forms in various parts of the country during the colonial era. In this context, we may mention *Laavani* in Maharashtra, *Alha* in Uttar Pradesh, *Gee-gee* in Karnataka, or *Villupaattu* in Tamil Nadu. *Jâtrâ*, a traditional folk form, had been widely used during the period of nascent nationalism to spread the ideas of patriotism and the injustice of foreign rule. The renowned author Raja Rao shows in his novel *Kanthapura* how popular performances like *Hari-kathâ* were used by young patriots in the remote far-flung countryside to spread the message of Gandhi and the freedom struggle.

History and folklore are bound to impact one another. Much folk art, literature and song arose from real historical events. Many peasant rebellions during the early phase of British rule in India provided such impetus. The British, during the early period of their inroad in India, faced stiff resistance from the tribal people who positively grudged encroachment on their basic rights. Tribal communities and ethnic people who had no experience of being 'ruled' by any authority beyond their own head/chief and had held rent-free land for generations in exchange of service to the landlord, were suddenly forced to pay revenues. Taking cover of British patronage the zamindars also sneaked in for their cut. The ensuing protests and challenges by these desperate people were ruthlessly crushed both by colonial masters and their representatives. The folklore of these regions retains the memory of these unrecorded tragedies. The *Chuar* revolt (in North-West region of Bengal) of 1799, the peasants' insurrection in the North Bengal districts in 1783, the *sannyasi Bidroha* in Birbhum and Bishnupur in the wake of the famine of 1769-70, the Hos' (of Singbhum) long resistance to the British from 1820-27, the combined rebellion of the Hos and the Mundas (Chhotonagpur) in 1829-32, and again in 1857, the Khasi rebellion (in Sylhet) in 1783, 1829, and 1860, the Santhal uprising (in Bengal and Bihar) in the 1850s, the Bhil revolt (in Khandesh, West India) from 1819-1831, the uprising of the Poligars in various areas along the eastern coast of South India, etc have gone down in folk memory in the form of tales, songs and verses.

1832 marked the first instance of Dhangar Kol uprising (Sonepur) and before long they were joined by Larka Kols of Singbhum. The Ho, Munda and Oraon of Choto Nagpur rebelled against the British. In 1895 the Mundas were in revolt, led by Birsa Munda. Birsa invoked the memories of 1832 and the solidarity of the tribal people during that uprising. "The valleys of Icha Hurang, Lango Lor, Domba Ghat and the upland of Jikilata in popular imagination had once resounded with the triumphs (though illusory) of the powerful combination of the Mundas and Laraka Hos against the British Raj as commemorated with pride in Munda folk songs." (Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, 176). These Munda songs were sung at the meetings of Birsa and his followers, during 1898-99, in order to stir up the spirit of revolt on the eve of the insurrection. A Munda meeting, held in March 1898 on Simbua Hill, sang about the Kol revolt of 1832,

"O where are they fighting, shouldering weapons like
the small ant?"

- O where are they shooting arrows, carrying their weapons like the big ant?
- O they fight at Bundu
- O they shoot arrows at Tamar (in Guha 176).

You can find ballads on real folk heroes and real events like Veer Kunwar Singh (Bihar) who lived during the 1857 uprising and Birsa Oraon (Chhotanagpur) during Munda uprising. Ballads on Gandhiji's Non-cooperation movement are an example closer in history to our times.

10.3.2 Revolts, Insurrections and Folk Forms

The many isolated local insurrections and revolts by oppressed peasants throughout the country during the earlier phase of the British rule. These were not sufficiently explored or recognized by mainstream historians for a long time as they remained recorded in a gamut of folktales, songs and verses. Many of these may have also become untraceable as these were oral art forms and not recorded through any technological or other means.

The Santhal Revolt of 1855-56: originating in the Santhal Parganas of Bihar spread over the Santhal areas of Bihar and Bengal. Around 30,000 Santhals stood up against the British led by the brave young men Sidhu and Kanu. They had no weapon but bows and arrows and a strong resentment against the ruler. This resentment spread through songs such as the one translated below by Hemango Biswas,

“Sido, why are you bathed in blood?
Kanu, why do you cry *hul, hul*?
For our people we have bathed in blood,
For the trader thieves
Have robbed us of our land”.

The memorable Santhal uprising in 1855 against the 'dikkus' (landlords, money-lenders and their British accomplices) has been recorded in a number of ballads. These ballads evoke admiration, awe and sympathy for the rebels. Here are the opening lines from a long ballad cited by P.C.Roychowdhury:

*'Korley paramarsha mane harsa muluk marbar tare
Ingrej mariey amra rajys liba kere'* (Roychowdhury, 104)

[They decided with great zeal to snatch the land from the British]

The following lines of the long ballad seem to reflect a keen triumphant mood during the onward march of the santhals to Kumrabad.

*'Ghar bari kuri kuri bhangley dalan kotha
Kumrabader loguloke korley kumrokota.'* (Roychowdhury, 106)

[They brought down all the houses and mansions to dust/ they chopped the residents of Kumrabad like kumro (yellow gourd)].

The Indigo Revolt of 1859-60 saw the participation of more than six million peasants. This even attracted the sympathy of the elite Indians who had been indifferent to earlier such revolts. Dinabandhu Mitra's play *Nildarpan* is an example of the way such revolts entered popular expression. Among the folksongs arising out of this revolt a most famous one is:

“The blue monkey has wrecked Bengal,
Our golden land—
Harish dies before his time
And Long is thrown into prison
What will the poor peasant do now! (Translation, Rama Kundu)

All over India similar songs can be found in different languages, retaining a very real history of desperate protest and defiance in their lines.

One can also cite the immensely popular folksong that spread like wildfire through Bengal following the hanging of Khudiram Bose, the teenage martyr who joined the terrorist movement and hurled a bomb with the intention of killing a British bureaucrat. We do not know who composed the song, but it was picked up by the masses,

“Ma, allow me to go for once, I shall come back!
O ma, I’ll put my head into the noose all a-smile
While the world will look on,
On Saturday at ten the court cannot contain the crowds any more
The judge orders hanging for Khudiram.
You still have twelve millions of sons and daughters, ma.
To tend; let me be hanged!
I shall be born again in a mud hut
If you fail to recognize me then,
Just look for the sign of the noose round my neck...(translation, Rama Kundu)

Sisir K. Das described the 1857 revolt, also referred to as the ‘first war of Independence’ as a “silent moment”. This is due to the little record it has left behind in contemporary written literature. Excluding the poets Iswar Gupta (Bengal) and Narmad (Gujarat), mainstream literature remained nearly mum during and in the immediate aftermath of 1857 in contrast to folklore. There was an immediate and powerful outpouring of folk response in various forms of folk art. Even the puppeteers presented the events through their puppet shows in order to stir pity, awe and resentment amidst the folk.

The heroic feats of Rani Laxmibai became the favourite subject of popular folksingers: (see P. C.Joshi, ‘Songs of Mutiny’). Mahasweta Devi, in her book *Jhânsîr Rânî* cites a song which indicates the degree of inspiration the Rani instilled among her followers:

“One day we all will have to die
Then let that day be today
For our Rani we shall give up this life.
I will fight the Feringhee with this sword in my hand
The world will never forget me.”(Translation, Rama Kundu)

There was a burst of ballads and songs about the queen of Jhansi, which reflects popular hatred against British torture and admiration for the queen as can be seen in the following song,

“Fell the trees,
The queen of Jhansi ordered,

So that the Feringis
Cannot hang our soldiers,
So that the cowardly British
May not shout,
Hang them on the tree.
Fell the trees, so that
They may not get any shade
To rest in the hot sun.” (Translation, Hemango Biswas)

Another hero who was valorized in the folksong was Kunwar Singh, a leader of 75 years. Age or physical debility did not make him weak of purpose. The songs specially highlight his age in order to foreground his exceptional commitment. Kunwar Singh appears in these songs as an old man of 80, whose head wriggles as he walks, whose hair is white like a crane and who has lost all his teeth. However, “such a man set out for the war in the dark night”. Children are still lulled to sleep with the song about Kunwar,

“O my child, our grandpa that day
had picked up the sword...”

A Gond prayer during the rebellion of 1857 invokes the popular spirit thus,

“Shut the mouth of the slanderers and
Eat up the backbiters, trample down the sinners,
You, ‘satusamharika’
Kill the British, exterminate them, Matchundee.
Let not the enemy escape, not the wives and children
Of such oh! Samgharika
Show favour to Shanker; support your slaves;
Listen to the cry of religion.
‘Mathalka’ eat up the unclean,
make no delay,
now devour them,
and that quickly,
Ghor-Mathalka.

(From P.C.Joshi(ed.), *Rebellion 1857: A Symposium* (1986: 158); cited in *The Penguin 1857 Reader*. (ed.) Pramod K. Nayar. Penguin Books India, 2007; p. 314-15)

In the folk poems of the ‘Karan’ poets of Rajasthan the kings of Rajasthan, all of whom had supported the British except the king of Bund, were called ‘gadar’. Sankardan Samaur(1824-78) had even called upon the people to rebel against the kings. The Karan poet Suryamal of Bundi composed satirical verses:

Oh ye Thakurs, don’t allow people to call you Singhas (lions)
Now that you’ve surrendered to foreigners
The name suits only those whose paws can kill elephants, and not the weak.

The great harvest of folk literature, scroll, music, and rural ‘tamashas’ preserved the glory and the martyrdom, the thrill and the tragedy of 1857. It was only in later

years that these slowly percolated into mainstream and thereby inspired subsequent freedom struggle. So these are valuable documents of our anti-imperialist struggle and national heritage.

At the initial stage of the rebellion the elation among the common folk can be guessed from such excited songs as follows:

“Oh, all come and see
In the market of Meerut
How they give a good thrashing to the captured Feringhee
How they give a good thrashing to white men!” (P. C. Joshi)

In a sombre mood, the sad songs on the fall of Lucknow such as “bullets are flying in Alambagh”, or “the canon roars in Machhibagan”, or “thick arrows have darkened the sky”, or “soldiers are beating their own forehead”, or “queens are lamenting inside the palace” suggest an atmosphere of gloom and confusion.

Many tragedies were registered in folksongs and tales and thus remained alive in folk memory. Maniram Dewan of Assam, who was hanged in 1858, for his involvement in the ‘mutiny’ was thus commemorated in the mournful elegiac folk ballad:

“Secretly did they arrest you, O Maniram,
Secretly did they take you
Holroyd Sahib on the Tokolai bank
Had you secretly hanged.” (Hemango Biswas)

Amalita in Assam is about Maniram Dewan who had, around 1857, tried to organize a revolt but was eventually captured and executed by the British in 1858 following a mock trial. The ‘malita’ registers the sorrow of the people at the tragedy:

‘*Desh patiboloi olali Maniram
Yatarai marile hanchi;
Lagar Samaniyai úatru úâlile
Loli Jorjatat phanchi*’

(Das, 129)

‘Maniram you had set out to build the country
However somebody sneezed at your departure,
All the followers and friends you had betrayed you
You were hung at Jorhat.’

Thus, folklore contains valuable micro-narratives of history under the garb of their simple melodies, verses, tunes and tales. Today we know some six thousand Indians were hanged during the three months in the immediate aftermath of the mutiny.

10.3.3 Folk Cults, Bhakti and Protest

Like the political establishment, religious establishment too caused resentment and led to unique forms of protest. The *Bâul* songs prevalent among the outcast and poor communities present a remarkable defiance of the Hindu and Muslim religious establishments. Their emphasis on ‘manush’ or the individual is itself a protest against the authority and teaching of the mainstream religious establishment. The songs that go in the name of Lalan Sain or Madan Seikh amply bear out the message of protest.

He who knows the real *tattva* of man
Does not need any scripture
He has no fear of gods or demons, made of earth or wood
Who knows man (Translation, Rama Kundu)

When asked by everybody about his caste, Lalan would ask with simple innocence:
'what caste does look like? I do not know.' Lalan sings:

'The real Mecca is the human body.

Why do you tire yourself out, running abroad?' (Translation, Hemnago Biswas)

A popular song in the name of Madan Shek:

"Your path is blocked with
Temples and mosques,
When your call comes, my mentor,
I cannot move on –
The Gurus and Mursheds
Stand in my way.
The 'Puran', the 'Koran' and the counting of beads,
How tormenting are they
Madan wails in disgust."

(Translation, Hemnago Biswas)

Sanat Kumar Bose writes about the *Bâul*: "He ... defies all the accepted forms of rituals prescribed and rigorously defended by the Hindu priests". (*Folkmusic and Folklore* 52) The outcaste status of the *Bâul* who has to necessarily hold himself aloof from the mainstream society and religion/s, is however an assertion of his unique space and worldview.

The powerful Bhakti movement which is believed to have gained strength from the Eighth Century onwards in various parts of India is perceived as a form of social protest against the class and caste divisionism of orthodox religion. Though imbued with various strands of mysticism, the raising of the individual being or devotee or seeker above social and religious structures had recognisable consequences on the self-perception of entire communities. Indeed Bhakti movements created communities of devotees who within their fold could be equals and 'casteless' being united in the same mystico-religious experience while belonging to particular social castes or communities in other social contexts. Early Bhakti movements of south India such as Saivism and Sri Vaishnavism and later Movements originating in the Deccan like the Dattatreya cult and Vithoba cult to name a few have grappled and tried to resolve problematic issues of social inequality and the pre-eminence of the individual mystic.

