



**SATHYABAMA**

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by AICTE

[www.sathyabama.ac.in](http://www.sathyabama.ac.in)

**SCHOOL OF SCIENCE  
AND HUMANITIES**

**DEPARTMENT OF  
ENGLISH**

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608**

## **Course objectives:**

To enable students to understand and appreciate folklore through songs and riddles

To introduce students relevant theories of world folklore.

To enable students to understand the link between culture and language.

To expose to students folk forms

UNIT – 1 General Folklore 9 Hrs

Definition of Folk Literature – Concepts of Folklore –Folklore Genres – Nature and Function of Folk

Idioms, Sayings, Vocabulary, etc.

UNIT - 2 Folklore Theories 9 Hrs

Mythological Theories – Performance Theory –Functional Theory –Psychoanalytic Theory

UNIT - 3 Oral Folklore 9 Hrs

Beliefs, Customs, Festivals, Medicine, etc. – Folk Culture – Folk Religion –Folklore and electronic Technology

UNIT – 4 Folk forms from the world 9 Hrs

Folk Tales – Folk Songs (Translated Texts) – Folk riddle – Folk Proverbs

UNIT - 5 Current Trends in Folk Literature 9Hrs

Post Colonialism and Post Modernism Concepts - Feminism Gender Concepts - Gender and Society

## **Course outcomes:**

On completion of the course, student will be able to

- Identify the knowledge of “lores” through cultural contexts.
- Articulate theories and concepts of folk world
- Ascertain the philosophies of different traditions, cultural aspects and texts
- Classify various folk tales for an overall understanding
- Interpret critical and reflective thinking through written and oral texts.
- Summarize folk forms and trends in Folklore

Prescribed Text:

Tribal Language, Literature And Folklore, Rawat Publications (Jan 2019)



**SATHYABAMA**

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by AICTE

[www.sathyabama.ac.in](http://www.sathyabama.ac.in)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608 – UNIT I**

**SATHYABAMA**  
**INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608**  
**Course Materials**

Definition of Folk Literature – Concepts of Folklore – Folklore Genres – Nature and Function of Folk Idioms, Sayings, Vocabulary etc.

**Definition of Folklore:**

Folklore is a collection of fictional stories about animals and people, of cultural myths, jokes, songs, tales, and even quotes. It is a description of culture, which has been passed down verbally from generation to generation, though many are now in written form. Folklore is also known as “folk literature,” or “oral traditions.”

Folklore depicts the way main characters manage their everyday life events, including conflicts or crises. Simply, folk literature is about individual experiences from a particular society. The study of folk tradition and knowledge is called folkloristics. Although some folklores depict universal truths, unfounded beliefs and superstitions are also basic elements of folklore tradition.

**Concept of Folklore:**

The concept of folklore emerged in Europe midway in the nineteenth century. Originally it connoted tradition, ancient customs and surviving festivals, old ditties and dateless ballads, archaic myths, legends and fables, and timeless tales, and proverbs. As these narratives rarely stood the tests of common sense and experience, folklore also implied irrationality: beliefs in ghosts and demons, fairies and goblins and spirits. From the perspective of the urbane literati, who conceived the idea of folklore, these two attributes of traditionality and irrationality could pertain only to peasant or primitive societies. Hence they attributed to folklore a third quality: rurality. The countryside and the open space of wilderness was folklore’s proper breeding ground. Man’s close contact with nature in villages and hunting bands was considered the ultimate source

of his myth and poetry. As an outgrowth of the human experience with nature, folklore itself was thought to be a natural expression of man before city, commerce, civilization, and culture contaminated the purity of his life.

**The triumvirate of attributes** — traditionality, irrationality and rurality — was to dominate the concept of folklore for many years to come; often it still does. It provided standards for inclusion or exclusion of stories, songs, and sayings within the domain of folklore proper. Those which possessed at least one of these qualities were christened “folkstories, folksongs, riddles and folk-sayings”; those which did not were reprovingly rejected.

In their turn, these terms of meaning generated additional attributes, which together comprised the sense of the concept of folklore in common use, in print, and in speech. The cloak of tradition concealed the identity of those who authored folktales, ballads, and proverbs, and transmission from generation to generation obscured their origins.

### **Types of folklore:**

**Folk Tales:** (The stories originating in popular culture typically passed on by word of mouth) The oral fictional tale, from whatever ultimate origin, is practically universal both in time and place. Certain peoples tell very simple stories and others tales of great complexity, but the basic pattern of tale-teller and audience is found everywhere and as far back as can be learned. Differing from legend or tradition, which is usually believed, the oral fictional tale gives the storyteller absolute freedom as to credibility so long as he stays within the limits of local taboos and tells tales that please.

A folktale travels with great ease from one storyteller to another. Since a particular story is characterized by its basic pattern and by narrative motifs rather than by its verbal form, it passes language boundaries without difficulty.

**Tall Tales :** A **tall tale** is a story with unbelievable elements, related as if it were true and factual. Some tall tales are exaggerations of actual events, for example fish stories ("the fish that got away") such as, "That fish was so big, why I tell ya', it nearly sank the boat when I pulled it

in!" Events are often told in a way that makes the narrator seem to have been a part of the story; the tone is generally good-natured.

**Fables:** Fables are simple stories that incorporate characters (typically animals) whose actions teach a **moral lesson** or **universal truth**. Eg: The Tortoise and the Hare. Often the moral is stated at the end of the story. Fables have appealed to both adults and children, yet many fables demand **abstract thinking** and their points are often lost on children. The use of animals as symbols for human behavior often has made fables safe, yet effective, political tools. The first known collection of fables in the Western world is "**Aesop's fables**".

**Myths:** (Greek word – "mythos" which means thought, story or speech) Myths include the legendary or traditional stories, with an event or hero, with or without facts. A myth is a traditional story that may answer life's overarching questions, such as the origins of the world (the creation myth) or of a people. A myth can also be an attempt to explain mysteries, supernatural events, and cultural traditions. Sometimes sacred in nature, a myth can involve gods or other creatures. It presents reality in dramatic ways. Eg: King Midas

**Epics:** The word epic is derived from the Ancient Greek adjective, "*epikos*", which means a poetic story. In literature, an epic is a long narrative poem, which is usually related to heroic deeds of a person of an unusual courage and unparalleled bravery. In order to depict this bravery and courage, the epic uses grandiose style.

The hero is usually the representative of the values of a certain culture, race, nation or a religious group on whose victor or failure the destiny of the whole nation or group depends. Therefore, certain supernatural forces, deus ex machina, help the hero, who comes out victor at the end. An epic usually starts with an invocation to muse, but then picks up the threads of the story from the middle and moves on to the end. Eg: "Paradise Lost" by John Milton

**Ballads:** A special tradition of tales told in song has arisen in Europe since the Middle Ages and has been carried to wherever Europeans have settled. These ballads, in characteristic local metrical forms and frequently with archaic musical modes, are usually concerned with domestic or warlike conflict, with disasters by land or sea, with crime and punishment, with heroes and outlaws, and sometimes, though rarely, with humour. Despite a folk culture fast being overwhelmed by the modern world, these ballads are still sung and enjoyed

**Legends:** Legend, traditional story or group of stories told about a particular person or place. Formerly the term legend meant a tale about a saint. Legends resemble folktales in content; they may include supernatural beings, elements of mythology, or explanations of natural phenomena, but they are associated with a particular locality or person and are told as a matter of history. Some legends are the unique property of the place or person that they depict, such as the story of young George Washington, the future first president of the United States, who confesses to chopping down the cherry tree. But many local legends are actually well-known folktales that have become attached to some particular person or place. For example, a widely distributed folktale of an excellent marksman who is forced to shoot an apple, hazelnut, or some other object from his son's head has become associated with the Swiss hero William Tell.

**Religious Stories:** In religious studies and folkloristics, folk religion, popular religion, or vernacular religion comprises various forms and expressions of religion that are distinct from the official doctrines and practices of organized religion. The precise definition of folk religion varies among scholars. Sometimes also termed popular belief, it consists of ethnic or regional religious customs under the umbrella of a religion, but outside official doctrine and practices.<sup>[1]</sup>

The term "folk religion" is generally held to encompass two related but separate subjects. The first is the religious dimension of folk culture, or the folk-cultural dimensions of religion. The second refers to the study of syncretisms between two cultures with different stages of formal expression, such as the melange of African folk beliefs and Roman Catholicism that led to the development of Vodun and Santería, and similar mixtures of formal religions with folk cultures.

Chinese folk religion, folk Christianity, folk Hinduism, and folk Islam are examples of folk religion associated with major religions. The term is also used, especially by the clergy of the faiths involved, to describe the desire of people who otherwise infrequently attend religious worship, do not belong to a church or similar religious society, and who have not made a formal profession of faith in a particular creed, to have religious weddings or funerals, or (among Christians) to have their children baptised.<sup>[1]</sup>

## **Examples of Folklore in Literature:**

### **Example #1: Rudyard Kipling**

Rudyard Kipling was keenly interested in folklore, as he has written many English works based on folklore such as, *Rewards and Fairies* and *Puck of Pook's Hill*. His experiences in Indian environment have led him to create several works about Indian themes and tradition. Since Kipling has lived a great deal of life in Indian regions, he was much familiar with the Indian languages.

Kipling's popular work, *The Jungle Book*, consists of plenty of stories about traditional folktales. He also has Indian themes in his work, *Just So Stories*, in which he has given many characters recognizable names related to Indian languages. Helen Bannerman has also penned an Indian themed folktale, *Little Black Sambo*, during the same period.

### **Example #2: Patrick Henry**

Patrick Henry was a politician, attorney and planter, who gained popularity as an orator when Americans were struggling for independence. He is well known for his speech in the House of Burgesses in 1775 in the church of Saint Joseph. The House was undecided about whether they need to mobilize and take military action against encroaching military forces of England. Henry gave his arguments in favor of American forces' mobilization. After forty-two years, William Wirt, Henry's first biographer, working from different oral histories and stories, reconstructed the sayings of Henry, outlining the folk traditions he inherited and passed on.