Sometimes a shrine can command the central position in a community's life. In such cases, the shrine itself can evolve into a bastion of struggle for the community. Saurabh Dube writes, "Recent studies of low-caste movements have focused on religion as a mode of coping with and transforming an oppressive social order, the articulation of these initiatives was linked to popular tradition and popular culture." (*Subaltern Studies* 132)

The evolution of the Satnampanth cult and the Satnamis in Chhattishgarh can be cited as example. *Satnampanth* was an expression of the protest of the Chamar

community of the locality. An ‘untouchable’ caste, the Chamars protested against their marginalization from the rural society. The Satnami mythic narratives relate the origin of this cult with the emergence of their preceptor, Guru Ghasidas. Being chosen and initiated by ‘Satnampurush’, Ghasidas began to heal people from snake-bite, disease, blindness, other ailments and even death. Mystics and preceptors are often believed to be gifted with healing powers.

The Satnampanth rejected caste division within the community. They questioned the caste system but at the same time upheld the practices of purity and pollution which were flaunted by the upper caste as mark of their superiority. By rejecting meat, alcohol, narcotics, even certain vegetables and pulses, etc., they seemed to appropriate the symbols of the higher caste. This appropriation was itself an act of defiance. Eventually they also took the *janeu* or sacred thread, tilak, and choti, all symbols of high castes, thus challenging the prerogative of the caste order.

At the same time Satnampanth also introduced other practices which indicated protest. Satnampanth rejected temples and abolished the worship of village gods and goddesses for its followers. According to the myth “Satnampurush had asked Ghasidas to chase out the gods and goddesses from their houses” (*Subaltern Studies 144*). They tried to get over the machinations of the caste society by throwing its gods and goddesses away. They also replaced the ‘priest’ by a nominated representative called ‘bhandari’. There was no caste distinction within the faith. This actually meant a rejection of the social hierarchy of the caste society. A human mortal and that too from a ‘low’ caste, Guru Ghasidas was made to take the place of religious leader and was invested with the authority of the upper caste guru. A very daring act indeed! This invited the ire of the upper caste Hindus. The fact that they could launch this protest, however briefly, was because of their unity and the tight bond of mutual support among the community. By its very nature Satnampanth involved a ‘confrontational enterprise’ (*Subaltern Studies 147*).

The Satnamis not only took on the caste society but later, during the leadership of Ghasidas’s son Balakdas sought to take on the colonial power or the ‘angrej raja’. As the story runs, when five Satnamis were unlawfully arrested and penalized by the sarkar, certain miraculous events proved their essential purity. The chakki or grinding stone in which they were to grind an impossible amount of grains broke down, forcing the government to accept their *janeu*, tilak and choti. As Dube writes, “the questioning of the exercise of colonial law combined with the truth, legitimacy and power of Satnam reveals the glimmer of a version of an alternative legality”. (Ibid 148)

Two self-styled religious sects set up among local tribals in Mymensingh and Faridpur (now Bangladesh) in the early 19th century, *Pagal Panthi* and *Ferazis* respectively, professed the ideals of equality among all men. The *Pagal Panthis* rebelled against the British and the local zamindars supported by the British in 1825 and 1833. Another sect, the *Ferazis*, claiming that land was God’s gift and none had the right to impose tax or rent on land, launched a peasant’s movement in 1838-47 against extortion by zamindars and the British indigo planters.

10.4 WOMEN’S PROTEST AGAINST PATRIARCHAL AUTHORITY

The marriage rituals in Murshidabad among the women of the Muslim community included a form called ‘kâp’. Kâp or ‘Alkâp’, a form of burlesque performed in accompaniment to verse or music, was in vogue among the folk. It is played by

women making fun of the male society and institutions. Some women dress up as men with beards made of jute. Wearing shirt-trousers or dhoti-lungis and painting their faces, some carry spades and cane baskets on their shoulders. By means of dance, song and mimicry they make fun of the quarrels among men and the dispensing of rural justice by men among other male-oriented activities. The note of female assertion in 'Kâp' can be fascinating. For example, on the occasion of some minor problems threatening the marriage feast in a village, the local women rise and squash it with the defiant dance and song of 'Kâp',

Remake jhamake lacbo re mashale

Mashal jalyie de

Shasur bhasur mani ne mashale

Mashal jalyie de (Sarkar 134).

[Oh, light and hold up the flaming torches/We shall dance with flair and gusto/ Oh, we don't care about the strictures of father-in-law, or elder brother-in-law ...]

It is interesting to see how women, in spite of the cramping patriarchal stranglehold, carve out their space by means of these oblique devices of protest!

Dinesh Chandra Sen collected popular ballad-like songs called *Maymansingh Geetika* through years of hard work in the fringe areas of East Bengal, now Bangladesh. We hear a bold, direct indictment of the male in many of these songs. For example, Mahua, a beautiful girl who had been kidnapped and brought up by the *vedia*, a migrant community, expresses her apprehension when courted by a genteel youth thus, "*Tomra purush bang-er jat/laihya laihya jao re nagar(3)/ Ar parer maiya dekhle pare hat baraiya dao...*" (You men, you are the race of frog, you go a-skipping from one relation to another; and if you chance to spot a stranger's daughter at once you bend forward to grab the poor thing!)

Women would sometimes use a festive occasion for the mockery of male authority often represented by the bridegroom or the priest. 'Joranam' or 'khicagit' were extempore songs sung by women on the occasion of marriage. In these songs the bridegroom is called 'Japra' (wild shack of hair), 'luvia' (glutton), etc. The priest too is targeted as can be seen in the following verses,

'Bidhi pade bapudeye maje maje ere

Gharat ache khaloipeti taloi mane pade' (Das 105)

Mr. Priest cites some mantras, leaves out some;

Remembers the potbellied woman at home'

Or

'Puja karon buli raikaha bamune

madhuparkakano khale' (Das 105)

'Just see, the gluttonous priest,

under the pretence of worshipping pours the bowl of honey down his gullet!'

Women folk poets or 'Kavials' often lament the bleak lot of the women toiling unrewarded on farms and in households. An obscure woman 'kavial' (folk poet) sings thus,

'Pushye rtu nitya nutan

maiyaar rtu nai sangsare

Khoda ei dunya jabe kon dine' (Deb 87)

[For the men life brings such variety with every reason!
For women it is but one monotonous endless droll.
O God, will this system ever change!]

It is interesting to note the concluding prayer to ‘Basundhara brata’ or ritual fast which is held by women to ensure rain. Women holding a dripping water bowl above the Banyan, Pakud and Tulsi trees, sing the song of the brata. The ritual is concluded with the prayer:

‘*Basundhara devi mago tomay kori namaskar,
ei prthibite janmo jeno ar na hoi amar.*’ (Deb)

[I pray to you O goddess Basundhara, that I may not be born again on this earth]

Though at the heart of all bratas (customs of fasting and worship observed by women) there is a longing for the love of the husband, his well-being and the good health of the family, traces of a deep desolation and despondency underlie the women’s ritual songs.

10.5 FESTIVALS AND FOLK EXPRESSIONS OF PROTEST

Some popular religious festivals among rural folk have also become platforms to give vent to protest against social injustice though in an indirect way. *Gambhira*, *Chou*, *Jhumur*, *Haichao*, *Bihu* are some of the examples.

Gambhira has been in practice in Malda for nearly two centuries. It is part of a religious festival in which the artists tell the tales of their woes, hardships and sufferings to Lord Shiva and seek redress from the Lord. This is a kind of covert protest. The *Gambhira* songs sung in Malda through the month of Chaitra address some of the very real problems of rural life, though putting the blame on Siva and accusing none but Siva for every hazard. The rural poet sings,

“Catch hold of him, don’t let him go
Carry him along
The old fellow has given much pain
When paddy is sown, he gives no water
He jokes with us every time.”(Roy 115)

Tea garden labourers in Assam have evolved their own lore over time lamenting their lowly status and distance from home. The *adkati* or cunning recruiting person is ironically called ‘Shyam’ (possibly to rhyme with Assam too). ‘Shyam’ is a name that is traditionally supposed to denote the eternal lover. Hemango Biswas cites a popular *Jhumur* song sung by the tea garden labourers in Assam,

“How cruel are you, O Shyam,
You have cheated me into Assam.
The Sardar demands work,
The Babu says, drive them along,
The Sahib threatens, I’ll take off your skins
I didn’t want to come
It was you who cheated me into Assam

How cruel you are, O Shyam.”
(*Folkmusic and Folklore 114*)

Prafulla Goswami cites an Assamese *Bihu* song which is a direct mockery of the British planter,

“The Sahibs come and open the gardens
on their heads are pan-shaped topees,
they make Mems of coolie girls
with cigars on their lips.”

(Ibid 68)

In North Bengal there was a custom among the Rajbangshi community of worshipping three deities together, Gorakhshanath, Sona Roy and Rupa Roy. The songs sung by the team of Gorakhshanath’s worshippers are called ‘Haichao’. A ‘haichao’ such as cited would contain a mocking reference to the British traders.

“*Kora bale kurire bhai ebar baro ban*
Uncha kari bando dhipi kaladhapa dhan
Kaladhapa dhanre mor tulsi sari sari
Tahar niche darbar kare Gaurmon chaudhuri...

(In view of the threat of a heavy flood they had made a very high barn to store their dear harvest; then the white trader came to usurp the barn.)

Baramashya songs, as a rule, underscored the poverty and misery of the folk, thereby incorporating an implicit protest against the system. If the form was the frame, protest contributed the flesh to it. Here is a song from Sylhet (now Bangladesh):

In the month of asharh, it rains the whole day,
Brings tears for the poor mother,
There is no food, not a piece of cloth to wear,
What can I send to my daughter’s house?
But my daughter’s mother-in-law will not understand
And my daughter will be tortured.

[Translation, Soumen Sen]

Though *Murshidi* songs are ostensibly about *Dehatattva*, the religious message of *Murshidi* song is sometimes expressed in terms of social-economic reality and the unfairness that is embedded in the system. Thus the dimension of protest has been apparent quite often. For example,

I paid all my rents and taxes
Yet my land is put on auction,
Whom shall I complain to?
My landlord remains far off... (Translation, Rama Kundu)

These songs have double meanings. The situation of the devotee vis-à-vis his distant God is described in terms of the unjust suffering of the tenant of an absentee landlord. Similarly, the ‘rent collector’ in the following song can be death, as well as the very alive grim emissary of the real absentee landlord.

My Guru...I am head and ears in debt.
I don't know how to pay off the Zaminder's rent,
I am in constant worry,
When the rent collector comes
With the ejection notice in hand.

(Translation, Hemango Biswas)

It is not difficult to read the voice of unconcealed resentment and protest against social inequalities and injustice in many a *Murshidi* song of Bengal. One such song says,

'My Murshid, some live in palaces,
but I have a broken hut,
the hut can somehow resist a gale,
But it can't withstand the storm

'My Murshid, some people are well-dressed,
but I have a loin cloth,
even if it covers a part of the body
it doesn't cover my shame. (Translation, Hemango Biswas)

10.6 FOLKTALES OF LOVERS AS PROTEST

The lovers, heroes and heroines in Punjabi folklore possess extraordinary beauty but come from poor walks of life. The potter's daughter Sohni, the washerwoman Sassi, the shepherds Ajimbeg and Ranjha are examples. Puran and Rasalu, the two popular prince heroes gave up their throne and embraced the life of a destitute. Another unique aspect of Punjabi folklore is the celebration of individual freedom. The lovers represent the assertion of the individual whenever there has been a clash between the individual and the family and/or community.

Birha and *Dehotattva* songs emphasize the young lover's protest against social taboos and censors. For instance, a *Bihu* song says,

'God created the earth first
And then created life,
If this God could fall in love
Why should we not?'

(Translation, Hemango Biswas)

Love songs also imply protest against the insensitive system of marriage which proves particularly painful for the young bride, uprooted from her paternal family forced to labour amidst hostile in-laws. They particularly create a space for romantic passion and desire, usually not present within formalized relations of households which deny individual space.

10.7 OUTLAWS AND NOTIONS OF PROTEST

Some individuals may be regarded as criminals by all sections of society. However there are instances when people considered criminals by the law keepers, the state and the administration might be heroes and champions in the perception of the poor or the marginalized. David Arnold describes this as 'ambivalence'. Some acts can

be perceived by the state as not only criminal but a threat or challenge as well. On the other hand “for the subalterns, even a purely selfish theft or assault can, in the right situation of tension and underlying hostility to oppressors, assume the character of a gesture of defiance or revenge.”(*Subaltern Studies* 125). This means that in certain contexts even criminal acts carried out for selfish motives by some might assume a heroic character in the eyes of the oppressed communities. This can happen when there are shared grievances against a community or a ruling class. In such situations crime itself can be seen by the underprivileged or deprived masses as an expression of protest.

The peasant’s own perception of ‘violence’ can be the reverse of that held by his enemies and the establishment. The establishment perceives all violation of law or defiance of law as ‘crime’. On the other hand in special situation the rebellious peasant can perceive them as gestures of social protest and therefore valorize them as honourable and just acts of protest. We have seen this in the Robin Hood ballads of pre-industrial England which used to enjoy great popularity among the poor villagers of England. The tales about Banjara Singh a bandit who operated around Chambal, correspond to the exploits of Robin Hood. These popular local tales about Banjara Singh ring with reverence for a man who was supposed to have been merciless to the rich and benevolent to the poor. Sympathy and admiration for the outlaw resound in these tales. Goreya Baba, a folk hero belonging to the Dushads, one of the backward castes of Bihar, was originally a robber leader. He came from Delhi along with his gang and eventually was deified. “He was the Robin Hood of Bihar”(Folklore of Bihar 41). Later he became a “popular godling” with the Dushads. Goreya had many encounters with the police and landed gentry. Finally he was killed near Sherpur (district Patna). A shrine was built there, and a mound of earth came to represent Goreya. Gradually Goreya worship spread through Bihar.

P. C. Roychowdhury cites the popular story of Jaydeb Dube, alias ‘*Bhoy-Haran*’ (dispeller of fear) of Monghyr (Bihar). Dube, a fortune teller, had made a humble cottage, but the Raja or local ruler wanted it. In disgust Dube pushed a knife into his own body and sprinkled fire on the palace which instantly caught fire and got scorched. Dube, now turned a demon, pursues the king from hill to hill and finally kills him on the top of Tinpahar (Santhal Parganas). Eventually all the Rajas of the Khheturia clan died at the hands of Dube’s ghost. The demon Jaydev or *Bhoi-haran* commands great reverence in the area, and is next in status only to the deity of Baidyanath of Deoghar (Santhal Parganas).

Sanat Kumar Mitra cites a Bhadu folk song:

‘It is now difficult to identify *Bhadrajan*
Bhadrajan are cheats and swindlers.
Deceiving people with sweet words
They commit burglary even in daytime...
None can protest out of fear...’

[Translation, Sen]

There are many traditions of popular performances by low castes or communities which have an outcaste status. Shang pantomimes, usually held by low people in Cities and towns, combined dance, song, mimicry, and could be outrageous satire against the high-ups. Bireswar Bandyopadhyay collected some of these Shang verses:

‘We, the scavengers, live in the city,
Babus enjoy life at our cost

Hi, gentoos! Attend
The marriage-feast of the scavenger's daughter
We invite you cordially.'

[Translation, Sen]

Some very common proverbs carry a barely concealed core of protest and satirical comment. Here are a few examples;

i) "*Bahge Chunle atharo gha, Rajay chunle bish*"

[The tiger's touch leaves one with eighteen injuries, while the king's attention inflicts twenty.]

ii) "*Rajar salao prajar thakur*"

[Even the brother-in-law of a king is a deity to the poor subject]

iii) "*Laathi jar, mati tar*"

[One who has got the arm power also gets the wealth]

iv) "*Keu more bil chenche keu khay koï*"

[While the lot of some people is to spend his life catching fish, the lot of some other people is to eat that catch]

10.8 LET US SUM UP

Folklore can be the repository of countless micro-narratives of history. By the term micro-narratives those individual or domestic or personal narratives both of individuals and communities are implied. These narratives are a commentary and at times source of official history. Folk forms are not a fossilized thing but part of a constant ongoing living process. They are a source of delight and sustain joy in a life of hard work and deprivation. At the same time folk forms have been a device for the people to negotiate with untold sufferings and hurts. Folk forms may be individual but always stress upon the collective experience of the immediate audience or the community they address. Even when an individual author is there, he represents the voice of the folk. Thus a song becomes a group song though originated by an individual. Sankar Sengupta writes, "...if a boatman, or a peasant or a labourer creates new ballads or songs about his comrade who is killed on the river drive or by an accident or by a person with vested interests or even by the police and he models his song on other lament songs of folk people who intends it to be sung by his fellow comrades would surely come to the group of folksongs even in spite of its origin from an individual. Thus protest songs and ballads are important... Song is considered... a weapon, a brick bat" (*Folklore and Folklife* 126).

In this unit we have had a small glimpse of the ways in which folklore has been the expression of a people through history. Folklore also records and retains the memories of popular uprisings and revolts becoming a source of history. Alan Dundes, the folklorist, argued, "The important question is not what is folklore, nor where does folklore originate, nor how it is transmitted. The important question is what does folklore do for the folk". (*The Study of Folklore* 135) By understanding the power of folk forms of art and expression to voice dissent or protest and subvert existing social equations we can begin to comprehend the role folklore has played and continues to play in our lives.

10.9 ACTIVITY

Make a collection of proverbs and riddles of India that have caught the collective imagination of people through generations, both oral and written.

10.10 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Arnold, David. 'Rebellious Hillmen, 1839-1924', *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (ed. Ranajit Guha OUP India, 1996).

Bandyopadhyay, Bireswar. *Bangla Desher Sang Prasange*. Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1972.

Biswas, Hemanga. 'A Glorious Heritage' in *Folkmusic and Folklore: An Anthology*. Vol.1 (ed. Hemanga Biswas, *et al*). Calcutta, Folkmusic and Folklore Research Institute, 1967.

Bose, Sanat Kumar. 'Baul Songs of Bengal' in *Folkmusic and Folklore: An Anthology*. Vol.1 (ed. Hemanga Biswas, *et al*). Calcutta: Folkmusic and Folklore Research Institute, 1967.

Das, Yogesh. *Assamer Loksamskriti*. New Delhi: NBT India, 1983. Print.

Dube, Saurabh. 'Satnampanth of Chhattishgarh' in *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society* [ed. Partha Chatterjee and Gynendra Pandey] OUP India, 1993. Print.

Dundes, Alan (ed.) *The Study of Folklore*. N.J.: Englewood-Cliffs, 1965.

Ghosh, Amitav. 'The Slave of MS. H.6' in *Subaltern Studies VII: Writings on South Asian History and Society* [ed. Partha Chatterjee and Gynendra Pandey] OUP India, 1993. Print.

Goswami, Prafullakumar. 'Assamese Folk Songs: A General Survey' in *Folkmusic and Folklore: An Anthology*. Vol.1 (ed. Hemanga Biswas, *et al*). Calcutta: Folkmusic and Folklore Research Institute, 1967. Print.

Mitra, Sanat Kumar. *Bhadu in Banglar Loksangeet*. Calcutta: Academy of Folklore, 1984. Print.

Panikkar, K.N. *Folklore of Kerala*. NBT, 1991. Print.

Roy, Buddhadev. *Folksongs of Bengal*. Calcutta: Firma Klm Private Ltd., 1980.

Roychowdhury, P.C. *Folklore of Bihar*. New Delhi: NBT India, 1994. Print

Sarkar, Dinendrakumar. *Bibaher Lokacar*. Kolkata: Akademy of Folklore, 1980.

Sen, Soumen. "Protest— A Major Function of Folklore: The Indian Paradigm". *Folklore Research Journal* (I,i), April-June, 1993.

Sengupta, Pallab. "Folk-tales and Proverbs as Modes of Protest against Socio-Economic Exploitations: A Study". *Folklore Research Journal* (I,i), April-June, 1993

Sengupta, Sankar. *Folklore and Folklife in India*. Calcutta: Indian Publications, 1975. Print.

[Translations from non English sources have been done by Dr. Rama Kundu where other translators have not been mentioned.]

10.11 GLOSSARY

- Insurrection** : a rebellion or resistance to established Authority.
- Anti-imperialist struggle** : a struggle on the part of subject people Against their imperial/ colonial masters.
- Establishment** : existing power structures in a society.
- Perceptor** : a philosophical leader or seer.
- Outlaw** : a fugitive or person who has been declared Illegal.
- Pantomime** : a theatrical performance with facial Expressions and gestures.

(P.S. Major portions of this unit are borrowed from Course 1, Block-3, Unit-4 and Course-1, Block-4, Unit-4, PGDFCS, written by Prof. R Kundu and Prof. Nandini Sahu, with approval of SOITS School Board, Item no: 13:SB 18.13.1, 5th October 2015)

10.12 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Note: Your answers should be in about 400 words.

- 1) What do you understand by the term 'Protest'? How are they expressed through folk riddles?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Can you name some tribal uprisings against the British rule?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3) What revolts and insurrections have been discussed above?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

4) What do you know of the Satnampanth?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5) Disuss the 'Kap' ritual mentioned above.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6) What popular festivals have been discussed in the above section?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

7) Discuss some famous proverbs which are folk forms and also are a part of our everyday speech.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

UNIT 11 ARCHIVING AND DOCUMENTATION

Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
 - 11.1.1 Definition of Archives
- 11.2 Characteristic of Archives
- 11.3 Role of Archives
- 11.4 Functions of Archives
 - 11.4.1 Acquisition Policy
 - 11.4.2 Appraisal
 - 11.4.3 Documentation
 - 11.4.4 Preservation
 - 11.4.5 Using archives
- 11.5 Archival Ethics
- 11.6 Organization of Archives
- 11.7 Sound Archives
 - 11.7.1 Division of Work in the Sound Archives
- 11.8 Copyrights: Legal and Ethical Issues
- 11.9 Some of the Archives in India: Case Studies
 - 11.9.1 The National Archives of India
 - 11.9.2 National Film Archive of India (NFAI)
 - 11.9.3 Archives of Research Centre for Ethnomusicology (ARCE)
- 11.10 Legal and Ethical Issues
- 11.11 Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
 - 11.11.1 What is Copyright Law?
 - 11.11.2 Laws for Protection of Folklore/Traditional Cultural Expression in India
 - 11.11.3 Commercial Exploration of Folklore/Traditional Cultural Expressions in India
- 11.12 Let Us Sum Up
- 11.13 References and Further Readings
- 11.14 Check Your Progress: Possible Questions

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After having read this unit you will be able to

- discuss about archiving;
- explain the importance of archives and their role in our society;
- understand the legal and ethical issues related to documentation and archiving; and
- list some of the important archives in India.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Archives house non-current records/documents (all formats such as paper, sound recordings etc.) of an institution/organization/research scholar or even individual for preservation. The material preserved in the archives have a continuing value for

future references. The materials collected for the archives are unique in nature. Archives are an outcome of a process and they are a body of functionally and organizationally related material that has grown originally out of some activity. Archives are maintained by the national governments, universities, cultural institutions, museums, hospitals etc., wherever it is important to preserve non-current records indefinitely. These records have greatest historical and great potential use to their creators and other researchers in documenting and understanding the past, dealing with the present, and preparing for the future.

Conservation and preservation of Cultural properties

For any nations of the world, it is very much essential to conserve cultural properties for a good understanding of the history and culture. Because the cultural properties are priceless national assets and form the foundation of future progress. Therefore, every individual must conserve and preserve such properties and pass them on to future generations. The material for conservation of cultural properties are all types of materials, paper, paintings, manuscripts, textiles, metal objects, wooden objects etc. Cultural properties can be broadly divided in two groups, tangible and intangible.

A brief note of Tangible and Intangible cultural properties:

- **Tangible:** a property or thing that is perceptible by touch, such as
 - 1) Buildings, picture, sculpture, applied art, calligraphic works, and other items of great historical or artistic value to our nation.
 - 2) Archeological specimens and other historical materials of great scientific or academic value.
- **Intangible:** Property which does not have any physical presence such as dramatic arts, music, folk performing art, textiles, costumes, applied arts technology and other cultural assets of an intangible nature which are of great historical or artistic value.

There are varied tasks involved in conservation of all objects, for which a good understanding of perspectives and techniques of preservation is essential for the conservator/curator/archivist/librarian and the concerned staff. Some of the common conservation procedures of such properties includes removing dirt from the objects, which can cause damage, in case of acid paper, removing the chemical products or agent of decay etc, preservation of environment temperature, humidity, light control etc. Conservation of all kind of material/art objects/sound recording are done under three main headings: (1) Conservation of Museum object (2) Conservation of Library materials (3) Conservation of Archival materials. Although they have a separate identity, basically they are one institution divided under three divisions. The museum, library and archives play an important role in our society to provide comprehensive and need based information to their clientele with special reference to information management, information retrieval, networking, relating one another with their collection.

Conservation of Museum Objects

Museums are permanent institutions in the service of society. They acquire, conserve, research, communicate and exhibit the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and hold them for the purpose of education, study, and enjoyment, as defined by the International Council of Museums. According to the UK Museums Association,

“ museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artifacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society.”

Museums collect and care for objects of scientific, artistic, or historical importance and make them available for public viewing through exhibits that may be permanent or temporary. Museums play an important role in our society, both socially and economically. The attraction for tourism through displaying art objects for exhibition, provide a marketplace for creative arts through their retail activities. Some of the specialised museums allow physical contact with the associated artifacts and also encourages approach. Apart from these, offering academic programmes and activities for a range of audiences, lectures or tutorials by the museum faculty or field experts, films, musical or dance performances, and technology demonstrations are also taken up by the museums.

Conservation in museums includes all kind of processes of looking after a place where art /material objects/recordings of cultural significance are retained. It includes continuous and protective care of the objects, setting of a place, maintenance such as preservation, restoration, reconstruction etc. A well organized library is an integral part of a museum, the purpose of having a library in the museum is for collection of books, periodical, guide books and catalogues. Folklore and ethnographic museums collect sound recordings of oral traditions such as folk music, tribal music, folk dance, folk theatre, oral history etc., in their archives.

11.1.1 Definition of Archives

There is no single definition of archives; however, here are few examples of archival definitions:

According to the 1979 French definition of archives, records become archival as soon as they are created or received. American federal records become archival as soon as they are formally offered by a federal agency and the National Archives signs a document accepting legal responsibilities for them. Although archives are records, but not all records are archives. The records are selected for an archive because they have permanent value, either as evidence of transactions, or because of the information they contain about people, places, and things. The decision of selecting records for archives is taken by the archivists.

The term “archive” has been derived from the Greek word “ archeion”. Etymologically, “archeion” has its origin in the word “arch” which refers to the magisterial residence, then the public office where Government records are kept. Historical manuscripts, isolated letters of ancient rulers, copper plates, stone inscriptions, besides a host of other artifacts, are popularly known as archives. Archives are a greater or a lesser faction of records of an organization, institution or individual which are preserved for their enduring value whether they are current or non-current.