### **Example #3: A. K. Ramanujan**

A. K. Ramanujan has written a lot about context sensitivity as a theme in many cultural essays, classical poetry, and Indian folklore. For example, in his works *Three Hundred Ramayanas*, and *Where Mirrors are Windows*, he talks about intertextual quality of written and oral Indian literature. His popular essay, *Where Mirrors Are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflections*, and commentaries done on Indian folktales, including *Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages*, and *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology*, present perfect examples of Indian folk literature studies.



#### Example #4: Alan Garner

Alan Garner is a renowned English novelist popular for writing fantasy tales and retellings of traditional English folk tales. His works are mainly rooted in history, landscape, and folklore of his native country Cheshire. One of such children's novels is, *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen: A Tale of Alderley*, which took a local legend from *The Wizard of the Edge*, and described landscapes and folklore of neighboring Alderley Edge, where Alan had grown up. The novel is set in Alderley Edge in Cheshire and Macclesfield. This is a very good example of the use of folktales in literature.

#### **Function of Folklore:**

The main purpose of folklore is to convey a moral lesson and present useful information and everyday life lessons in an easy way for the common people to understand. Folk tales sugarcoat the lessons of hard life in order to give the audience pointers about how they should behave. It is one of the best mediums to pass on living culture or traditions to future generations.

Currently, many forms of folk literature have been transformed into books and manuscripts, which we see in the forms of novels, histories, dramas, stories, lyric poems, and sermons. Folk literature is, however, not merely a carrier of cultural values; rather, it is also an expression of self-reflection. It serves as a platform to hold high moral ground without any relevance to present day reality. Instead, writers use it as a commentary or satire on current political and social reality. In the modern academic world, folklores and folktales are studied to understand ancient literature and civilizations.

#### **Folklore Genres:**

Folklorists -- those who study folklore -- classify the subject according to various genres, or categories. The broadest categories are oral, material and belief.

**Oral:** One of the most popular folklore genres, oral folklore encompasses song, dance and all forms of "verbal art," including poetry, jokes, riddles, proverbs, fairy tales, myths and legends. Of course, many of these "verbal" art forms now exist in written form (e.g., fairy tales). But in the beginning, they were passed on orally. That's why many of them contain devices to help people remember them. One such device is repetition. Think of the story of the "Three Little

Pigs," where the pigs keep building houses, which the wolf keeps saying, "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down." Folk tales also contain formulaic expressions to aid memory, such as "Once upon a time" and "They lived happily ever after."

**Material:** Objects you can touch are included in the material folklore classification. So this means personal items such as home decorations, special clothing and jewelry. But it also encompasses traditional family recipes, foods and musical instruments -- e.g., the Sioux's chegah-skah-hdah, a type of rattle, and the bodhrán, an Irish frame drum. Vernacular artwork, textiles and architecture (using local materials and serving local needs) are also included in material folklore. Examples include the 1920s shotgun houses popular in the American South and the raised *horreros*, or granaries, found in Galicia, Spain.

**Belief:** While this points to religion, belief also covers rituals such as tossing rice at a bride and groom to wish them good luck, and the Jewish tradition of giving bread, sugar and salt as a housewarming gift. Some folklorists classify this genre as behavioral or cogitative, and include the way folklore beliefs affect your thought process and behavior. Here's an example: A young driver rear-ends you, and you're about to tell her off. Then you remember the golden rule -- "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" -- and instead you calmly accept her apology. That's behavioral folklore in action.

### **Folk Idioms, Sayings, Proverbs and Vocabulary:**

Common sayings seem to be the grass roots of our American culture. If your parents had nothing to say, they always seemed to resort to some previously spoken phrase their parents said to them, didn't they? But, to claim that these are really "American" sayings is false. Our nation is a melting pot of many cultures, so the sayings listed below represent years of generations handing them down one to another (mostly orally) with their own cultural spin. Many were told to help educate and pass wisdom down from young to old. Their motive was to teach you a message of behavior or to give you philosophical wisdom. Some come from the bible, although are not actually word for word. Why? Because many people did not read or write. But their preacher came around and told them the bible. So they remembered the bible "as they interpreted the message" and passed it down that way.

Proverbs and sayings are usually short and sweet or short and tangy. They have been defined as the wisdom of many and the wit of one.

Although proverbs, sayings and maxim may be highly believed, they ironically often contradict each other. I found this true pertaining to marriage and wives as I read through them. Another example is about being to hasty. One says "*He who hesitates is lost*" and yet another advises, "*Look before you leap.*" The first one says to wisely NOT stop and wait before you venture forth while the other one tells us the opposite and warns us to stop and wait before we start a venture.

### **List of proverbs and sayings:**

A clean conscience makes a soft pillow.

A good deed is never lost.

A smile is worth a thousand words

A clock will run without watching it.

A man is judged by the company he keeps.

A good neighbor, a found treasure!

A friend to everyone is a friend to nobody.

<https://www.brownielocks.com/folksayings.html>

### **British Sayings/idioms:**

An idiom is an expression, word, or phrase that has a figurative meaning that is comprehended in regard to a common use of that expression that is separate from the literal meaning or definition of the words of which it is made.

Examples:

'Bob's your uncle'

It is added to the end of sentences to mean that something will be successful.

## Origin of Bob's your Uncle

"Bob's your Uncle" is a way of saying "you're all set" or "you've got it made." It's a catch phrase dating back to 1887, when British Prime Minister Robert Cecil (a.k.a. Lord Salisbury) decided to appoint a certain Arthur Balfour to the prestigious and sensitive post of Chief Secretary for Ireland.

Not lost on the British public was the fact that Lord Salisbury just happened to be better known to Arthur Balfour as "Uncle Bob." In the resulting furor over what was seen as an act of blatant nepotism, "Bob's your uncle" became a popular sarcastic comment applied to any situation where the outcome was preordained by favoritism. As the scandal faded in public memory, the phrase lost its edge and became just a synonym for "no problem."

By James Harris

'Keep your pecker up'

Remain cheerful - keep your head held high.

'Big girl's blouse'

A weakling; an ineffectual person.

'Burning the Candle at Both Ends'

Working for many hours without getting enough rest

'Eyes are bigger than your belly'

Think you can eat more than you can

'My eyes were bigger than my belly, I couldn't eat every thing I had put on my plate'

'Sleep Tight'

Have a good nights sleep

'Gordon Bennett'

An exclamation of surprise

'Stone the crows'

An exclamation of annoyance.

'Tie the Knot'

Get Married

'Talk the hind legs off a donkey'

A person who is excessively or extremely talkative can talk the hind legs off a donkey.

'I'll put the Kettle on'

Let me make you a cup of tea

'Do you want a brew?'

Do you want some tea?

'Leg it'

Run extremely fast

'Popped his/her clogs'

He/she has passed away (died)

<http://www.projectbritain.com/sayings.html#Sayings>

### **Folklore Vocabulary Word List (379):**

A) Accident, Account, Adventure, Adventurer, Ages, Alone, Angels, Appealing, Artistic, Aspiration, Associate, Attitudes, Augury, Authority, Awareness

B) Banshee, Barrier, Baskets, Beauty, Behavior, Beliefs, Betrayal, Beyond, Blessing, Bliss, Blood, Bode, Books, Bracelets, Brawl, Bright, Bucolic

C) Camelot, Camps, Candles, Caravan, Carefree, Caretaker, Carnival, Carriage, Caution, Celebrations, Challenges, Chance, Character, Characteristic, Characters, Charisma, Charm,

Charmed, Circus, Cities, Coaxing, Cobbler, Color, Colorful, Complex, Compulsion, Congregate, Connection, Consequences, Cosmic, Cottage, Country, Countryside, Creativity, Cult, Culture, Curse

D) Dance, Dangerous, Death, Deceit, Deception, Decoration, Defiance, Demon, Descent, Devil, Devotion, Different, Discover, Discovery, Distinctive, Divine, Dream, Dreaming, Driving, Duels, Duty, Dwelling

E) Egypt, Elders, Elf, Embellishment, Emotion, Emotional, Encampment, Enchantment, Energy, Enigma, Enslaved, Envy, Epic, Epoch, Era, Erstwhile, Ethics, Ethnic, Events, Evil, Exaggeration, Excitement, Experience

F) Fable, Fairy, False, Fame, Fanciful, Fantasy, Fate, Fay, Fealty, Fear, Feelings, Fertility, Fervor, Festival, Festive, Fiddle, Fields, Figure, Flog, Flowers, Folk, Folklorist, Forbidden, Forest, Foretell, Fortune, Furor

G) Gather, Generations, Geography, Giant, Glen, Goals, Goblin, Gods, Goodness, Grace, Greed, Greeting, Gremlin, Groups, Guilt, Guitar, Gypsies

H) Hallucinate, Happy, Harbinger, Harbor, Hardship, Harmonious, Harp, Hearth, Heaven, Heaven on Earth, Heritage, Hermit, Hero, Heroine, Hidden, Hills, History, Hobbit, Holiday, Honesty, Hope, Horror, Horse-and-Buggy, Horses, Hunting

I) Idyll, Imagination, Imaginative, Impossibility, India, Informative, Insular, Intelligence, Interaction, Interest, Interior, Ireland, Irish

J) Jaunt, Joking, Journey, Joy, Justice

K) Keen, Kidnapping, Killing, Kingdom, Kings

L) Laughter, Learning, Legend, Leprechaun, Lessons, Lineage, Listening, Literature, Logical, Longing, Lore, Love

M) Magic, Magical, Maiden, Mastery, Meander, Memories, Mesmerize, Miracle, Mischief, Mood, Moon, Music, Mysterious, Mystical, Myth, Mythology

N) Narrative, Natural, Nature, Normal, Nostalgia

O) Observations, Obsess, Ocean, Odds, Old, Omen, Oracle, Oral, Origin, Ostracize, Overcome

P) Painting, Pattern, Performance, Persecution, Personalities, Pixie, Poetry, Poverty, Power, Practices, Prayer, Pride, Primitive, Princess, Prisoner, Privacy, Prophecy, Protection

Q) Qualm, Quantity, Queen, Query, Quest, Question

R) Rage, Ranching, Realm, Recount, Refuge, Relation, Relationships, Religion, Remembering, Rendition, Reputation, Respect, Revelation, Revere, Ribbons, Riding, Ritual, Romantic, Romany, Roots

S) Sacrifice, Safety, Saga, Sandman, Scourge, Secrets, Serious, Settle, Singing, Smarts, Society, Solstice, Songs, Sorrow, Space, Spell, Spirit, Spirits, Spiritual, Spying, Squalor, Stars, Status, Stereotype, Stories, Storytelling, Subjects, Superstitious, Suspicion, Suspicious, Swarthy, Systems

T) Tale, Telling, Thievery, Time, Tooth fairy, Topics, Trade, Traders, Traditional, Traditions, Train, Travel, Travel, Treasure, Trial, Tribulation, Trickster, Triumph, Troll, Truth

U) Underworld, Unfamiliar, Unique, Unreal, Unscrupulous, Unusual, Utopia

V) Vampire, Vapors, Variety, Village, Vows

W) Wand, Wander, Wealth, Weather, Weave, Weaver, Wind, Wisdom, Wonderland, Woods, World, Worship, Wrongdoings, Wrongs

X)

Y) Yearning, Youth

Z) Zeal, Zone

<https://myvocabulary.com/word-list/folklore-vocabulary/>



**SATHYABAMA**

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by AICTE

[www.sathyabama.ac.in](http://www.sathyabama.ac.in)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608 – UNIT II**



**SATHYABAMA**  
**INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND**  
**TECHNOLOGY**  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608**

**Course Materials**

**UNIT II – Folklore Theories:**

Mythological Theories – Performance Theory – Functional Theory – Psychoanalytic Theory

**INTRODUCTION:**

Folktale is one of the popular sources of entertainment. From time immemorial it has been considered as an important asset of our society. They are the literary creations of a society which may be taken as the common property shared by all. Theory is a tool by which one can interpret the meaning of folktale. Such kind of analysis is essential to understand the society and its people. Tales told for amusement has become a subject of serious study in the 19th century. It reflects the fantasies of people metaphorically. The analysis and interpretation of metaphors provide insights into the social problems and behaviour of people everywhere.

**MYTHOLOGICAL THEORY:**

**Description:**

*Theories of Mythology* provide students with both a history of theories of myth and a practical ‘how-to’ guide to interpreting myth, the most elementary form of narrative.

**Four Theories of Myth:**

There are four basic theories of myth. Those theories are: the rational myth theory, functional myth theory, structural myth theory, and the psychological myth theory. The rational myth theory states that myths were created to explain natural events and forces. Functional myths are what you call the kinds of myths that were created as a type of social control. The third myth theory is the structural myth theory. This theory says that myths were patterned after human mind and human nature. The psychological myth theory is the fourth myth theory which states that myths are based on human emotion.

- The rational myth theory states that myths were made to better understand natural events and forces that occurred in the everyday lives of people. This theory also explains that the gods and goddesses controlled all of these happenings of nature.

Examples of this type of myth are creation myths from different cultures.

- The functional myth theory talks about how myths were used to teach morality and social behavior. It states that myths told about what types of things should and shouldn't be done, and the consequences for those wrong doings. The functional myth theory also states that myths were created for social control and served the function of insuring stability in a society. A story about a tribe who rebelled against the great serpent, Degei, is a good example of a functional myth. This story is about a tribe who learned many skills from their great serpent god, Degei, and then became Degei's workers and servants. Two chiefs of this tribe were sick of working for him and tried to defeat him; they were too weak for Degei. Instead of winning their freedom, they were killed in a great flood caused by Degei. This myth is trying to say that you should not be lazy because if you are, then you will regret it.
- Structural myths are said to be myths based on human emotion. These types of myths show the two sides of the human mind; the good side and the bad side. They show the divided self and the duality of human nature. Myths about Hercules show how the human mind can be both good and bad. Hercules did both good and bad things. One of the bad things he did was (in "Jason and the Argonauts") he stole a broach pin from the treasure chamber of the god Talos. This sin caused his friend to be killed. Hercules knew that his friend was killed because of his sin, so to make up for it, he vowed to stay on the island until his friend was found.
- The psychological myth theory states how myths are based on human emotion and that they come from the human subconscious mind. Cultures all around the world had similar fears, questions, and wishes which, to them, were unexplainable. That is the reason that psychological myths were made; and that is why there are archetypes shared between cultures. Archetypes are general forms and characters used by all cultures. Some archetypes found between cultures are having a sky god (Zeus and Oloron), a sea god (Poseidon and Olokun), and an agricultural god (Orisha-Okò and Demeter). These archetypes are examples of how people think alike when it comes to things that are to them mysteries and fears.

In conclusion, it appears that man created myths for quite a few reasons. These reasons include explaining the unknown, natural events and forces, to show the duality and pureness of human nature and the human mind, and to help societies maintain order and remain stable.

### **PERFORMANCE THEORY:**

Performance Theory- It suggests that everyone of us puts on a performance in our society. Whether through the clothes we wear, the conversations we hold or the food we eat, all are a performance designed as a signal system to ourselves and to others of our place within our social group.

The influence of Richard Schechner (b. 1934) on both theatre production and academic theory has been profound and, in some ways, revolutionary. Schechner has consistently challenged traditional practices and perspectives of theatre, performance and ritual for almost half a century. His principle contention is that drama is not merely a province of the stage, but of everyday life, and is a cross-cultural phenomenon. *'It is important to develop and articulate theories concerning how performances are regenerated, transmitted, received and evaluated in pursuit of these goals, performance studies is insistently intercultural, inter-generic and inter-disciplinary'*.

As with all academic studies, performance theory is founded on certain key principles, which include such terms as 'presentation of self', 'restored behaviour' and 'expressive culture', and incorporates social drama and ritual. His concept of performance, which contrasts sharply with previous, principally modernist, approaches to the arts, asserts the importance of different 'systems of transformations', which vary enormously from culture to culture, and throughout historical periods and movements.

The radical nature of performance theory is demonstrated by its all-encompassing, even holistic, approach to theatre and performance, with popular culture, folklore, and ethnic diversity incorporated into the cross-disciplinary mix. In examining the ways in which the theory can be useful to theatre practitioners, it is important to examine in more detail the main strategies it deploys, including the concept of 'performativity'.

**Performativity** is a complex concept that can be thought of as a language which functions as a form of social action and has the effect of change. The concept has multiple applications in

diverse fields such as anthropology, social and cultural geography, economics, gender studies (social construction of gender), law, linguistics, performance studies, and history, philosophy.

The concept is first described by philosopher of language John L. Austin when he referred to a specific capacity: the capacity of speech and communication to act or to consummate an action. Austin differentiated this from constative language, which he defined as descriptive language that can be "evaluated as true or false". Common examples of performative language are making promises, betting, performing a wedding ceremony, an umpire calling a strike, or a judge pronouncing a verdict.<sup>[1]</sup>

Influenced by Austin, philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler argued that gender is socially constructed through commonplace speech acts and nonverbal communication that are performative, in that they serve to define and maintain identities. This view of performativity reverses the idea that a person's identity is the source of their secondary actions (speech, gestures). Instead, it views actions, behaviors, and gestures as both the result of an individual's identity as well as a source that contributes to the formation of one's identity which is continuously being redefined through speech acts and symbolic communication. This view was also influenced by philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser.

'Performativity' as a concept is closely related to postmodernism. The postmodern view does not see the idea of 'performance' as intrinsically artistic or theatrical, but as something that pervades the fabric of the social, political and material world. It is an inalienable part of what constitutes power and knowledge. Teaching and lecturing, political speech-making and religious sermonising illustrates this characteristic of performativity.

The postmodern view of things posits a standpoint that culture has become a commodity in itself, rather than a critique of commodity. It is inseparable from the context of post-World War II Western society, where new goods and technology, and corresponding cultural developments, emerged from the rubble of post-war austerity. This shift from modernist to postmodernist thinking in the arts can be located in the 1950s, with movements such as abstract expressionism, modernist poetry and existentialism in literature and philosophy representing a high flowering of the modernist impulse. The postmodern world, originating in the 1960s, represented a blurring of distinction between high art and popular, mass-communicated mediums, formerly derided as 'low art'.

*'Recognising, analysing, and theorising the convergence and collapse of clearly demarcated realities, hierarchies, and categories is at the heart of postmodernism. Such a convergence or collapse is a profound departure from traditional Western performance theory'.*

In the Schechner universe, the previously solid foundation of modernism, with clearly defined borders of reality and representation in performance, has been wrenched away, and many of the assumptions in the western artistic tradition, from Plato and Aristotle on, such as the notion that theatre reflects, imitates or represents reality, in both individual and social life. *'Representational art of all kinds is based on the assumption that 'art' and 'life' are not only separate but of different orders of reality. Life is primary, art secondary'.*

In Performance Studies, Schechner asserts that *'performing onstage, performing in special social situations (public ceremonies, for example), and performing in everyday life are a continuum'*. His contention that each and every one of us is in some sense a 'performer' is difficult to dispute. Engaging in 'real life' is often indistinguishable from 'role play', and in today's 'surveillance societies' of Western culture, with CCTV cameras seemingly everywhere, the scope for performance as an extension of simply being has never been wider. The evident logical development of this is the ubiquitous 'reality TV' show, as well as the do-it-yourself webcam and personal websites on the internet, both of which have contributed a new dimension to 'the style of being'.