Engenio Casanova, an Italian archivist defines archives as, “the orderly accumulation of documents which were created in the course of its activity by an institution or an individual and which are preserved for the accomplishment of its political, legal or cultural purposes by such as institution or individual”. Dr. P. Basu, an Indian archivist, said “archives are records of enduring value no longer required by the creating agency for frequent use”. (Archival 5-6).

Archivist: A person who is responsible for managing the records of archives is known as an archivist. They maintain the archives of the parent entity, be it a government organization, institution, primarily for their administrative usefulness to their creator or successors. In some archives, the archivists serve as records managers, assisting the creators of records in archiving budget and efficiency in the

creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, there fore reducing their quantity and increasing their quality of records. Archivists have an important role by preserving and making records available in the society, especially for those who are involve in various research oriented activities, disseminating information and new idea.

11.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF ARCHIVES

- 1) The archives of a particular institution or organization reflect the policies, functions and transactions of that institution alone and nothing else.
- 2) The distinctive feature of the archives is their official character, being the products or by-products of transaction of certain organization or institution having legal efforts. From this the second principle of archival administration that the archives must remain in the unbroken custody of the creator or his legitimate successor for their validity in the court of law was derived.
- 3) The archive is their uniqueness, each record was created in single copy for a specific purpose.
- 4) The authenticity of archives, refers to the underlying fact that the archives are not collected, in the usual sense of the term, by the creating institution or organization; rather they grow naturally out of their activities and operation.

The difference between archives and other record keeping organization/institution is that the latter does not have the above mentioned characteristics. Books in the library or items in a historical manuscript repository (storage place) are collected and arranged in some specific system of order and does not necessarily require to be a part of any organization/institution. Where as, it is essential for archives to create relationship with the creating institution/organization, for the sense of creating archives.

Archival records are preserved for use either by the creating organization/institution/ individuals or by research scholars. The proper utilization of records involves several factors, such as concentration of records in one place, or the establishment of a Records Office, proper arrangement of records, and preparation of their reference media. Opinion as to how records are to be concentrated at one place, and how they should be arranged and how they should be made available for use, both by the creating institute as well as by research scholars, needs to be understood. However these rules differ from time to time, country to country, government to government.

11.3 ROLE OF ARCHIVES

- to safeguard the national, regional, traditional culture of the society;
- to spread awareness among the people to respect and value their culture and also changes happening in the society. For example an Ethnomusicology archive provides some of the rare and oldest recordings of folk/popular/classical forms, which will be beneficial for any current research scholar or individual to observe the similarity/changes of the performance in present contest;
- making people to think about their past and its related history; and
- preserving important recorded documents for future reference.

11.4 FUNCTIONS OF ARCHIVES

For an efficient evolution and to ensure that the records are understood within their most appropriate context there are certain processes conducted for archival materials.

11.4.1 Acquisition Policy

Archives collect non-current records of an organization/institution/research scholar or individual etc. There are the types of material collected in the archives. These vary from Governments records, folklore materials, history of people, manuscripts etc., as per the archival requirement. Acquisition is pivotal. Following are the certain acquisition policy defining the types of records that archives seek to add to their holdings.

Acquisition Policy:

- a) Policies of institutional archives usually attempt to ensure adequate and complete documentation of the institution, its functions, and its activities. Therefore, the policy identifies priority subjects for acquisition and the types of materials most likely to provide important information about the institution.
- b) Specify the administrative units that are most likely to create essential documentation.
- c) Defining categories of personal and family papers and other non-institutional collections.
- d) Defining acquisitions in relationship to the holdings of other archival material. Many similar institutions are concerned with documentation of similar subjects and serve the needs of the same researchers. Because duplicate documentation is of little value to these scholars and absorbs valuable archival resources.
- e) Institution can cooperatively choose areas of specialization or may agree that records or papers should be placed in institutions already holding relevant related documentation.

11.4.2 Appraisal

The decision by an archive or organization is to take a collection to preserve and process its own archival records. It involves a significant commitment of time, money, and space, because, no one can afford to keep everything and anything. That is why, the incoming material considered must be appraised to determine, firstly, whether the collection as a whole is worth keeping, and second, which items within it are permanently valuable. The preference of decision for preserving collections depends upon the current historical and cultural values, and the intellectual and conceptual frameworks of those conducting the appraisal.

11.4.3 Documentation

An essential bridge between the collectors and the archives is documentation. It is the written document which accompanies with the acquired materials. For a systematic documentation every piece of note has great value as the context is not self evident. The documentation process includes the identification of items, storage location, retrieval, presentation and circulation for the information of users. For example, in a sound archive, the archivists have very little knowledge of being responsible for the preservation of recordings for the future user without knowing who they will be and what they may need to know. Therefore all details of the

recording including the answers to the basic questions “why, what, where, when, by whom, for whom” etc., should be documented as an archival holding.

11.4.4 Preservation

Is one of the major process of archiving, the process of preservation takes place after a systematic, well-documented collection has been made with its contents. The goal of preservation is to assure that records in archival custody survive for an indefinite period of time, in some cases are legally necessary. This can be most easily achieved when the goals and basic principles of preservation are understood by all staffs involved with the records. It is a joint responsibility of a number of professional staffs for the preservation of archives, each of whom brings unique knowledge to bear on the complex problem of preserving archival records. Archival materials are diverse, they are composite objects, generally comprising of a variety of papers, inks (from carbon ink to laser printing), animal skins and its products, textiles, photographs and photographic material, audio-visual materials (wax cylinders, shellac and vinyl disc and optical materials: CD and DVD), magnetic materials (tape, hard discs and floppy discs) etc. These materials are composed of diverse materials, most often respond somewhat differently to changing environmental conditions, hence they may vary in their preservation processes. Some of the most serious dangers are insects, dust, heat and humidity, which can be prevented with climate control. The core aspects of preservation is the physical preservation of archival building, air-conditioning system, ventilating and de-humidifier. Preservation apparently makes an attempt to maintain materials in a sound physical and chemical condition.

11.4.5 Using Archives

Archival collection exists to be used, but the understanding of its appropriate use varies from institutions to institution in line with their missions. Usually all archives provide information of their collection in published forms like newsletters, ephemera or brochures etc. Now-a-days in many countries information is provided through the Internet. Therefore archivists require to guide the user how to care and handle the archival records, specially for paper records which are prone to perishing if handled recklessly. Most often in sound archives, duplicate copies are made, so the original recordings remain safe and intact. Most of the sound archives provide copies of recording to the user for research activity on request.

11.5 ARCHIVAL ETHICS

When materials are acquired or donated to an archive, certain complicated ethical issues always accompany it. Archival ethics can be defined as:

- A system of moral principles;
- The rules of conduct recognized in respect to a particular group, culture, class of human action, etc.;
- Moral principles as of an individual or that branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to the right or wrong of certain actions and the goodness and bad deeds of the motives and ends of such actions

The governing principle in creating a code of ethics is that the rule must not be arbitrary. They must be necessary for, or an aid to, the purpose of the field in which they apply. For example, in a field recording archives the recorded materials of a particular community are rare, archives have to be aware of the rights of the

community to their music. While signing for any kind of commercial releases, archives should make communication with both the community and the depositor/collector, which can be consulted as to the uses of the recordings. Archival Ethics are tremendously intricate and they are best dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

11.6 ORGANIZATION OF ARCHIVES

Archives are divided into five main categories according to organization they cater:

- 1) Academic archives: archives created to preserve these archives are found in colleges, universities or any other academic institution.
- 2) Business archives: archives located in institutions, which are owned by a private business house. The corporate archives maintain historic documents and items related to the history of their companies. Example: World of Coca-Cola, Levi Strauss & Co, Motorola Heritage Services and Archives.
- 3) Government archives: these archives include those institutions run on a local and state level as well as those by the central government.
- 4) Non-profit archives: these archives include archives for non-profit businesses such as hospitals and the repositories with the foundations. Non-profit archives are usually set up with private funds from donors to preserve the papers and history of specific persons or place.
- 5) Special archives: these archives include tribal archives, folklore archives, archives within museums and archives that exist the papers of private individuals. (www.wikipedia.org)

11.7 SOUND ARCHIVES

Sound archives are a place where audio visual recordings are stored for the purpose of both preservation and use. The sound archives play an important role in our society, they have been influencing our day to day life through audiovisual media with radio and television. The origin of sound archives is many but one of the oldest sound archives is broadcasting developed. Broadcasting archives came naturally into being because of the primary need for developing storehouse for recording that are used for radio programme. Many sound archives have been within research or institutions which took up sound recording as yet another source of information in their specialized fields. There are many archives of specialized fields like Ethnomusicology, Folklore, Oral history, Political or social history. (Rolf Schuurmsma. 1983. Approaches to the National Organization of Sound Archives in the book *Sound Archives: A Guide to their Establishment and Development*.pp.1-9)

There are different types of sound archives, which are often developed with departments of libraries or for audio/visual collection. There are some archives which developed inside institutions responsible for general collection, frequently of national and regional character, and they are not connected to any specialized field. For example: the Library of Congress in Washington DC and the Public Archives of British Columbia in Victoria have gradually built up extensive collections of sound recordings of spoken word and music alongside collections of books, documents and other media. Although types of sound archives are many in number but they are almost overlapping with each other in many ways. Following are the types of sound archives:

- National sound archives (the central collecting agency in a country, sometimes independent, sometimes part of a bigger institution)

- Gramophone record libraries (important above all for music, acoustic “libraries”)
- Archives of radio and television stations
- Sound departments in scientific research institutions
- Central locations for sound recording (audio-visual) media in schools and adult education

(IASA *Phonographic Bulletin*. No.58/June 1991. pp.11).

A brief description of sound archives is given below, from which they can be different from one to another by their tasks.

A gramophone record library will usually acquire all discs available on the market which come with its required collections and make them available to its users. It is important for a gramophone record library because they are used by a large clientele. A research institute for oral traditions, who document traditions like folk performing arts, rituals, narratives etc., act very differently. Most often research institutes of these kinds work two ways, (1) Taking up research projects for wanting to document any traditional art forms (for example: documentation of folk musical forms of Himachal Pradesh). (2) Another kind of research institute, where researcher or collector can deposit their valuable work and keep it for future references. But these institutes have fewer users with a more intensive service. Compare to Gramophone and Research institute, speed of service is an important factor for a broadcasting archive (radio and television).

There are considerable differences in the work of national sound archives, in most countries these archives serves national public needs. Apart from having music recordings, some of these archives have had their origin in broadcasting or recording archives. Most of such sound archives keep recordings of speech and other sound resource material in addition to music (*IASA Bulletin* no.58/June 1991).

11.7.1 Division of Work in the Sound Archives

Collection: sound recordings are collected mainly in two ways (1) Passive: the published recordings of different varieties, which are available in the open market and copies of broadcast footage, are collected for archival preservation. For example: sound archives of a radio station and television centre. (2) Active: unpublished recording material of individual research or institutional projects, which needs special care to have very well thought-out procedure for active sound documentation.

Documentation: The exact nature of documentation required by an archive will depend on the type of material it collects. For example: (1) event documentation will try to record a particular relevant happening like a dance performance or popular concert, a poetry recitation. (2) Interview of oral history will collect material about ritual practices of some community or stories of life etc. Although both these methods complement each other, they demand different modes of documentation.

Cataloguing: The purpose of catalogue is to provide systematic information on the items contained in a collection in sufficient detail to enable for those who have to administer that collection and those who wish to use the items for their work as efficiently as possible. In sound archives, the role of cataloguing is very dependent upon the kind of sound recordings. For example: a research institute will usually undertake a more intensive survey and evolution of its sound documents, but, a record library will go by its formal information on the record cover. It is very

important to maintain efficiency in terms of both time and unnecessary usage of the recordings in the archive. Generally, cataloguing may be considered under three heading-accessioning, indexing and labeling.

Preservation: the aim of any sound archive is to preserve its collections into the indefinite future. Most of the preservation work requires technical expertise and expensive equipment, but certain principles require nothing more than common sense. Some of the important preservation principles are:

- 1) keep storage area dust and insect free
- 2) keep temperature and humidity stable
- 3) keep material away from light
- 4) handle only when necessary
- 5) store in a secure vault to protect from theft, loss, or accidental misuse
- 6) develop an emergency plan for natural disasters, such as flood or fire
- 7) keeping multiple copies of a document is an important preservation principle. Specially, make working copies of original recording and keep the original into permanent storage, and, use only the new copy or working copy.

11.8 COPYRIGHTS: LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Copyright regulation has an important role to play in the sound archives; these may vary from country to country. Whatever may be the deference of regulation, but, it is very important, that when copying sound documents one must clarify the copyright situation regarding any particular document to the source. Especially when a copy is being made for public performance, for example: radio or television broadcasting. In research archives, where usually collections are donated, the archives assume full legal ownership. But, there are some terms and conditions between donor and archives, related to:

- 1) the donor's access to and use of the collection;
- 2) restriction on access of other to certain materials in a collection, usually for a specific period of time, to protect privacy of the creator;
- 3) intellectual ownership of the records, including copyright, and which remains with the creator of the records unless those rights are explicitly given over to the archival repository. For example in a folklore collection, the intellectual rights might be held by the informant, the folklorist, or the organization that sponsored the research, depending on the agreement among them.

Copyright for commercially published sound recordings follows two separate rules:

- 1) the right of the author (s) of the recorded work like composer, lyricist, arranger, etc. These rights are often controlled by publishers and/or a copyright organization.
- 2) the right of the performer and the record company, usually controlled by the latter and/or a performing rights organization.

(Pekka Gronow.1983. *Commercial Recording in the Book Sound Archives: A Guide to their Establishment and Development*. pp.95-96).