At first glance, Schechner's hypotheses appears to fulfil both Warhol's philosophy and Shakespeare's oft-quoted 'All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players' as an approach to performance. The key concern of the drama ordnance practitioner is to place this into the context of performing in a way beyond simply 'being in itself' to the portrayal of a self-contained 'thing in itself' - an abstract presentation of a text or idea, for the purposes of entertain mentor education. (E.g. Theatre-in-education)

The actor or 'player' is not alone in presenting self-contained performances, with a beginning, middle and end. As Schechner observes, various figures in the public arena adopt strategies of performance and role play, such as politicians, religious leaders, and businessmen and women, conducting presentations at meetings: *'Paid performers all seeking attention, adulation, re-election, and money'*. (Schechner, 2002, P. 146) They all have their own strategies and scenarios to achieve effects, towards a specific goal, and, like the theatre/performing arts practitioner, their performances are predicated on self-consciousness.

*‘ Across this very wide spectrum of performing are varying degrees of self-consciousness and consciousness of the others with whom and for whom we play. The more self-conscious a person is the more one constructs behaviour for those watching and/or listening, the more such behaviour is performing. ’*

The application of role playing in many contexts, from psychotherapy sessions to teacher training exercises, follows similar approaches as drama improvisation classes, albeit with different objectives, but no less in addressing the self-conscious and unconscious impulses which lie at the basis of performance. It reflects the in-built routines, rituals and conventions of everyday life, instilled from birth, and through childhood experience. The Jungian theories of archetypes and the collective unconscious would suggest that the individual’s mind is not a tabularasa (blank page) at the time of birth – the implications of which are potent with creative possibilities for the practitioner/performing artist.

The concept of ‘performing in everyday life’ is a central aspect of performativity, as envisaged by Schechner. *‘Performativity is everywhere – in daily behaviour, in the professions, on the internet and media, in the arts and in the language’*. It is a natural progenitor of role play and improvisation. The expression ‘showing off’ is heard frequently throughout childhood, but is equally applicable to adult behaviour. Certain jobs and professions have evolved traditional codes of conduct, some of which have emerged as specific character traits, behaviour patterns and tones of voice. These have in turn been stylised into stereotypical representations: the roles of dignified clergyman, ardent reporter, solemn court judge, et al. They usually adhere to custom, but have evolved into modes of performance.

The implication is that many individuals, going about their ‘everyday business’ are not being themselves all of the time. They are acting out roles, predetermined to the point of being programmed in some cases. *‘Performing in everyday life involves people in a wide range of activities from solo or intimate performances behind closed doors to small group activities to interacting as part of a crowd.’*

Schechner observes that the social codes of our daily lives are adapted to greater or lesser degrees by everyone. The unconventional or rebellious resist the rules, but only revolutionaries seek to break them to achieve permanent change – a principal equally applicable to artists. The arts, and particularly the theatre, have always made use of stereotypes and archetypes, often parodying or subverting them. Those practitioners who set out to achieve truthful

performances, to 'get under the skin' of a character, can identify with these typical representations, as role play exercises reveal, but the underlying personality lies a layer or two deeper.

*'In the theatre the actor and the audience both know that the actor is not who she is playing. But in real life a person is simultaneously performing herself and being herself. The matter is, of course, nicely complicated because in some methods of realistic acting, actors are taught how to use their own selves to construct theatrical roles'.*

In approaching the role of , for example, a science teacher, and avoid a one-dimensional portrayal, an actor must discover the character as not simply a teacher, carrying out a teacher's role, but as an individual when 'off duty' during times, as Schechner puts it, when *'the performance aspect of ordinary behaviour is less obvious, but not absent'*.

The actor can draw on his/her own experience, be it of a personal kind (i.e. they may have previously been a teacher) or from memories and observations based on an actual person, or persons. (E.g. a teacher who had taught them) Naturally, this approach places more demands on the actor, enabling him/her to enact a performance of a person who is also a science teacher, rather than simply a science teacher with no identity beyond his/her teaching duties.

A-Gender, produced in 2004 by Joey Hately, artistic director of Transaction Theatre Company, was a postmodern theatre piece that adopted many of the elements of new theatre and performance theory very effectively. Ostensibly a presentation of gender politics portrayed as a personal case history, A-Gender presented the issue of transsexualism in a powerfully theatrical manner, deploying methods of performance outside the restrictions of conventional theatre.

The use of the 'one man (or one woman) show' format (a prototypical popular cultural form) and the 'stand up' routine, interwoven with visual media (video sequences) and other performance modes, enabled the artist/performer to convey the confusion, pain and anger of person whose gender identity causes them to believe that they have been born in the wrong body, the wrong gender.

There are essential differences. Street theatre is usually played out for the benefit of an audience, albeit one of a generally random nature, some of whom may become participants,

but not in the same way as in Happenings – with everyone performing and no audience. One element they do share is the idea of the ‘found space’, which is crucial to ‘environmental theatre’. Kaprow stated, *‘it doesn’t make any difference how large the space is. It’s still a stage’*. (Kaprow quoted in Schechner, 1977) Schechner elaborated on this principle with his axiom that *‘the theatrical event can take place in a totally transformed space, or found space’*.

Whereas traditional theatre restricts the ‘special place’ to an area (the stage) marked clearly as the space for performance, new theatre creates a space that is ‘organically defined by the action’. As in the Happening, and street theatre, space is transformed by the participants, who discover their own sets and scenery, using their surroundings, the various elements ‘found in the environment of the space, including décor, textures and acoustics.

Outdoor stage performances have adopted this principle, with many touring theatre companies using castle ruins, woodland clearings and riversides to stage Shakespeare’s Hamlet, A Midsummer Night’s Dream and The Merchant of Venice. This use of transformed space is perhaps a more conservative application of Schechner’s theory, as it retains many of the conventions of traditional theatre. The theatrical stage is simply substituted for its outdoor counterpart. Much of street theatre approaches adopt a radical use of space in the environment.

There are innumerable ways in which performance theory and new theatre are a useful alternative to traditional theatre. The application of other (visual) media has already been noted, as in the example of A-Gender. Schechner proposes others:

*‘I suggest other tools, other approaches. Mathematical and transactional game analysis, model building, comparisons between theatre and related performance activities – all will prove fruitful.’* This demands a high level of intense physical and mental rigour from the practitioner, as Schechner sees theatre as alive, experiential, organic, rather than something that merely replicates or reconstructs reality. His theory offers many practical methods for both student and practitioner to follow, in the form of both things to think about and things to do.

Folklore and ethnography shifted perspective in the 1960's from collecting and categorizing to synthesizing and understanding peoples and their creations in their own terms. Such re-imaginings gave birth to performance theory. Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock, both working with Native American texts, sought to represent those texts more appropriately, from a better,



insider's perspective, to reflect the way the stories were appreciated and understood by members of the cultures from which they came.

In oral cultures the genres are not simply categories in a library catalog but are part of an ensemble of actions that constitute the setting, often the ritual, and sometimes the music and dance of the performers; these actions also guide the voice and gestures and the intentions of the performers, as well as the audience and its expectations. Each genre has its characteristic context of performance, its own place, its own time, its own performers, and its own aims. Folktales may be told by adults who have built up a reputation for doing so, but they are more likely to make the rounds within families or among groups of children.

Given the variety of genres of oral literature, it is difficult to generalize about their content as a whole, but it is (perhaps misleadingly) easy to generalize within each genre. Mythology deals with gods, deities, and supernatural agencies in their relationship—whether distant or close—with humankind. Epics often deal with human as well as half-divine heroes and monsters. Folktales show a nearly universal concern with animals, and they introduce as actors humans, gods, and sometimes monsters. The widespread inclusion of animals, in turn, may indicate a recognition of a continuity between living things; animals often reenact the lives of humans, not only by speaking but in their roles and actions. A continuity between living things is also expressed in tales of humans born of animals, being cared for by them or being looked after by them in a more mystical sense.

The insights and methods of previous generations of scholars inevitably change based on new or fine-tuned theories that better fit contemporary methods, goals, or insights. Performance theory remains extremely useful and valid for contemporary folklorists, especially those working with field-collected narratives.

One insight of performance theory focuses on rendering texts so that the artfulness of a given performative event may be manifested on the page. Performance theory also recognizes that not all performances are equal. "Full performance" involves a level of competence that produces artistry, though measures of competency are to be discovered in each fieldwork situation and with awareness of local measures of artistry.

At the same time that performance theory calls for greater awareness of and attention to formal elements of textual representation (structural concerns), it also calls for greater focus on context. Performance theory situates stories to a particular event and credits a narrator who

assumes responsibility for the performance. Each performance is keyed, and relies on a performer's assumption of responsibility for the emergent event. Folklore is not to be conceived any longer as disembodied "text" but rather a rich convergence of performer, situation, setting, audience, and society.

Without context, it is argued, texts are disembodied from the reality of their performance event, and are thus incomplete and less meaningful. A text, like a textile (etymologically related) is woven together from the situation of a given performance, the audience, details of an individual performer, and knowledge and understanding of the social group and culture of the performer and the audience.

### **Applying Performance Theory**

Most folklorists working with performance theory attend primarily to structural, textual elements of the theory (rendering oral performances more artfully on the page), though all argue for attention to context. Obviously, the amount of contextual information necessary for a full performance-informed discussion of a text is overwhelming.

The goals and impulses gave rise to performance theory. Performances theorist advocates aim to avoid the dominating influences of theory, while employing it judiciously to understand discourse and practices, and to draw out "underlying uniformity of pattern" (Hymes 1975, 351). Michael Jackson suggests we should be aware of the "mutual dependency" of science and literature, letting each inform the other without elevating either to emerge as "truth" (1989).