Access and dissemination: the idea of all archival effort is to preserve valuable records and make them available for user. To make records available for user there are certain principles and policies which should be maintained by the sound archives (a) Preparing manual for access policies (b) Providing archival materials to scholar on standard term of access. (c) If necessary, charging fees from the user. (d) Providing security and physical protection of archival holding (e) Advertising archival holding and services (f) Restrictions on access and use.

Technology: the technology provision of a sound archive is a tool for getting the sound recording done for the archive and also dubbing for the incoming collection. The requirement of recording technology of a sound archive largely depends on technical and physical function of its day to day activities. The selection of recording equipment such as microphones, recorder, playback machine and recording media such as cassettes, disc, and reel that carry the sound etc., must be of a standard which will level the recording. Both the recording and reproduction equipment must be regularly and professionally maintained.

Archival storage: archives face constant problems crating and maintaining adequate storage condition. The equipments, the tape, digital media are quite fragile, and are specially affected by the dampness, light and heat. So, better the storage, longer the life of the medium. Special care should be taken for the storage area (1) storage rooms must be kept at constant temperature (20C+/-2) and humidity (50 -60%); (2) Apart from these, material must be protected from stray magnetic fields (electric circuits, lightening conductors etc.,(3) they must be dust free (4) tapes and discs must be in chemically inert covers, materials of which the recording media are made must be as stable as possible; (5) discs must be stored vertically or suspended in vertical files. Special care must be taken when original recording media are used and working copies should be made for each recording.

Most of the leading sound archives of the world follow a standard rule provided by the **International Association of Sound and Audio visual Archives (IASA)**. IASA was established in 1969 in Amsterdam to function as medium for international co-operation between archives that preserve recorded sound and audiovisual documents. IASA has over 400 hundred members from more than 60 countries representing a broad palette of audiovisual archives and personal interests which are distinguished by their focus on particular subjects and areas. Collections may exist in many sound and moving image formats and focus on topics such as: Music, History, Literature, Folklore and Ethnography, Theatre, Oral history, Bio-accoustics, Environment, Medicine, technology, Linguistics and dialects recordings, as well as for forensic purposes.

Activities

IASA supports the exchanges of information and fosters international co-operation between audiovisual archives and others interested in the field, especially in the areas of

- Acquisition and exchange
- Documentation and metadata
- Resources discovery and access
- Copyright and ethics
- Preservation and conservation
- research, dissemination, and publication

- Digitization of media content

Organization of IASA

Sections and Committees are responsible for developing the work of IASA. They deal with specific areas and provide excellent opportunities for information exchange and discussion.

Sections provide a platform for the exchange of information between specific types of archives and collection.

- The National Archives Section considers issues facing national archives, e.g. acquisition policies, legal deposit, the management of large collections.
- The Radio Archives Section is concerned with special issues relating to audiovisual archives whose holding includes collections of recording originally made to all archives and collections.

(IASA Information Bulletin)

11.9 SOME OF ARCHIVES IN INDIA: CASE STUDIES

Many educational institutions/government organizations/broadcasting centres have individual archives as a part of their administrative units. In the following section we are going to discuss about some of the archives of India in detail.

11.9.1 The National Archives of India

This is the repository of the non-current records of the Government of India. It is an attached office of the Department of Culture under Ministry of Tourism and Culture. It was set up in March 1891 in Calcutta (Kolkata) as the Imperial Record Department and subsequent to the transfer of the National Capital from Kolkata to New Delhi in 1911, it was shifted to its present building in 1926.

The main function of National Archives of India and State Government's Archives are to collect, preserve and organize government's records and other materials of historical importance. National Archive of India, being an apex archival institution of the country, is generally expected to provide technical know-how and requisite training to the professionals of state and other archival institutions. With the growth of concept of preservation of cultural heritage of the country as well as that of the various regions, the archives are expected to inculcate the awareness about preservation of cultural heritage. National Archive of India as well as various state archives mount exhibitions and organize lectures and celebrate archives week for the fulfillment of this objective. Though the main clientele of the archives are decision makers of the Central and State Government, but in recent years the main thrust is shifting towards the researchers, who come to the archives to consult the records created by various Ministries of the Government, in pursuit of their researches. The National Archive of India is running various training programmes ranging from short duration to one year Diploma course in Archives keeping with the objective to provide technical knowledge to the individuals and organizations interested in records management, preservation etc.

The National Archive of India has an established library, which provides secondary sources of information and requirements of creators of the records of the Government of India, Legislators, Judiciary, decision-makers, Gazetteers, Parliamentary debates, Census of India, India Office list, India Army list, Civil list, Travel Accounts,

Newspapers, Journals and Bulletins, Freedom Struggle Papers/Books, New Media and technological collections, Application of Computers, Electronic Books and Journals, Institutions and Organizations, Research Scholars of the Universities of India and abroad etc., as a useful adjunct to the government of India records available in the National Archive of India (*Archives in India*. 147-163)

11.9.2 National Film Archive of India (NFAI)

NFAI was established in February 1964, as a media unit of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Its objective is to acquire, preserve and restore the rich heritage of National Cinema, and the cream of international cinema. The archive has made significant progress in the preservation of films, audio and video material, documentation, research and dissemination of film culture in India. The archive functions as the main repository of Indian and foreign research workers for viewing film classics, relating to their research projects. The Archives Distribution Library caters to over 300 Film societies and Film Study groups in educational institutions in the country.

NFAI is a member of the International Federation of Film Archives, since May 1969, which enables it to receive expert advice and material on preservation techniques, documentation, bibliographies etc. and to exchange rare films with other such archives under the archival exchange programme. The Archive maintains a distribution library of 16 mm films (Indian and foreign) which are loaned to film societies and others for non-commercial study screenings. NFAI in collaboration with FTII conducts an Annual Film appreciation course. Film buffs, teachers, researchers, students and journalists join this course to learn about cinema and its vital cultural role. The headquarter of NFAI located in Pune, Maharashtra, has at present three regional offices at Bangalore, Kolkata, Thiruvananthapuram. The regular centres for screening movies to the audience are Bangalore, Kolkata, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram.

11.9.3 Archives of Research Centre for Ethnomusicology (ARCE)

The Archives and Research for Ethnomusicology (ARCE) was established in 1982 by the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS), at Gurgaon, Haryana, consortium of American Universities with a strong interest in South Asian Studies. The primary objective of this archive was to provide a centre in India where collections of Indian music and oral traditions could be centralized and made available, and to stimulate the study of ethnomusicology in India. The preservation of these recordings, cataloguing them and making them available to researchers form the basic of the day-to-day activities of the archive. Presently ARCE holds 186 collections, voluntarily deposited, which total nearly 20, 000 hours of recording (both audio and video). The field collections are supplemented by a large and comprehensive collection of commercially published recordings, phonodiscs, cassettes and compact discs also of the archives. These range from classical music to popular music including film music and other regional genres.

The ARCE Library houses books as well as journals on ethnomusicology, performing arts including dance and theatre, folklore, anthropology in India, linguistics, research methodology etc. The focus is on the study of ethnomusicology in India through theoretically important works on all cultures of the world are included. Newspaper, cuttings from major national and regional dailies also form a part of the valuable research material available at the archives.

ARCE also organizes seminars and workshops on ethnomusicology and archiving. At a smaller scale, discussion group meetings are organized to provide a forum for informal discussions on Ethnomusicology and related areas.

(2004.ARCE Newsletter 20)

11.10 LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES

When a collection/material object is deposited or acquired in an archive/museum, there is certain level of writing; negotiation with terms and conditions of legal procedures among the archivist, performer and depositor/researcher; the procedure of such kind are known as legal issues.

In general ethical issues are concerned with moral principles. For example, in a field recording archives the recorded materials of a particular community are rare; archivists have to be aware of the rights of the community to their music. While signing for any kind of commercial releases, archivists should make communication with both the community and the depositor/collector, who can be consulted regarding the uses of the recordings.

Before going into details about Legal and ethical issues, we need to understand the subject matter which needs to be protected under this regulation: they are **Traditional cultural expression/Expression of Folklore**, which, often, are the products of day to day life and communities' identity and cultural heritage. These products are constantly recreated and reproduced by the traditional artists and practitioners. Following are the subject matters of traditional cultural expression:

- 1) verbal expressions, such as folktales, folk poetry, riddles, jokes, words, symbol and indication;
- 2) musical expressions, such as folk songs and instrumental music;
- 3) expression by action, such as folk dances, plays and artistic forms or rituals; whether or not reduced to a material form; and
- 4) tangible expression, such as:
 - production of art, in particular, drawings, painting, carvings, sculptures, pottery, terracotta, mosaic, woodwork, metal ware, jewelry, basket weaving, needlework, textiles, carpets, costumes,
 - crafts,
 - musical instruments,
 - architectural forms.

Expression of traditional culture/folklore may be either tangible or intangible, most often they are combination of the two. An example of mixed expression of folklore would be a (1) recorded piece of music (tangible expression) that while performing a song or dance is intangible (2) a woven piece of cloth (a tangible expression) that while expressing a traditional story (an intangible expression). (WIPO publication no. 913 E)

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) has an active programme of policy development, legislative assistance for preservation, protection and promotion of traditional cultural properties.

11.11 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (IPR)

Copyright legislation is part of wider body of law known as **Intellectual Property Rights**. This right protects the interests of creators by giving them property rights over their creations. (WIPO Publication no. 909 E).

WIPO is an international organization dedicated to promoting creativity and innovation by ensuring that the rights of creators and owners of intellectual property are protected worldwide, and that inventors and authors are recognized and rewarded for their ingenuity.

The convention of establishing the World Intellectual Property Organization (1967) gives the following list of subject matters protected by intellectual property rights:

- Literary, artistic and scientific works
- Performances of performing artists, phonograms, and broadcasts;
- Invention in all fields of human endeavor
- Scientific discoveries
- Industrial designs
- Trademarks, service marks, and commercial names and designations
- Protection against unfair competition
- All other rights resulting from intellectual activity in the industrial, scientific, literary or artistic fields

The importance of protecting intellectual property was first recognized in the Paris Convention for the protection of Industrial property in 1883 and the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works in 1886. Both treaties are administrated by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

Generally all countries have two types of intellectual properties and they are:

- a) to give statutory expression to the moral and economic rights of creators in their creations and to the rights of the public in accessing those creations.
- b) to promote creativity, and the dissemination and application of its result, and to encourage fair trade, which would contribute to economic and social development.

11.11.1 What is Copyright Law?

Copyright Law protects the rights of intellectual creation with the respect to their original works. It is applicable to all types of literary and artistic works and will be protected as long as these are original expressions of an idea. Generally, copyright protection begins automatically from the date of creation, usually without being subjected to any law which was first recognized in the Paris C formalities. Copyright protection lasts for the life of the author plus fifty years after the death of the author. The following categories of work are protected under copy right law:

- 1) literary works
- 2) musical works, including all types of accompanying words
- 3) dramatic works, including all types of accompanying words
- 4) pantomimes and choreographic works

- 5) painting, graphic, and sculptural works
- 6) motion pictures and other audiovisual works
- 7) sound recordings

The Copyright Protection Law varies from country to country. Let us discuss the Act of Copyright Protection for Folklore/Traditional cultural expressions in India.

11.11.2 Laws for Protection of Folklore/Traditional Cultural Expression in India

In India the legislation that takes care of the rights relating to literary and artistic works, sound recordings, films and the right of performers and broadcasting organizations, is the Copyright Act, 1967. The act has been amended a number of times with most recent update in 1994 (WIPO publication) The Indian Copyright Act does not contain any provision for the protection of **Folklore/ Expressions of Folklore**. There is no separate legislation along the lines of the model provisions, to serve the purpose of offering legal protection to expressions of folklore. There is no scope for the tangible elements of folklore under the Patent Act or Designs Act.

Under the amendment incorporated in the Copyright Act in 1994, a certain amount of protection is offered to the performers. As per the Act, a performer includes, “an actor, singer, musician, dancer, acrobat, juggler, conjurer, snake charmer, a person delivering a lecturer, or any other person who makes a performances.” (*The Intellectual Property* 288) Again, performer, in relation to a performer’s right, is defined as “any visual or acoustic presentation made live by one or more performers”. (*The Intellectual property* 284)

It is to be noted that a concept of a performer is not limited to “one who performs a literary or artistic work, as per provisions of the Rome Convention, rather the performer as per the Indian Act can be any one who makes a performance. To that extent, a person who performs folklore is a performer and his rights are protected under this Act.

The rights of performers given under the Act are limited and they offer only the “possibility of preventing’ certain acts undertaken without the consent of the performer. The following acts are taken from “Performer’s right” chapter VIII, section 38.

- 1) Where any performer appears or engages in any performances, he shall have a special right to be known as the “ performers right” in relation to such performance
- 2) The performer’s right shall subsist until twenty-five years from the beginning of the calendar year next following the year in which the performance is made.
- 3) During the continuance of a performer’s right in relation to any performance, any person, who, without the consent of the performer, does any of the following acts in respect of the performance or any substantial part thereof, namely:
 - a) makes a sound recording or visual recordings of the performance; or
 - b) reproduces a sound recording or visual recording of the performance or any substantial part thereof, namely
 - made without the performer’ consent
 - made for purposes different from those for which the performer gave his consent, or

- made for purposes different from those referred to in section 39
 - c) broadcasts the performance except where the broadcast is made from a sound recording or visual recording other than one made in accordance with section 39, or is a re-broadcast by the same broadcasting organization of an earlier broadcast which did not infringe the performer's right; or
 - d) Communicates the performance to the public otherwise than by broadcast, except where such communication to the public is made from a recording or a visual recording or a broadcast, shall, subject to the provision of Section 39, be deemed to have infringed the performer's right.
- 4) Once a performer has consented to the incorporation of his performance in cinematograph film, the provision of above mentioned sub-section (1), (2) and (3) shall have no further application to such performance.