Richard Bauman suggests we need an approach based upon a similar emergent and fluid notion of "truth," and also an awareness of the connection between the "stuff" we collect and the community and people from which it comes:

If we are to understand what folklore is, we must go beyond a conception of it as disembodied superorganic stuff and view it contextually, in terms of the individual, social, and cultural factors that give it shape, meaning, existence. This reorientation in turn requires us to broaden the scope of our fieldwork: a contextual perspective on folklore makes the enterprise much more ramified and complex than the simple butterfly-collecting approach – the collecting of anachronistic antiquities – that often passes for fieldwork in folklore.

Performance theory helps us to continue to discuss and appreciate what it means to be human and to give expression to our lives.

## **FUNCTIONAL THEORY:**

### **Functionalism in general:**

Functionalism is the theory that states all aspects of a society serve a function and are necessary for the survival of that society. The approach used in functionalism is that all elements of the society are interdependent and they serve a function for the overall stability of the society. Thus, they are necessary for the survival of that society. According to the functionalist perspective, each aspect of society is interdependent and contributes to society's stability and functioning as a whole. Furthermore, functionalism is a perspective created by Emile Durkheim.

For example, the government provides chemicals and manure for farmers and they can succeed in agriculture and can contribute to the overall economic development of the society, by providing people with healthy food and also by paying tax to the government to continue this procedure. Similarly, farmers can support their families from the income they get. Hence, the farmers are dependent on the government for manure and other agricultural support; the government is also dependent on the farmers for the healthy food they provide

Thus, functionalism highlights that it is the inter-dependency among these varied functions or the elements that eventually lead to the maintenance of the society in a more successful manner.

### **An Introduction to Functionalism:**

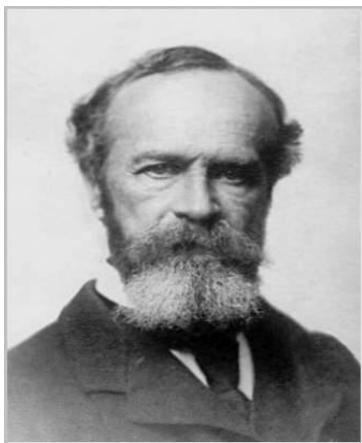
The early days of psychology in the 19th century focused on the nature of the mind apart from metaphysical explanations. Two views developed early that attempted to expand the understanding of how the brain works. Structuralism focused on the "structure" of the brain and assumed cognitions and the other functions of the mind such as creativity, moral reasoning, etc. were product of naturalistic functions within the brain. The understanding of the structure of the brain was simplistic and many of the explanations offered were conjecture based on self-reports (introspection) of experimental subjects.

A second school of thought emerged in the late 19th century that disagreed with the focus of Structuralism. William James and associates argued that focusing on the structure of the brain was too limited to understand the nature of the brain's function. Rather, they proposed the focus should be on the functions of the brain, which fell more in line with metaphysical use of the term "mind." A difference with the metaphysical assumptions of the mind was that Functionalism as it came to be known perceived the functions of the brain as a product of the evolutionary struggle of organisms to adapt to their environments.

Definition:

Functionalism is the study of mental activity such as perception, decision-making, and cognitions. The focus on the mind is not the origins of cognitive activity as in Structuralism, but the purpose of cognitive activity or how the mind serves the organism in its evolutionary struggle to adapt to the environment.

The term "Functionalism" can be used in two ways. Functionalism can describe how the mind processes information. Functionalism can also describe how mental processes have changed in the evolution of organisms and why certain processes were selected while others were not.



William James

He was a famous psychologist, known for his contribution in functionalism approach. He was the first American psychologist. "Principles of psychology" is one of his greatest works which is still considered very informative and fresh. It was the first general text book written on psychology. He was famous as spokesperson for the functionalism approach.

He was against structural approach of psychology; he argued that the conscious part can be divided into different parts. He coined the phrase “stream of consciousness”. According to James, mental life is a unity that changes with time and flows.

In his book he presented enlightening ideas regarding memory, attention, habits, emotions, imaginations, learning and many other things. His advanced studies took him in more mysterious direction.

William James wrote the first textbook on psychology, “Principles of Psychology.” The text included functionalist’s conclusions such as the nature of consciousness, emotions, and memory. The phrase “stream of consciousness” was introduced in the book and described the functionalist’s belief that the mind responds to multiple “streams” of information. The function of the mind is to determine the best course of action that is likely to improve the state of the organism..

#### William James - Theory Of Functionalism

Functionalism is the second paradigm of psychology. As the name suggests the main focus of functionalism is in the functions of mental processes that includes consciousness. This approach was not the work of one individual. However, William James plays a vital role in defining functionalism. The main aim of functionalists was to find out why humans feel, think and behave the way they do.

### THE PARADIGM OF FUNCTIONALISM

- The Crux Of Psychology

Basically, psychology is an in-depth study of mental activities that include memory, perception, imagination, learning, feelings, emotions, judgement and many other functions that are carried out by brain. It is also assessed in terms of the process of adaptation to its environment.

- Methods Used In Psychology

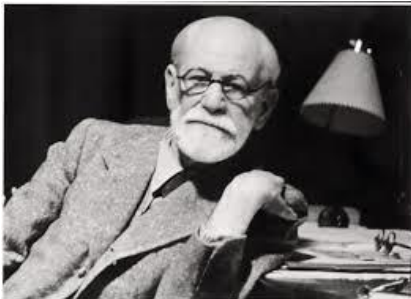
Mental activities can be studied through several kinds of methods some of them are introspection, objective manifestations of mind, use of instruments in order to measure and record behaviours and functions through in-depth study of its products and

creations and also through study and observation of physiology and anatomy of the brain.

The functionalists inclined to use the word 'function' rather lightly. The word “function” is used in two different ways at least. It can include the operation of mental process. The term 'function' can also mean the process that plays an important part in the evolution of species, the adaptive characteristics that result in selection through evolution.

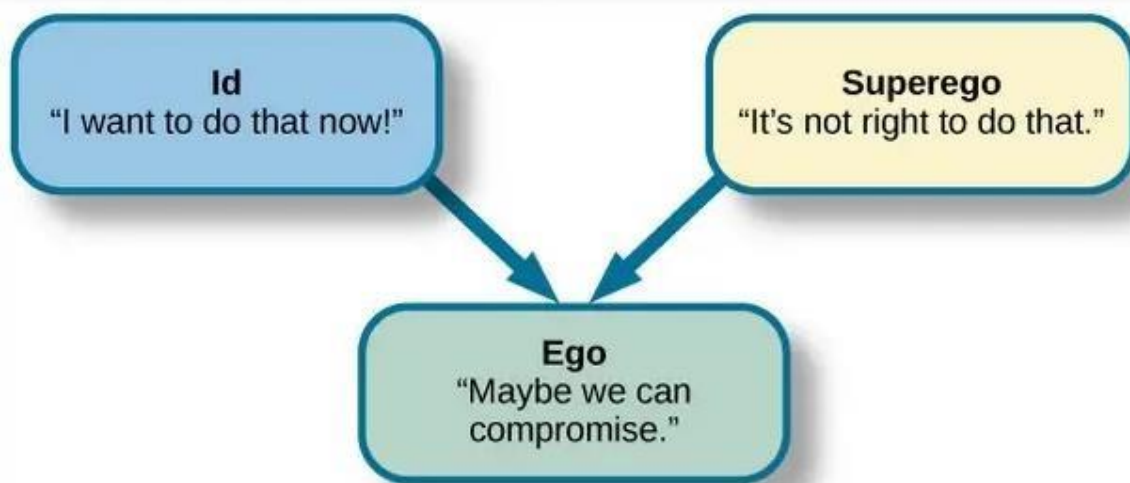
Functionalism never became obsolete; instead it became a part of conventional psychological approach. Now modern psychology focuses on process rather than the structure, focusing on process is a common characteristic of modern psychology. According to critics, factionalism lacked clear design and had similar problems to structural approach, as both relied on introspection.

## PSYCHOANALYSIS THEORY:

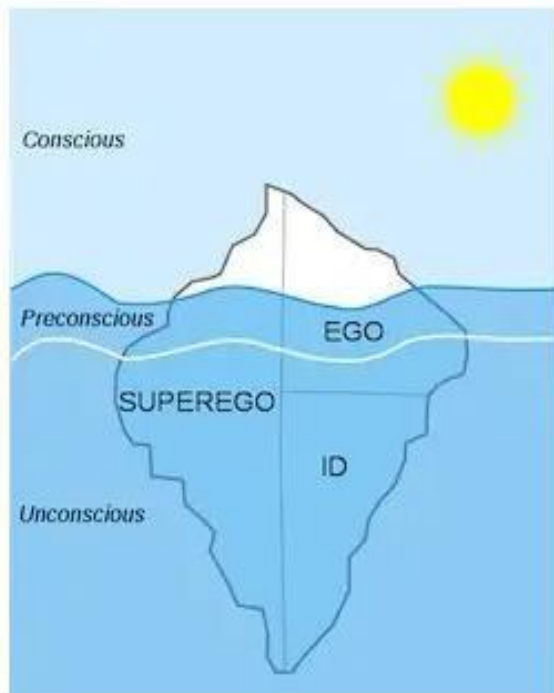


Sigmund Freud (6<sup>th</sup> May 1856 – 23<sup>rd</sup> Sep 1939)

Psychoanalysis: The term 'psychoanalysis' has two accepted meanings. Firstly, it means a method of treating mentally disordered people. Secondly, it also goes to mean the theories on human mind and its various complexities. This psychoanalytical school is also known as depth psychology on the ground that it goes into the deep region of the unconscious mind. Psychoanalytical theory was propounded by Sigmund Freud. Freud was originally a medical man who was engaged in the study and treatment of nervous patients in his own clinic. Out of his long devotion to medical practice he came to realise that many of the abnormal behaviour and mental disease of his patients were owing to the nervous abnormalities. Gradually he was more interested in the study of psychology and more particularly psychology of the unconscious mind.



The job of the ego, or self, is to balance the aggressive/pleasure-seeking drives of the id with the moral control of the superego.



**The role of id, ego and super ego in formation of personality:** One of the valuable concepts of psychoanalysis is the threefold system in the organisation and building up of a man's personality. They are id, ego and super ego - constituting the psychic world of man. These may

be known as the New Testament of Freudian scripture. The psycho- social build up of a man's personality is nothing but the result of these three systems. In the year 1923, Freud proposed to divide the mental activity into id, ego and super ego instead of unconscious, preconscious and conscious. In the new theory, it is recognised that the three systems merge into one another and form a co-operative whole, except when there is conflict. Freud conceived the id to be what he called the vital layer of the mind. He describes id as chaotic and a cauldron of seething excitement. It contains everything that is inherited, that is fixed in the constitution and is completely unconscious. Id is full of excitement and directly associated with somatic or bodily processes. Cut off from the external world, everything which goes on in the id is unconscious and remains so, having no correspondence to space or time. In the year 1933, Freud noted that the id contains sexual and aggressive energies, their discharge taking place with the help of the ego. The study of the id derivatives indicates that there are many contradictory impulses present in the id and the ego is required to put them in order. This "kingdom of the illogical" as Freud (1940) called it, is completely unconscious containing various instinctual impulses. The id is only interested in the discharge of instinctual tension and is always guided by 'hedonism' or the pleasure principle. The activity of the id is governed by the so called primary process, in which there is no recognition of good and bad, or yes or no. The principal feature of the primary process is a tendency to the complete discharge of mental energies - without delay. The id has no connection with the external world, but opens towards the ego. It is separated from the ego by its censor, which controls the flow of id derivatives. In addition to communicating with the ego, the id also communicates with the super ego. The id supplies both ego and super ego with the energies with which they operate. Id is inherited and fixed part of the personality which contains the instinctual, elemental or emotional drives that provide the psychic energy for human behaviour. These forces are modified and transformed by other parts of the personality which develop out of the id, notably the ego and super ego. The ego represents the self and is concerned with external reality and decision making. The ego is in constant contact with time, space and with physical reality. It has organizational and critical capacity. Its function is to establish relationship between the individual organism and the outer world. The contact with reality compels the ego to adopt the reality principle and to abandon the pleasure principle which dominates the id. The ego is an adjuster between the wishes of the id on the one hand and the demands of external reality on the other. At the same time, it has to obey the demands of the super ego. So the ego has to serve three harsh masters at a time. Due to this reason, there is always conflict among these three systems. The ego cannot fulfil the demands of the id, it takes help of some indirect method called defence mechanism. Defence mechanisms are the



mode of behaviour to relief the ego from tension. The third system, the super ego may be defined "as the group of mental functions having to do with ideal aspirations and with moral commands and prohibitions". The super ego provides moral conscience and ideal model which the person may seek to emulate. It is primarily sociologically and culturally conditioned and strives for perfection rather than pleasure.

**Folktale and Psychoanalysis:** It has been stated earlier that in the study of folktale and other items of folklore, psychoanalytical theory can play a major role. Folktale is an important genre of folklore. Tales are told for amusement which reflects the fantasies of a people metaphorically. The analysis and interpretation of metaphors provide unrivalled insights into the social problems and behaviour of people everywhere. It is not enough to say that folklore is a mirror of a culture. We must try to see what it is that folklore reflects. For that we have to depend on psychoanalytical theory which helps in interpretation of any folklore item. Interpreting means here finding a hidden sense in something. From Freud's study of dreams, psychological theories relating to the folktale have received new incentive. Dreams can reflect the personal mental life and especially the anxieties of an individual. During sleep the defences of the ego are lowered allowing repressed materials to reach the conscious. For this reason dreams to some extent, may taken as royal road to the unconscious. The contents of the dream are usually symbolic and a proper interpretation of the symbols by an expert psychoanalyst may provide valuable clues to repressed desires and conflicts of the people. The people obtain fulfilment in imagination of those unconscious wishes which it cannot obtain in reality. Like dreams, myths and other folklore items also reveal psychic repressions of the community. Due to this reason, psychoanalysts consider folklore as the projection of human mind. Karl Abraham, a renowned member of Freudian school opined that the dream is the myth of the individual. Projection is an act of externalizing the conflicts and other internal conditions that give rise to pain and anxiety in person. It provides an opportunity to evoke responses from the unconscious mind which reveal the person's wishes. The repressed hopes and desires of a society are expressed in various folklore items. Folklore is a medium through which a folk community reveal their repressed feelings. From that point we can define folklore as a defence mechanism of the society, through which a society maintain its well being by releasing pent up tensions. Because we know that repressed desires and hopes are the root of all evils. From the above discussion it is evident that there is a close relationship between folklore and psychoanalysis. Earnest Jones (1879 \_ 1959) the close friend and biographer of Freud,

delivered a lecture on "psychoanalysis and folklore" addressing the English Folklore Society at their fiftieth anniversary congress in 1928. Folktale is very popular among the various items of folklore. Like any other items of folklore, folktale also reflects the unconscious needs and demands of the members of a society. Folktales are the products of human mind. What instigates a tale is a wish and the fulfilment of that wish is the content of the tale. Due to this reason, folktale is the most popular amongst all the narratives. People find pleasure in it since it satisfies a wish. Generally all tales have a happy ending and the child identifies itself to a varying extent with the young hero of the story. The child obtains a fulfilment of those unconscious wishes which it cannot yet obtain in reality. Folktale is a medium through which people project their emotional life into a safe, externalized, socially sanctioned form. All folktales reflect the need and hopes of a society symbolically. In order to decipher latent meanings of folktale, folklorists learned heavily on the theory of psychoanalysis. Various types of folktales have been interpreted by many scholars following Freudian line. In this regard, two renowned folklorist of India, J. Handoo and A. K. Ramanujan's name may be mentioned here who have done analytical works in terms of psychoanalytical interpretation.

For proper understanding of a society, psychoanalytical study of folktale may be considered essential. Through various characters of the folktale a society reduces its anxiety and tension resulting from unrealised needs and hopes. Each and every society has their own norms and values which are necessary for its members to follow. Because of social control the people cannot fulfil their hopes and desires. The repressed materials find place in the dreams, myths and other folklore materials. Folktale is a medium through which a folk community reveal their repressed feelings. From that point of view we can define folktale as a defence mechanism of the society, through which a society maintain its well being by releasing pent up tensions. Because we know that repressed desires and hopes are the root of all evils. Folktale reflects the unconscious needs and demands of the members of a society metaphorically. These are the products of human mind. What instigates a tale is a wish and fulfilment of that wish is the content of the tale. And people find pleasure in it since it satisfies a wish. Study of folktale in the light of psychoanalytical theory proves to be useful in understanding human behaviour and social problem. At the same time some other psychological or sociological approaches may also be used in the analysis of folktale.

Psychoanalytic theory, founded by Sigmund Freud during the twentieth century as a means to evaluate and cure mentally disturbed patients, lurks beneath the surface of traditional Fairy Tales, barely hidden. When these stories are read in Freudian terms of latent and manifest content, (as described in *'The Interpretation of Dreams'*), it's possible to read familiar narratives as psychological tales of sexual development, personal growth and female suppression.

### **Disturbing Dream Sequences**

Psychoanalysis can be applied to literature in the same way it is applied to dreams. Dream-like, shifting in nature and purpose, Fairy Tales are often an arbitrary collection of images more than a clear and linear narrative. As in dreams, the content of these images is much more important than the precise wording of the story.

In the original *Sleeping Beauty* story, for example, the thirteenth fairy who curses Sleeping Beauty becomes a threat only because she has been wilfully isolated, a psychoanalytic mechanism called 'the return of the repressed.' This proves true again in the story when the princess pricks her finger on the first spindle she sees, only because spindles have been banned, leaving her inexperienced and, so, curious. The virginal Sleeping Beauty is literally 'pricked' before slipping into a coma. The metaphorical phallic imagery here – the castle turrets, thorns, spindles, and repressed desires, are more telling than the tale itself.

### **Dwarves and The Death Drive**

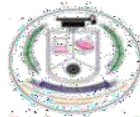


The traditional story of *Snow White* isn't a far cry from the Disney interpretation. At the end of the tale, a Prince purchases Snow White's body from the seven dwarves, having fallen for the Princess when he first lays eyes on her – despite the fact that she is, in fact, dead. This marginalised aspect of the Fairy Tale demonstrates necrophilial desire and the theory of the death drive. Elizabeth Bronfen argues that in 'Snow White,' the prince desires the dead princess because through her corpse, he is able to validate his own life:

*'By embalming a beautiful woman she is idealised in a way that obscures the possibility of decay and the possibility of the survivor's death.'*

The male identity must define itself through the female. In gazing at Snow White's corpse, the Prince's lifeforce grows stronger. Even more unusual, the Prince actually *buys* the corpse from the seven dwarves, encased in its casket. It is pertinent that he wants the body to remain in its transparent coffin, preserved like a centre-piece or an ornament.

In *The Little Mermaid*, Ariel must *lose her voice* in order to become human and obtain the man she desires. To walk on land, the young mermaid has to surrender her speech, her words and the only thing which the man she is searching for recognises her by – her song. In giving herself to him, she loses the ability to express her opinions, and simultaneously her identity.



**SATHYABAMA**

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by AICTE  
[www.sathyabama.ac.in](http://www.sathyabama.ac.in)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608 – UNIT III**

**SATHYABAMA**  
**INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608**  
**Course Materials**

**UNIT III – Oral Folklore**

Beliefs, Customs, Festivals, Medicine, etc – Folk Religion – Folklore and electronic Technology

**Folk Beliefs:**

One of a variety of compounds extending from the coinage of the term folklore in 1846 (previously popular antiquities), the term folk-belief is first evidenced in use by British folklorist Laurence Gomme in 1892.