Section 39 deals with certain fair use provisions in relation to performer's rights and the right of broadcasting organization, like private use, and the reporting of current events.

Section 39 (1): No broadcast reproduction right or performer's right shall be deemed to be infringed by-(a) the making of any sound recording or visual recording for the private use of the person making such recording, or solely for purposes of bona fide teaching or research; or (b) the use, consistent with fair dealing, of excerpts of a performance or of a broadcast in the reporting of current events or for bona fide review, teaching or research; or (c) such other acts, with any necessary adaptations and modifications, which do not constitute infringement of copyright

11.11.3 Commercial Exploration of Folklore/Traditional Cultural Expressions in India

As mentioned earlier, there is no provision to protect expressions of folklore/Traditional cultural expressions in the intellectual property laws or in any other legislation. As such, exploration of folklore expressions without taking the permission of the communities and compensating the communities concerned is not illegal. The general outlook of those business interests who extensively borrow from the collection of the folklore of the communities or tribal settlements is that of exploitation of material available in public domain.

In the music industry, there is a trend towards greater opportunity for popular music (film music, contemporary music etc) mixed with folk music. The mix and match products have become very popular throughout the country, including young music enthusiasts. Albums of popular folk songs orchestrated by folk music instruments like vibrant drums and other wind and string accompanist are flooding the market. The companies concerned collect the music through the local communities, or many times, the performer himself takes the responsibility of arranging such music from the villages or tribal belts. The musical forms reproduced or adapted from folklore or public religious contents or those related to village traditions like harvest and festivals.

A case study of plagiarism in music industry:

A popular Hindi film song "*Achha sila diya tune mere pyar ke/yaar ne hi loot liya ghar yaar ka*" in the movie *Bewafa Sanam*, is reportedly a *ghazal* of noted Pakistani poet and singer Ataulah Khan. This song was sung in the movie by an Indian singer and marketed by the proprietor of Super Cassettes Industries Ltd. Late Gulshan Kumar used it without giving credit to the original singer. Later Mr. Khan filed a

law suit against Gulshan Kumar for illegal use of his song in the movie. (Tribune: Chandigarh, dated 2 July 1995)

Like the music industry, Indian films also have more of folklore contents in the new productions. High tech films built on folktales or folk-themes and even mythological themes as a basis take special care to shoot in typical tribal or village settlements to add a realistic touch to the films, with a view to earning public applause and entertainment value. Other than these, many times, folk dances like *Garba ras* of Gujarat, *Bhangra* of Punjab, *Koli* dance of Maharashtra etc., and traditional rituals like weddings, Child birth etc. are depicted by making use of artists from the communities concerned.

In the handicraft and handloom industry, folk craft is extensively used. In most of the State Governments, there are corporations or cooperative for handloom products and handicrafts items. These organizations play a vital role in the management and development of the community's interests in these traditional forms or folklore from a purely cultural or economic angle. There has been little or no attempt to protect the intellectual property contents of these creations and the communities are subjected to exploitation in the hands of large textile and handicrafts companies, which, through modern techniques, copy and replicate the artistic creations to the detriment of the interests of the societies concerned. For example, printing traditional technique of tie and dye in to modern cotton, silk and polyester, use of tribal embroideries in modern fashion, without acknowledging the groups responsible for creation of art/crafts forms. Even in the realm of the folk tradition relating to sculpture, paintings and architecture, there is mass-scale exploitation resorted to by industrial houses.

Case study of legal protection of commercialization of handicraft in Australia:

The visual and art and crafts are an important source of income for indigenous artists and communities in Australia, and the level of copyright and other IP protection they enjoy is of utmost important to them, according to a report issued in 2002. It is estimated that the indigenous visual arts and crafts industry has a turnover of approximately US\$130 million in Australia, of which indigenous people receive approximately US\$30 million (*WIPO Publication* No.913-E).

11.12 LET US SUM UP

Importance of archives is not only to study the past but also for the impact of knowledge about past that have on the present and the future. The changing trends in the society, different levels of government's policies, organizations/institutions regulation etc., are some of the efficient utilization of archives. Everyone benefits from archives, they are the institutional memory system. Archives permit continuity and consistency and accountability to the people. They provide citizens with a sense of national identity and are of great value to them in establishing and protecting individual and property rights and privileges. They educate, entertain, and enrich our lives by providing appealing and tangible heritage of the society. In short, archives provide the basic for understanding of the past, they help orient us to our present, and they provide guidance for our progress in future.

Method of Preservation of Sound recording

The aim of any sound archive is to preserve its collections into the indefinite future.

Most of the preservation work requires technical expertise and expensive equipment, but certain principles require nothing more than common sense. Some of the important preservation principles for everyone are:

- 8) keep storage area dust and insect free
- 9) keep temperature and humidity stable
- 10) keep material away from light
- 11) handle only when necessary
- 12) store in a secure vault to protect from theft, loss, or accidental misuse
- 13) develop an emergency plan for natural disasters, such as flood or fire
- 14) keeping multiple copies of a document is an important preservation principle. Specially, make working copies of original recording and keep the original in permanent storage, and use only the new copy or working copy.

11.13 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

- i) *IASA Training Manual*. IASA Bulletin No, 58/June 1991.
- ii) Agrawal, O.P. *Preservation of Art Objects and Library Materials*. New Delhi: National Book trust, India. 1993. Print.
- iii) Ghosh, Sailen. *Archives in India*. Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay. 1963. Print.
- iv) Lance. David. (ed). *Sound Archives: A Guide to Their Establishment and Development*. International Association of Sound Archives. 1983. Print.
- v) Nancy, Mackay. *Curating Oral Histories: from Interview to Archives*. California: Left Coast Press Inc. 2007. Print.
- vi) Seeger, Anthony and Chaudhuri, Shubha (eds). *Archives for the Future: Global Perspectives on Audiovisual Archives in the 21 Century*. Calcutta: Archives and Research Centre for Ethnomusicology and Seagull Books. 2004.
- vii) Arai, Hisamitsu and Kamil, Idris. *The Intellectual Property-Conscious Nation: Mapping the Path from Developing to Developed*. WIPO Publication No. 988 (E). Print.
- viii) Singh, A.R. 2001. *Information Management in Archives and Libraries*. Delhi. Aakar Publication. Print.
- ix) *Intellectual Property and Traditional cultural expressions/Folklore* (Booklet No.1). WIPO Publication No. 913 (E) 13; SB. 18.13.1., 15th October, 2015. Print
- x) Kumar, PSG. *Archival Librarianship*, WIPO, 2014. Print.

11.14 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Note: Your answers should be in about 300 words.

- 1) What is an archive? Write a note on the archiving of both tangible and intangible cultural properties.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2) Explain the role of archives.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3) What is a sound archive? What are the classification in a sound archive?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4) Write about IASA and its activities.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5) Describe one of the important archives of India.

.....
.....
.....
.....

(Major portions of this unit have been borrowed from Block 4, Unit 2 and 4, MFC -001 of PHDFCS, written by Dr. U. Borah and Prof. N. Sahu with approval of SOITS School Board, Item no: 13:SB 18.13.1, 5th october 2015).

UNIT 12 ADAPTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF FOLK LITERATURE IN MODERN TIMES

Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Adaptation and Interpretation of *Neel Kamal* and *Lal Kamal* in this Animated Version
- 12.3 Adaptation and Interpretation of the Girish Karnad's *Nagamandala*
- 12.4 Let's Sum Up
- 12.5 References and Further Readings
- 12.6 Check Your Progress: Possible Questions

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to understand

- adaptation and its relationship with “folk”;
- significance of adaptation as a practice in reviving “folk”; and
- adaptation as an process of recreation and interpretation of existing tales in a different socio-cultural context.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

What is ‘Folk’?

The Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary terms the word “folk” as “people in general”; and also identifies it as something which is “originating from the beliefs and customs of ordinary people”. Folk was also a medium of mass-communication. As Trilochan Pandey puts it, “Folklore in India today is regarded as one of the most important and effective instruments of social engineering” (Claus, Pattanayak and Handoo Vol. II n.p.). It has always tried to educate the masses and inculcate cultural values among the people through a mode of entertainment. Folk has never tried to assume the role of a preacher, rather it has always engaged itself in a dialogic mode with the society.

What is ‘Adaptation’?

Adaptation is ubiquitous in the present era and can be seen everywhere – in movies, television, music, internet, comics and video games. It is a trans-positional process, i.e. casting a specific genre into another generic mode – an act of revision in itself. This trans-coding can involve shift of medium (a novel to film) or genre (an epic to a novel) or a change of frame and context, for example, the story teller tells the same story but with a different fragrance. The word ‘adapt’, has its origin from the Latin word ‘adaptare’, which means ‘to make fit’. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines adaptation as follows: “Broadly speaking, the recasting of a work in one medium to fit another, such as the recasting of novels and plays as film or television scripts.” Adaptation is frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text. This is achieved most often by offering a revised

point of view from the ‘original’, adding hypothetical motivation, or voicing the silenced and marginalized. Yet adaptation can also constitute a simpler attempt to make texts ‘relevant’ or easily comprehensible to new audiences and readerships via the processes of proximation and updating. This can be seen as an artistic drive in many adaptations of so-called ‘classic’ novels or drama for television and cinema. But most often adaptations are considered to be “inferior”, “minor”, “secondary” and “derivative” with respect to the original text. They are found lacking in symbolic richness of the original text and the spirit of the book. As early as 1926, Virginia Woolf “deplored the simplification of the literary work that inevitably occurred in its transposition to the new visual medium and called film a ‘parasite’ and literature its ‘prey’ and ‘victim’”(Hutcheon 3). Adapters relate stories in their own ways – they concretize or actualize ideas, simplify selections, draw analogies, fuse two different tales into one, critique or idolize them. The stories are not invented, they are taken from elsewhere. It is therefore impossible to discuss adaptation without referring to the politics of intertextuality, since adapted versions share a discrete relationship with their source text. Like translation, adaptations are considered to be derivative and ingenuous, but one can hardly ignore their functional significance.

Folk and Adaptation

In some ways or the other we live and breathe stories; they constitute a major part of our being. In Indian folk tradition, we believe that stories have a life of their own, they are not mere inanimate objects of entertainment; Arthur Frank, in his highly stimulating book, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio- Narratology*, argues from a similar point of view. He aims to analyse how stories are in dialogue with one another, with people’s experiences and with societies. Frank draws heavily from Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogic narratology. He believes that all utterances are dialogic in nature because they depend on the interplay of varied, and at times opposed, meanings. Stories do not belong to storytellers and story listeners because all stories are “reassemblies of fragments on loan” and “depend on shared narrative sources.” They not only contribute to the making of our narrative selves but also weave the threads of social relationships and make life social. Though distinct, genres of stories depend on one another, for there is no such thing as a pure genre, and all tale types have a symbiotic relationship with one another. Analysis demands that we learn from storytellers. “The primary lesson from storytellers is that they learn to work with stories that are not *theirs* but *there*, as realities. Master storytellers know that stories breathe (qtd. in Zipes 4). Folk stories are hence not only bearers of cultural symbols and codes, but are depictions of human values and insights that transcend the barrier of space and time. It is in this context adaptation recontextualizes and reinvents stories and prevents them from getting lost in abyss of time.

12.2 ADAPTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF *NEEL KAMAL* AND *LAL KAMAL* IN THEIR ANIMATED VERSIONS

About the author

Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumder (1877-1957), writer of fairy tales and children’s literature, was born in the village of Ulail in Dhaka district. He lost his mother when he was nine and was brought up by his paternal aunt, Rajluxmi Devi, at Mymensingh. At the age of twenty-one, he moved to Murshidabad with his father. In Murshidabad, Dakshinaranjan started to write for different journals, including the *Sahitya Parisat Patrika* and *Pradip*. On completing his FA, he returned to Mymensingh, where he took on the task of overseeing his aunt’s zamindari.

Dakshinaranjan was attracted to folk literature and collected fairy tales, hymns, ballads and humorous conversations. Inspired by Dinesh Chandra Sen, he edited and published the material he had collected in *Thakurmar Jhuli* (1907), *Thakurdadar Jhuli* (1909), *Thandidir Thale* (1909), and *Dadamashayer Thale* (1913). Rabindranath Tagore wrote the introduction to *Thakurmar Jhuli*, which was also translated into German. Dakshinaranjan's work has given the folk literature of East Bengal a permanent place in Bengali literature. Dakshinaranjan was also well known as a writer of children's books. Among his children's writings are *Khoka Babur Khela*, *Amal Bai*, *Kishorder Man*, *Charu O Haru*, *First Boy*, *Last Boy*, *Utpal O Rabi*, *Banglar Sonar Chhele*, *Sabuj Lekha*, *Chiradiner Rupkatha*, *Amar Desh*, and *Ashirvad O Ashirvani*. He also translated fairy tales from different parts of the world in *Prithibir Rupkatha*.

About the Story

In a faraway land lived a king. The king had two queens, but one of his queens was a monster (*rakshas*). But no one was aware of this secret. Both the queens had a son each. Their names were Kusum and Ajit. Ajit was the son of the monster queen. Both grew up together and were inseparable. The monster queen had a sinister desire of feasting on her step-son, but obviously with proper spices. But her son was an impediment to this desire. She secretly got rid of the other queen by feeding on her blood. Due to her son's protection to Kusum, the monster queen was enraged and suddenly one night the horses and elephants in the King's stable died mysteriously. The king was bewildered. Next night he found that his son Kusum was captured by a huge monster. Before the king could act the monster queen cast a magic spell on him, and he was reduced to a spectator. The monster devoured his son in front of his eyes. Ajit woke up due to this commotion. At the sight of his brother being eaten up by the monster, he hit the monster with his entire might. The monster vomited a golden egg and fled. As her son now turned into a foe, the monster queen ate her son Ajit and vomited an iron egg. She was not at ease with those two monstrous eggs, and hence buried them in a bamboo forest. The kingdom was transformed into a haven for the monsters. People started fleeing from the kingdom.

One day when a farmer was cutting bamboo in that forest, he found those two eggs. When he threw away those eggs, out of those two egg shells emerged a red boy and a blue boy. They appeared to be the sons of a king – they had crowns on their head and swords in their hands. Within moments of their appearance, the two princes disappeared from the kingdom. Horrified at the sight of such a weird development, the farmer fainted. After walking miles, they reached the kingdom of a king, where monsters were equally powerful. Anyone who could get rid of those monsters in the kingdom were promised the daughters of the king along with the kingdom. Prior to Neel Kamal and Lal Kamal, many others had tried their luck, but had fallen prey to those monsters. The twin princes took permission from the king and waited for the monsters in a thatched hut. During the first few hours of the night nothing happened. Both the brothers felt sleepy, and decided to sleep by turns. Before Neel Kamal went to sleep, he asked his brother to take his name in case anyone knocked at the door. Being a descendent of the monster family, Neel Kamal was superior in strength. The monsters were aware of it and hence avoided him. When the monsters knocked their door, they were initially tricked by Lal Kamal. But when they came back again later, the elder brother Lal Kamal erroneously took his name first and the monsters barged into the room, only to be maimed by Neel Kamal. The king's kingdom and his daughters were handed over to the twin princes.

When the monster queen heard the news of monster's death, she conspired to kill both the princes again. Two of her messengers took the guise of foot soldiers and requested the twin brothers to fetch them the oil of the monster's head so that their king could be cured of paralysis. On their way to the land of monsters, as the twin princes sat under a *peepal* tree, they overheard a *byangomi* (an intelligent mythical bird that can talk as well as tell fortune) asking her *byangoma* for a drop of blood so that the infant *byangomas* can open their eyes. The brothers volunteered themselves for the cause and in return the infant *byangomas* promised to render their service as an acknowledgement of the benevolence shown by the princes. As they reached the land of the monsters, the brothers convinced the mother of monster queen (Neel Kamal's grandmother) that they were part of her family. The land of monsters was nothing but a necropolis, with dead, rotten bodies piled up all around. On one fine night, when the monsters were out of the palace in search of their prey, Neel Kamal guided his brother to a well on the southern side of the palace. Neel fetched a golden jar and spade from the well. As they opened the jar, a male and a female hornet came out of it. They were the *jiyon kathi* and *moron kathi* of the monsters. *Jiyon Kathi* and *moron kathi* were small sticks that could make someone live or die as per command. The life of a male monster was hidden in *jiyon kathi*, whereas the life of a female monster was hidden in *moron kathi*. As the hornets were brought out from the jar, the monsters felt dizzy, they came running after the two brothers. But before they could get hold of them, Neel beheaded *jiyonkathi* with the spade he had recovered from the well. Along with the monster grandmother, all the monsters were beheaded; the brothers wrapped her head in a cloth and brought it back to their kingdom. When they did not find those soldiers, they send it back to the monster queen. At the sight of severed head of her mother, the enraged queen assumed her original form and came after Neel Kamal and Lal Kamal. This time too, before the queen could pounce upon them, Lal Kamal exacted his revenge and killed her. On the death of the monster queen, the king was cured of his paralysis, and was united with both the sons.

About the Adaptation

Trilochan Pandey's paper, "Folklore as Mass media: An Introduction" speaks of the usefulness of folk media in terms of the needs of contemporary communication and information dissemination. He asserts the importance of folklore in developing societies like India, where the levels of literacy is extremely low. It emphasizes their pivotal role in educating youth, promoting solidarity within a community, and as an outlet for suppressed emotions by providing a means of escape from disappointments and frustration. While stressing the importance of folk as a form of mass media, he argues:

The secret of its effectiveness lies in the fact that the "folk" are not aware of its subtle ways of functioning. As a matter of fact everything is imported in the guise of entertainment and recreation. The folk do not really seem to be conscious of this. They simply participate and use folklore in their daily lives. A mother sings a lullaby, an old man narrates a tale and someone observes a custom. It is in this manner that important cultural wisdom is transmitted, imported and used where its use becomes necessary and the balance of cultures maintained. One should not lose sight of these and other characteristics of folklore when one thinks of mass communication as a factor in social change. (Claus, Pattanayak and Handoo Vol. II n.p.)

In this age of digitalization, folklore has found a new mode of expression. It has traversed a long way from being primarily a part of oral tradition to black and white print to the animated delineation of characters on celluloid. A major part of children's lore is still dominated by tales from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. In this age of

gadgets, where parents are too busy to spare time for children's bed time stories or grandparents are frequently absent from the framework of the nuclear families, the burden of sharing the stories now rests with new age technologies. Thus, though the process of transmission has changed, the basic role of the folktale remains the same – as an effective tool of mass communication. Folk tales and tales from oral traditions are an important way of communicating with children. Acting especially as repositories of moral and social lessons and cultural/religious instructions discovered by grandparents and parents through time, these traditions have always been an important part of growing up. Along with our shift from an organic and pastoral style of life to a cosmopolitan lifestyle, the idea of folk has also been estranged. But, the lament of a lost tradition is not new, a similar voice of discontent can be heard, when Rabindranath Tagore wrote a preface to Dakhinarajan Mitra Majumdar's collection of folktales of Bengal, *Thakurmar Jhuli*, in 1907.

Is there anything more Swadeshi than *Thakurmar Jhuli*, *The Grandmother's Bag*? But alas, in recent times, even this bag full of sweets has come already manufactured from the factories of Manchester. Nowadays, fairytales from the West have become almost the sole recourse of our boys. The Grandmother Companies from our own country are bankrupt. If one rattles their bags, perhaps a copy of Martin's Ethics or Burke's notebooks on the French Revolution might pop out-but where are our princesses, our magic birds – *Byangoma* and *Byangomi* - or the gem of seven kings that lies beyond seven seas and thirteen oceans? (9)

Around the time of the first partition of Bengal in 1905, attempts were made to reflect upon the tradition of folklore in the noted works of Dakhinaranjan Mitra Majumdar (1877-1957), Dinesh Chandra Sen (1866 -1939), Upendra Kishore Roychowdhury (1863-1915), Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) and Jasimuddin (1904-1976). It was further noted that under the influence of the scholarship of Dinesh Chandra Sen, who played a pivotal role in recovery of Bengali folk literature, Dakhinaranjan Mitra Majumdar compiled four volumes of children's folktales as mentioned earlier – *Thakurmar Jhuli* (Grandmother's Bag, 1907), *Thakurdar Jhuli* (Grandfather's Bag, 1909), *Thandidir Jhuli* (Maternal Grandmother's Bag, 1909) and *Dadamoshayer Jhuli* (Maternal Grandfather's Bag, 1913), with the sole motive of "collecting, conserving and preserving a fraction of the large floating oral literature concerning ritual, fairy, demons and tricksters that faced threat of extinction about hundred years ago (Mitra 57). Thus in the process of rejuvenating and preserving a lost tradition, the orality of folktales was adapted by the print media. However, in the preface to *Thakurmar Jhuli*, Tagore confessed his doubt about the efficacy of modern language to delineate the soul of folktales:

I was afraid to open the book of Dakhinaranjan babu. I was cynical about the ability of modern day urbane Bengali to capture its spirit. It is tough to preserve that spirit of folk in today's bookish language. I would have never attempted such a daunting task. (Mitra 11)

He goes on to praise Dakhinaranjan Mitra Majumder for his ability to preserve the simplicity and idiosyncrasy of folk. Thus printing physically replaced the oral world of folktales. It remains debatable as to whether this change of medium has been able to preserve the spirit of folk; but folk, which would have otherwise been a part of the forgotten tradition, has, y this transformation, been able to find a place in the shelves of the urban English speaking population. Similarly, in recent years, mythological characters and folk stories have reinvented themselves in cinematic

adaptations of myths and folk stories (like the television series on *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Paheli* etc.), Animated depictions of these stories for children has breathed a new life into them. For a child today, who goes to an English medium school in an urban locality and belongs to a nuclear family, *Neel Kamal and Lal Kamal* has hardly any significance. From the world of Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse and Tom and Jerry, with which the child is familiar, stories of *Lal Kamal and Neel Kamal* or *Sonar Kathi and Rupar Kathi* or *Brahman and Brahmani* transport the child to a new world – a world which is totally unfamiliar, but still appears to be a familiar one.

The popularity of the animated version of *Thakurmar Jhuli* on Zee Alpha Bangla can be gauged from the fact that it was broadcast for two years continuously, from 2005-2007, backed by the financial strength of an enormous number of sponsors and occupying the Sunday morning prime-time slot throughout the duration of its broadcast. The available animated versions on *Neel Kamal and Lal Kamal* are neither neatly designed nor effectively executed, and in comparison to the Disney animation movies, they appear crude and amateurish. Yet the popularity of animated version of *Thakurmar Jhuli* on Zee Bangla testifies to the power of these stories. The visual depiction of the tale of two brothers not only popularizes it among children, but educates them about bonding between siblings in the face of adversity. It also speaks about supporting good against evil and about acting in unison in times of danger. Thus even in this age of gadgets and gizmos, folktales continue to educate the masses. This would not have been possible if we would have failed to imagine and interpret them in a new medium. People, who have grown up reading stories of Dakhiranjan's *Thakurmar Jhuli*, may criticize the animated rendition of the tales, but they cannot ignore their significance. Moreover they tend not to take into account the fact that even the multiple collection of folktales by Dakhiranjan Mitra Majumadar is not the original source of tales – they have been canonized over time.

12.3 ADAPTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE GIRISH KARNAD'S NAGAMANDALA

About the Author

Girish Raghunath Karnad is a well known name in the field of drama, theatre and films. He has directed many plays and movies in Kannada language. He rose to prominence as a playwright in 1960s. His emergence marked the evolution of modern Indian playwriting in Kannada, just as it happened in the case of Badal Sircar in Bengali, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi. He chose to write in his adopted language Kannada, and not in his mother tongue, which was Konkani. His plays have been translated into several Indian languages and directed by eminent directors like Ebrahim Alkazi, B. V. Karanth, Alyque Padamsee, Prasanna, Arvind Gaur, Satyadev Dubey, Vijaya Mehta, Shyamanand Jalan and Amal Allana. Over the past few decades he has been a highly popular face in the world cinema and television. He has been creatively involved as a director, screen writer and actor in both Hindi and Kannada films.

He was conferred the prestigious Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan by the Government of India. He won four Filmfare awards and innumerable national awards in different capacities. He has been honoured with Sahitya Akademi award, the Karnataka Sahitya Akademi award and the Sangeet Natak Akademi award. During 1987-88, he was at the University of Chicago as Visiting Professor and Fulbright playwright-in-residence. It was during his tenure at Chicago that *Nagamandala* was premiered at the Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. It was based on an English translation of the

Kannada original that Karnad himself did. *Nagamandala* (Play with Cobra, 1988) brought him the Karnataka Sahitya Academy Award for the Most Creative Work of 1989.

About the Play

Nagamandala is a combination of two tales – the tale of a story and a song and the serpent lover. Let us identify the tale of a story and a song as **story one** and latter one as **story two**.

Story One: Once there was a house wife who knew a song and a story, but she kept them to herself – she never told or sang them to anyone. The story and the song felt suffocated and tried to escape. One day while she was sleeping with her mouth open, the story escaped out of her mouth and took the form of a shoe and sat outside, and the song took the form of a coat and hung itself from a peg. When her husband returned home, he enquired about the coat and the shoe, but the woman was clueless. He grew suspicious of her and both of them started to quarrel. In a fit of anger the man took his blanket and went to the Monkey Temple to sleep. The woman too was baffled and unhappy at the sudden development and put off the lamp as she went to sleep. At night all the flames of town used to gather at the Monkey temple and gossip. On that night the flame of that woman's house arrived late. When other flames enquired the reason for being so late, he narrated the story of this couple, who quarrelled. He further told them about the revenge that the story and song exacted from the woman for treating them in such ungenerous way. The man was now convinced of his wife's fidelity and returned home. This story serves as the prologue of the play *Nagamandala*.