Common parlance employs the word superstition for what folklorists generally refer to as folk belief. A proponent of this conceptualization includes Alan Dundes, the American folklorist who proposed that the term as superstition denote traditional expressions that have conditions and results, signs and causes. There are also those who include in the term's coverage the belief narratives such as legends, which are differentiated from folktales in the sense that they are believable for telling stories about human beings who lived in the recent past

In folkloristics, folk belief or folk-belief is a broad genre of folklore that is often expressed in narratives, customs, rituals, foodways, proverbs, and rhymes. It also includes a wide variety of behaviors, expressions, and beliefs. Examples of concepts included in this genre are magic, popular belief, folk religion, planting signs, hoodoo, conjuration, charms, root work, taboos, old wives' tales, omens, portents, the supernatural and folk medicine.

Folk belief and associated behaviors are strongly evidenced among all elements of society, regardless of education level or income. In turn, folk belief is found in an agricultural, suburban, and urban environments alike.

People often use "folk belief" to refer to superstitions, old wives' tales, and unorthodox religious and medical practices. This view of folk belief reinforces a perception of already marginalized people as more exotic and backward than previously imagined. Folk beliefs are better seen as providing insights into how people live their lives and what they think of as

important. Understood in this way, folk beliefs and practices provide valuable clues into how people construct their worlds and bring meaning to their experiences.

The folk beliefs of the Great Plains reflect the many groups contained within its vast boundaries. Indigenous peoples, European pioneer settlers, and more recent arrivals such as the Hmong (Laotians) all contribute to the rich cultural heritage of folklife in the Plains. Along with traditional beliefs and practices, each group creates new forms of folk belief through exposure to unfamiliar terrain, conditions, and other groups. Folk beliefs thus reflect a dynamic process of tradition making, with plenty of room for individual variations and stylistic differences along with crosscultural sharing within the region.

Folk belief takes on a regional flavor through the response of people to their immediate natural world. For instance, weather signs and omens form a vital part of folk belief within the Plains. Examples include "Rain follows the plow," "Heavy fur on animals means a severe winter," and "A tornado never hits the junction of two rivers." Sometimes weather signs are put in the form of rhymes: "Sunset red and morning gray sends the traveler on his way / Sunset gray and morning red keeps the traveler to his bed."

The world encountered by early settlers in the Great Plains was filled with wondrous and formidable creatures, many of which figure prominently in folk belief. One of the more unpleasant aspects of Plains life was the abundance of snakes. Snakes slithered by the hundreds in massive dens, crawled easily through the sod walls of Plains homes, and startled unwary humans and horses alike. A few examples of snake lore include stories about fabled "hoop snakes" and "joint snakes" and beliefs such as "Black snakes will suck cows."

Because of its deadly bite, rattlesnakes hold a special place in Plains snake lore. Kill a garter snake, and you'll get rain. But kill a rattler and get a BIG rain. Watch out for its mate, however, because "everyone knows a rattler's mate will come lookin' for it." A rattler's fangs naturally have special powers: "Be careful about killing a rattler with a lariat. Its fangs might get caught in the rope and bite you when you coil it." If this happens, be sure to apply plenty of "fresh, warm cow dung" to cure it. Ironically, rattlers also serve a medicinal function among Plains folk. To cure a headache, just place a rattlesnake's rattle in your hatband.

Of course, if that doesn't cure your headache, you might try a red bandana, wearing earrings, or finding a person born in October to rub your temples. Folk remedies and charms for good

health are abundant throughout the Plains. "Unlucky enough to get a sty? Rub a wedding ring on your eye." Or say this helpful charm: "Sty, sty, come off my eye, and go to the next passerby." Of course, if that passerby gives you a black eye, a silver knife is sure to draw the soreness out! Transference also works well with warts. Should you get warts from playing with a toad, simply sell them to another person or rub them with a penny and give the penny away.

Many folk beliefs and practices deal with luck. Find a "four-leaf clover" or a "red ear of corn" for good. Spill salt and throw some over your left shoulder to avoid bad. Bad luck at cards? "Get up and walk around your chair three times or sit on a handkerchief." Animals bring luck—crickets and rabbit's feet for good and crows bad. Some animals bring both kinds of luck: "If a black cat crosses your path, it's bad," but "If a black cat comes to stay at your house, it's good." Just don't kill it, whatever you do—that's bad. Death, the ultimate bad luck, comes by many signs: birds flying into the house, dogs howling at night, rain in an open grave, and pictures falling from the wall.

Folk beliefs and practices reveal the challenges faced daily by Plains folk. They underscore such things as the importance of good weather for survival, provide ways of dealing with the unexpected, and help cope with the often-precarious conditions of life in the Great Plains.

### **Folk Custom:**

The passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation, especially by oral communication.

Folklore is the expressive body of culture shared by a particular group of people; it encompasses the traditions common to that culture, subculture or group. These include oral traditions such as tales, proverbs and jokes. They include material culture, ranging from traditional building styles to handmade toys common to the group. Folklore also includes customary lore, the forms and rituals of celebrations such as Christmas and weddings, folk dances and initiation rites. Each one of these, either singly or in combination, is considered a folklore artifact. Just as essential as the form, folklore also encompasses the transmission of these artifacts from one region to another or from one generation to the next. Folklore is not something one can typically gain in a formal school curriculum or study in the fine arts. Instead, these traditions are passed along informally from one individual to another either through verbal instruction or demonstration.

## **Folk Festivals:**

India is a land of varied culture. Each and every state of India represents a different culture and has its own identity. Due to this, the festivals also differ from one state to other states. Thus, every state has its own festival. And the way of celebrating these festivals is also unique.

Being a highly spiritual country, festivals are at the heart of people's lives in India. The numerous and varied festivals that are held throughout the year offer a unique way of seeing Indian culture at its best.

**Holi** - Holi, often referred to as the "Festival of Colors", is one of the best known festivals outside of India. The festival is centered around the burning and destruction of the demoness Holika, which was made possible through unwavering devotion to [Lord Vishnu](#). However, the really fun part involves people throwing colored powder on each other and squirting each other with water guns. This is associated with [Lord Krishna](#), a reincarnation of [Lord Vishnu](#), who liked to play pranks on the village girls by drenching them in water and colors. *Bhang* (a paste made from cannabis plants) is also traditionally consumed during the celebrations. Holi is a very carefree festival that's great fun to participate in if you don't mind getting wet and dirty.

**Diwali** - Diwali honors the victory of good over evil and brightness over darkness. It celebrates Lord Ram and his wife Sita returning to their kingdom of Ayodhya, following the defeat of Ravan and rescue of Sita on Dussehra. It's known as the "Festival of Lights" for all the fireworks, small clay lamps, and candles that are lit. For most Indian families, Diwali is the most anticipated festival of the year.

**Onam** - Onam is the biggest festival of the year in the south Indian state of Kerala. This lengthy harvest festival marks the homecoming of mythical King Mahabali, and it showcases the state's culture and heritage. People decorate the ground in front of their houses with flowers arranged in beautiful patterns to welcome the king. The festival is also celebrated with new clothes, feasts served on banana leaves, dancing, sports, games, and snake boat races.

## **Folk Medicine:**

Traditional medicine as practiced nonprofessionally especially by people isolated from modern medical services and usually involving the use of plant-derived remedies on an empirical basis.



Folk medicine has existed for as long as human beings have existed. In an effort to cope with an environment that was often dangerous, humans, and their ancestors, began to develop ways of lessening pain and treating physical and mental problems. At first, many of the ways of treating these problems undoubtedly came through trial and error, using various plants and other methods derived from observation of how animals reacted to and treated illnesses and injuries. Over time, individuals within family and tribal groups became more skilled at helping the sick and injured, and some of these became responsible for carrying out healing ceremonies, religious rituals, and other rites designed to ensure the safety and health of their communities.

## **CULTURE:**

A group of belief systems, norms and values by people.

**Acculturation:** Cultural modification or change that results when one cultural group adopts traits of a dominant society, cultural development or change through borrowing.

**Assimilation:** The minority population reduces or loses completely its identifying cultural characteristics and blends into the host society.

Two types of culture:

### **Material culture:**

#### **Artifacts:**

- The built environment
- A human- made object which gives information about the culture of its creator (contents of house and shops) and users.
- Physically visible things (musical instruments, furniture, tools, buildings)

### **Non- material culture:**

#### **Mentifacts and sociofacts:**

- Oral traditions, folk songs, stories, philosophies
- Include beliefs, practices, aesthetics and values of group of people.

**Mentifacts:** Ideas and beliefs of a culture. Eg: religion, language or law.

**Sociofacts:** The social structures of a culture, such as tribes or families.

## **FOLK CULTURE**

Cultural traits such as dress modes, dwellings, traditions and institutions of usually small, homogeneous, traditional communities.

### **Local culture:**

A group of people in a particular place

- See themselves as a collective or community
- Shares experiences, customs and traits
- In order to claim uniqueness and to distinguish themselves from others

They are sustained through customs

- Simon Harrison - 2 goals
  - a. keep other cultures out
  - b. keep their culture in
- Must avoid cultural appropriation (the process by which other cultures adapt and use them for their own benefits).

Example: Hasidic jews

1. Ethnic neighbourhoods
2. Pious
3. Distinctive clothes
4. Speak Yiddish
5. Do not watch TV but will listen to radio
6. Other urban local culture. Eg: Italian neighbourhoods, China towns, Mexican, Russian, Polish.

Influence of physical environment on culture:

- Customs are influenced by climate, soil and vegetation.
- Particularly responsive to environment because low level of technology and agricultural economy.

Two necessities of life:

- Food and shelter
- Shows the influence of cultural values and the environment on the development of unique folk culture.

### **Food preferences:**

- Derived from the environment
- Adapt food preferences to environmental conditions
- Role of terror (effects of the environment on a particular food item)

### **Music:**

American folk music began as transplants of old world songs

#### ***Northern song:***

- Featured unaccompanied solo singing in clear hard tones
- Featured fiddle or fife - and - drum
- Southern, backwoods and appalachian song
- Featured unaccompanied high pitch and nasal solo singing
- Marked by moral and emotional conflict
- Roots of country music

#### ***Western song:***

- Factual, narrative songs
- Themes of natural beauty, personal valour and feminine purity
- Some songs reworked as lumber jack ballads.

### **Folk religion:**

Folk religion is any ethnic or cultural religious practice that falls outside the doctrine of organized religion. Grounded on popular beliefs and sometimes called popular or vernacular religion, the term refers to the way in which people experience and practice religion in their daily lives.

### **Key Takeaways**

1. Folk religion includes religious practices and beliefs shared by an ethnic or cultural group.

2. Although its practice can be influenced by organized religious doctrines, it does not follow externally prescribed axioms. Folk religion also lacks the organizational structure of mainstream religions and its practice is often limited geographically.

3. Folk religion has no sacred text or theological doctrine. It is concerned with the everyday understanding of spirituality rather than with rites and rituals.

4. Folklore, as opposed to folk religion, is a collection of cultural beliefs passed down through generations.

5. Folk religion is usually followed by those who do not claim any religious doctrine via baptism, confession, daily prayer, reverence, or church attendance. Folk religions can absorb elements of liturgically prescribed religions, as is the case for folk Christianity, folk Islam, and folk Hindu, but they can also exist entirely independently, like Vietnamese Dao Mau and many indigenous faiths.

### **Origins and Key Characteristics:**

The term “folk religion” is relatively new, dating back only to 1901, when a Lutheran theologian and pastor, Paul Drews, penned the German *Religiöse Volkskunde*, or folk religion. Drew sought to define the experience of the common “folk” or peasantry in order to educate pastors about the kinds of Christian faith they would experience when they left the seminary.

The concept of folk religion, however, predates Drew’s definition. During the 18th century, Christian missionaries encountered people in rural areas engaged in Christianity laced with superstition, including sermons given by members of the clergy. This discovery sparked outrage within the clerical community, which was expressed through the written record that now illustrates the history of folk religion.

This body of literature culminated in the early 20th century, outlining anomalous religious practices and especially noting the prevalence of folk religion within Catholic communities. There was a fine line, for example, between the veneration and the worship of saints. The ethnically Yoruba people, brought to Cuba from West Africa as slaves, shielded traditional

deities, called Orichás, by renaming them as Roman Catholic saints. Over time, the worship of Orichás and saints combined into the folk religion Santería.

The rise of Pentecostal church during the 20th century intertwined traditional religious practices, like prayer and church attendance, with religious folk traditions, such as spiritual healing through prayer. Pentecostalism is now the fastest growing religion in the United States.

Folk religion is the collection of religious practices that fall outside the doctrine of organized religion, and these practices can be culturally or ethnically based. For example, over 30 percent of Han Chinese people follow Shenism, or Chinese folk religion. Shenism is most closely related to Taoism, but it also features blended elements of Confucianism, Chinese mythological deities, and Buddhist beliefs about karma.

Unlike prescribed liturgical practice, folk religion has no sacred text or theological doctrine. It is concerned more with the everyday understanding of spirituality than with rites and rituals. However, determining exactly what constitutes organized religious practice as opposed to folk religion is difficult, if not impossible. Some, for example, including the Vatican as of 2017, would claim that the sacred nature of saintly body parts is a result of folk religion, while others would define it as a closer relationship to God.

### **Folklore and Electronic Technology:**

Folklore, both oral and written, has served a social psychological function throughout much of man's history, and it clearly continues to predominate today with the number of urban myths still circulating through the public. Some folklorists have argued that technology tends to eliminate certain types of folklore, but computers and the Internet in general have also proved to be a fertile ground for the spread and development of folklore. Computer mediated channels, such as Web pages and electronic mail have aided in the rapid transmission of specific types of folklore, especially urban myths (also called urban legends or contemporary legends by some folklorists) and chain letters. In some cases, the computer and Internet itself have themselves provided the stuff of which folklore is made.

To begin our exploration of folklore on the Internet, we should first define the specific types of folklore with which we are dealing. Folklore in a broad, academic sense is a "traditional"

shared story which possesses two qualities: it has been repeated by individuals and has undergone variations over time (Dundes, Pagter, 1987). Other characteristics such as the manner of transmission with some scholars leaning towards folklore as a primarily orally transmitted phenomenon (Dundes, Pagter, 1992) and the changing definition of who exactly the "folk" are, limit the likelihood of a universally accepted definition of folklore among academics. For our purposes, folklore will be defined as a shared story which has been repeated and has undergone variations through its existence. The "folk" who compose and share these stories will be defined in the same manner Dundes and Pagter identify "folk," that is, "any group whatsoever that shares at least one common factor" (1992).

There are three generally accepted ways to approach and analyze a piece of folklore among scholars and teachers, according to Danzer and Newman (1992). The first manner takes a literary perspective and deals mainly with the content and structure of the story. The second has an anthropological approach where the socioeconomic, historical, geographical and/or societal contexts in which the stories lay are taken into consideration. The third approach, the behavioral or group psychological approach, concentrates on the purpose of the source in creating or spreading folklore while looking at the group and individual's behavior in relation to that purpose (Danzer and Newman, 1992).



**SATHYABAMA**

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by AICTE

[www.sathyabama.ac.in](http://www.sathyabama.ac.in)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608 – UNIT IV**

**SATHYABAMA**  
**INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608**  
**Course Materials**

**UNIT IV – Folk forms from the world**

Folk Tales – Folk Songs (Translated Texts) – Folk Riddle – Folk Proverbs

**Folk Tales**

Asia is the world's largest continent. A place with unique cultural heritage, Asia is home to more than 3.8 billion people, making it the most populous continent on Earth. Eventoday people around Asia hold festivals celebrating the deeds of heroes and animals from ancient folklore.

The collection of folktales from Asia consists of fourteen books with 353 stories: 55 Arabic folktales, 104 Chinese folktales, 69 Indian folktales, 69 Japanese folktales and 61 Filipino folktales.

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

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

**Hitopadesha Tales**

The Hitopadesha is a remarkable compilation of short stories. Composed by Narayana Pandit, Hitopadesha had its origin around a thousand years ago. In Indian Literature, the Hitopadesha is regarded more or less similar to the Panchatantra. In the vein of Panchatantra, the Hitopadesha was also written in Sanskrit and following the pattern of prose and verse. Hitopadesha tales are written in reader-friendly way, which also contributed to the success of this best seller after 'Bhagwad Gita' in India. Since its origin, Hitopadesha has been translated into numerous languages to benefit the readers all over the world.

**Jataka Tales**

In 300 B.C, the Jataka Tales were written for the mankind to gain knowledge and



morality. Ever since, Jataka tales have become storybooks that are both enjoyable as well as knowledgeable. Originally written in Pali language, Jataka Buddhist tales have been translated in different languages around the world. The luminous fables of 'Jataka' are intended to impart values of self-sacrifice, morality, honesty and other informative values to people.

### **Panchatantra Tales**

The Panchatantra is a legendary collection of short stories from India. Originally composed in the 2nd century B.C, Panchatantra is believed to be written by Vishnu Sharma along with many other scholars. The purpose behind the composition was to implant moral values and governing skills in the young sons of the king. The ancient Sanskrit text boasts of various animal stories in verse and prose. During all these centuries, many authors and publishers worked hard to make these fables accessible and readable by a layman. The grand assortment has extraordinary tales that are liked, perhaps even loved by people of every age group.

### **FAMOUS FOLK TALES OF INDIA**

#### **Baital Pachisi**

[Baital Pachisi](#) is believed to be one of the oldest vampire stories from India. King Vikram once promised a tantric sorcerer that he'd capture a baital (a spirit with vampire like qualities) and bring it to him. But every time Vikram caught the baital, the spirit would escape by posing a riddle. The deal between the two was that if at the end of every puzzle, Vikram was unable to answer the question correctly, the spirit would willingly be taken prisoner. If Vikram knew the answer but still stayed silent, his head would explode into a thousand pieces, and if the king answered correctly, the baital was free to get away.

This cycle continued 24 times as Vikram, being a wise man, could solve every riddle, which mostly concerned philosophical questions about life. Finally, Vikram was unable to answer the 25th question and the baital kept his promise of being taken captive.

On the way to the tantric's, the spirit revealed that he was actually a prince. He also said that it was the sorcerer's plan all along to sacrifice the baital's soul so that he could attain immortality, and that Vikram too would be killed in the process. The spirit advised the king on how to outwit the tantric and save both their lives. After Vikram assassinated the evil sorcerer, the baital cleansed him of all his sins, and he also vowed to come to his aid whenever needed.

### **The Wedding of the Mouse**

Once a sage was bathing in a river when a hawk dropped a mouse it was holding in its claws right onto his hands. Afraid that the hawk would pounce on the mouse if he left it alone, the sage transformed the small animal into a beautiful baby girl and took her home to his wife. Since the couple did not have a child of their own, they adopted the baby, thinking her to be a blessing from god. When the girl reached a marriageable age, the sage and his wife decided to find the best husband for their daughter. So the proud father took his daughter to [the Sun God](#). However, the girl refused to marry him. Similarly, the sage met with the King of Cloud, the Lord of Winds and the Lord of Mountains. But the daughter dismissed all of them, despite their mighty powers. Finally the Lord of Mountains suggested that the King of Mice was far superior to him, since the latter could bore hills all over him. When the sage's daughter met the King of Mice, she immediately agreed to the union. Then the father transformed his daughter back to a female mouse and the happy couple got married. This story is from Panchatantra, a collection of fables from ancient India written in