Story Two: It is a story about a woman, her cruel husband and her serpent lover. Kamakshi was married to a cruel husband, who, in turn, was infatuated with a harlot. The woman resigned herself to the designs of fate. One day an old woman from the neighbourhood offered her a magical potion that had the power of taming the unruly husband. The woman mixed that medicine with some sweet porridge, but to her horror she found that it turned red. Her faith in the magical power of the medicine started faltering and she thought, "This stuff, whatever it is, instead of making him love me, may make my husband crazy. It may even kill him. Let him be happy with anyone he wants. If he is alive, by God's grace, he'll come back to me some day." (Ramanujam n.p.) She poured that mixture into a snake's hole. A king cobra lived in that hole. The potion acted on it and it fell madly in love with that woman, Kamakshi. That night as usual, the husband was out. There was a knock at the door. The woman was surprised to find her husband standing at the door. She suspected nothing foul, and they spent a blissful night together. Similar nights passed by and soon Kamakshi was pregnant. But she never knew that the husband with whom she sleeps every night is a snake. The snake revealed its identity and narrated the incidents that preceded it. Soon the news of pregnancy spread in the village and the husband flew into a rage. He complained about it to his father-in-law. The father-in-law summoned her and interrogated her, but was not satisfied with her answer. The woman confided the developments to her serpent lover. He assured her that he would never allow anyone to harm her reputation and directed her to take the test of truth at the Shiva temple next morning. The woman went to the court of the king and asserted that the son in her womb belonged to her husband. She further offered to take chastity test by handling a cobra at the Shiva temple. Everyone agreed to her proposal. The court assembled at the Shiva temple. There was an awesome five headed snake coiled round the Shivalinga. Kamakshi took it her hand and it hung around her neck and swayed gently. The villagers were awestruck. They condemned the husband and invoked her as the incarnation of a

devi. She gave birth to a divine looking son. Her husband was no more in doubts. Along with the snake, Kamakshi tricked the harlot too, and enslaved her. The woman, her husband and their son started living happily. Her husband was transformed into a doting husband. Kamakshi, in her happiness, forgot the king of snakes. One night when her serpent lover came to visit her, he found her sleeping peacefully in the arms of her husband. In a fit of jealousy he hung her from her loose stresses which fell downwards from the edge of her cot. Next morning Kamakshi found her hair to be heavy. Wondering what was wrong, she shook it, and the dead snake fell to the floor. She was grief-stricken. She performed the funeral rites for the snake and lived happily with her husband and son.

About the Adaptation

You are already aware of the fact that *Nagamandala* by Girish Karnad is a combination of two tales – “the tale of a story and a song” and “the serpent lover”. In this section we will discuss the play *Nagamandala* and a movie with a similar title. But before we deliberate upon the adapted versions, let us try to comprehend the importance of adaptation of folklore. Folk is *lok*, the custom, tradition and culture of a particular era; it is the *vox populi* of a specific culture that resonates through different cultural tropes across generations.

Folklore possesses a very specific set of signifiers and symbolic patterns that are worth interpreting in their own right. “One of the reasons fairytale and folklore serve as cultural treasuries to which we endlessly return is that their stories and characters seem to transgress established social, cultural, geographical and temporal boundaries. They are eminently adaptable into new circumstances, and contexts, making them available for different versions.” (Atkinson qtd. in Sanders 82) For example Shakespeare reworked a popular folklore storyline of a father and three daughters; two ugly and vile sisters and one beautiful and virtuous. Later Kurosawa re-contextualised that same story for his film *Ran*, with a difference. In *Ran* the three sisters are replaced by three brothers and it also draws upon legends of the daimyo Mōri Motonari. Karnad opines that with the arrival of Ramanujan there was a renewed focus on Indian folklore. He interpreted the data which was ignored until then in a new light. The realm of the kitchen, where women are at helm of affairs, and the stories narrated within its walls witnessed a paradigmatic shift. On the occasion of the maiden A. K. Ramanujan memorial lecture, Karnad commented:

It is in the kitchen, while feeding the children in the evening, that stories are often narrated. The adult males are not present when the children are fed: they are served separately, much later. The oldest boy present in the kitchen is not likely to be older than eight or nine. And the other occupants of the kitchen are all female members of the family, of all ages. Thus although the story is aimed at some sleepy or obstreperous child, there is an audience of female members listening to the telling. Inevitably, the tale becomes a network of messages between those present. On a particular evening, the teller who is usually the senior member of the family although never the *mater familias* may even choose a tale to comment, however obliquely, on something that has happened earlier in the house. More significantly, the tale resonates within a world of women, barred to men, which thus reflects the values, sufferings, aspirations and fantasies of women. (“A. K. Ramanujan Memorial Lecture” 2012 4)

This transition of tales from male world to the world of females has shifted the agency to women. Students, when we see *Nagamandala* in this light, we perceive a complex aesthetic reality. The preface of the play draws directly from the A. K. Ramanujan’s “the tale of a story and a song”. In this version, it depicts a man, who

happens to be playwright, come to an isolated, dilapidated temple to die. It was prophesied by a mendicant that if he failed to remain awake for at least one night of that particular month, he would die at the end of the month. His sin was that he wrote miserable plays and bored the audience to sleep. He was ignorant of the potency of stories. It was the last night and he was supposed to die. But to his surprise he heard some female voices at the temple premises, and those voices were not human but naked flames without wick. All the flames gathered at the temple and narrated their scandalous domestic gossip. It is at this point Karnad narrates “the tale of a story and a song”, but again with a difference. Here the story and song take the form of a young woman to extract revenge upon the old woman, who never narrated or sung them. The story and song also arrived at the temple. It is important to note at this point that all except the male playwright in that temple compound are female. When the story was asked to narrate a tale, she despondently replied, “STORY: Thank you, my dears. It is kind of you. But what is the point of your listening to a story? You can’t pass it on” (Karnad *Nagamandala* 5). Karnad argues that stories are not inanimate frivolous narratives, they have a life of their own:

It also clearly states certain beliefs in our folk culture. Firstly, the flames don’t get extinguished at night when they are put out, they simply move from home to temple, and return to the wicks when the lamps are lit again next evening. Nothing in nature is ever totally extinguished. Secondly, the story makes certain statements about stories. For instance, where does a story live? A Western child may believe that a story lives in a book, ideally beautifully illustrated by someone like Arthur Rackham. In Indian folklore, a story lives inside the teller, literally, physically inside. And it is his or her duty to pass it on. If the teller fails to pass on this story to some listener, the story will take its revenge and she (it is almost certainly likely to be a woman) will suffer punishment.

There are some things you cannot keep to yourself. Food, a daughter, a story. You must circulate them. A story is not merely for entertainment it has an important social function. If you don’t circulate it you are not doing your social duty. (Karnad n.p.)

In the light of this quotation we can understand the pivotal role of stories in a society. Hence the man jumps out from behind the pillar and grabs the story by her wrist. He volunteers to listen to the story that she has to tell. She narrates it only on the condition that the story is narrated again.

Karnad’s version of *The Serpent Lover (Nagamandala)* is not only a creative appropriation of the folktale, but is also a commentary on the unequal power equation between two sexes. He imagined it in his own way. The play, like its source material, is playful in nature. The characters in Karnad’s play are more human than those portrayed in the folktale, yet the play has tried to preserve the essence of folk. Karnad has succeeded in portraying the loneliness, pain and anguish of Rani. She is left alone in the house; she is perplexed, hurt and frightened, but unfortunately, there is no one to listen to her woes. Hence she hallucinates and dreams of liberation from this life of captivity: “Where are you taking me?” And the Eagle answers: ‘Beyond the seven seas and the seven isles. On the seventh island is a magic garden. And in that garden stands the tree of emeralds. Under that tree, your parents wait for you’” (Karnad *Nagamandala* 11). But like all dreams, these too come to an end and it is finally her neighbour, Karudawa, who comes to her rescue. Unlike the original version of the story, the neighbours in the play are well delineated characters. Karudawa is like any other typical village woman, who is both intrusive and sympathetic at the same time. Karnad elaborates the episode of the love potion that

eventually compels the cobra to fall in love with Rani. As a playwright he works on the character of Karudawa and Kappanna and simultaneously gives them a tale to narrate. Moreover as readers we are also given a plausible reason behind the bride's decision of throwing away the love potion in the snake hole, due to which the snake falls in love with the woman and starts visiting her every night, but not without incidents that cause reasonable doubts in the mind of Rani. Born as a woman, she is taught never to question, protest or assert her claim on anything. At this juncture Karnad deviates from the original tale; unlike in the folktale, the serpent lover never reveals his true identity to Rani, which in turn exonerates her from the charge of being unfaithful. On the other hand, more often than not, folk hardly conforms to the principles and values that are forcibly imposed by society. In the folk version of the story, though the bride is initially seduced by her serpent lover, she becomes aware of his identity on the night before the public trial. Thus in the structure of patriarchal principles, she is guilty of adultery. But simultaneously, her unflinching love and devotion towards her lover, subjugating her husband to her wishes, insinuates at a subverted world order, where a woman is in charge of affairs. Karnad is well aware of the polyphonic nature of folk and hence he astutely manoeuvres the conclusion of the play with multiple endings. He deftly challenges the accepted world order:

STORY: No two men make love alike. And that night of the Village Court, when her true husband climbed into bed with her, how could she fail to realize it was someone new? Even if she hadn't known earlier! When did the split take place? Every night this conundrum must have spread its hood out at her. Don't you think she must have cried out in anguish to know the answer?

MAN: So? The story is not over then?

STORY: When one says, 'And they lived happily ever after', all that is taken for granted. You sweep such headaches under the pillow and then press your head firmly down on them. It is something one has to live with, like a husband who snores, or a wife who is going bald (Karnad *Nagamandala* 29).

Moreover unlike modern genres, he desists from narrating a story within a story and hence the audience never comes to know about the fate of Kappanna. Conforming to the tradition of folk, he never attempts to write a structured play and makes a serious endeavour to preserve the spontaneity, polyphonic voice and dialogic nature of the original version. Hence, when the audience was not satisfied with the unhappy ending of the story, on their vehement insistence, the MAN (may be the alter ego of Karnad) narrates an alternative conclusion to the story. The binary closure transforms it into an open ended play, where the audience is free to select and interpret.

12.4 LET'S SUM UP

Linda Hutcheon in her book, *A Theory of Adaptation*, challenges the "negative cultural evaluation" of adaptation as a process. She perceives it to be an intertextual process, where works are created and received by people, which makes it human and experiential. It further opens up new interpretation in respect of different contexts and media. The discussion of *Neelkamal and Lalkamal* and *Nagamandala* substantiates the statement made above. The animated adaptation of *Neelkamal and Lalkamal* is an attempt to recontextualise the process of narration of some age old and popular folk story. Even if we consider adaptation as a secondary or subsidiary process, its importance cannot be negated in this age of electronic gadgets and media. Like print media, electronic media too has played a decisive role in preserving

and disseminating the popular folk forms in its new avatar. “Hopefully, the attempts and subsequent popularity of the digitization of the stories would lead to a preservation of this fast-losing flavour of folk literature.” (Mitra “100 years of *Thakurmar Jhuli* . . .” 10) On the other hand, adaptation of folktales, legends and myths for cinematic and dramatic versions often attempt to explore the hidden dynamics of a text. Karnad’s adaptation of folktales collected by Ramanujan for his play *Nagamandala* is an exemplification of the theory of intertextuality. He astutely integrated two different tales into the body of a single play. It is a fusion of Indian philosophy and ethos with the techniques of the western dramaturgy.

12.5 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Clarke, Kenneth W. and Mary W. Clarke. *Introducing Folklore*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. Print.

Dharwadkar, Vinay, ed. *The Collected Essays of A.K. Ramanujan*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.

Garry, Jane and Hasan El- Shamy, (Ed.) *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature*. London: M. E. Sharp, 2005. Print.

Handoo, Jawaharlal. *Folklore in Modern India*. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 1999. Print.

Karnad, Girish. *Nagamandala (Play with Cobra)*. New Delhi: Oxford India, 1999. Print.

Karnad, Girish. “A. K. Ramanujan Memorial Lecture 2012” Ramanujan Memorial Lecture, Ramjas College, University of Delhi. 2013. Web. 16 April 2016. <http://www.sacw.net/article4762.html>

Maitra, Lopamudra. “Children’s Oral Literature and Modern Mass Media in India with Special Reference to Gradual Transformation in West Bengal” *Indian Folklore Research Journal*, 5.8 (2008): 55-64. Web. National Folklore Support Centre.

Maitra, Lopamudra. “100 years of *Thakurmar Jhuli* (Grandmother’s Bag of Tales): From Oral Literature to Digital Media – Shaping Thoughts for the Young and Old”. *Indian Folklore Research Journal* 4.7 (2007): 77-95. Web. National Folklore Support Centre.

Majumdar, Dakshinaranjan Mitra. *Thakurmar Jhuli*. Kolkata: Mitra & Ghosh Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2013. Print.

Pattanayak, D.P., Peter J. Claus and Jawaharlal Handoo, ed. *Indian Folklore Vol. 2*. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages, 1999. Print.

Propp, Vladimir. *Theory and History of Folklore*. Trans. Ariadana Martin and Richard P. Martin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984. Print.

Ramanujan, A.K. *A Flowering Tree and Other Oral Tales from India*. Berkley: University of California, 1997. Print.

Zipes, Jack. *The Irresistible Fairy Tale*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012. Print.

12.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Note: Your answers should be in about 300 words.

i) What do you understand by the term “adaptation”?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

ii) Write a short note on Dakhinaranjan Mitra Majumdar.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

iii) Explain the significance of digitalization of folklore in the contemporary period.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

iv) “I was afraid to open the book of Dakhinaranjan babu.” Why do you think Tagore was cynical about Dakhinaranjan Mitra Majumdar’s rendition of folktales?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

v) Nagamandala articulates Karnad’s philosophy on stories. Explain in brief.

.....
.....
.....
.....

**Folk Literature: Sources,
Characteristics,
Classifications and
Functions**

vi) Write a short bio of Girish Karnad.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

vii) Where from do you think Karnad draws his material for the Preface of the play?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

viii) Who are Karudawa and Kapanna? What role do they have in the play?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

ix) How the role of the serpent differed in Karnad's Nagamandala than the one narrated in the original folktale?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

x) Comment critically upon the conclusion of Karnad's Nagamandala and the original version of the folktale.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Notes

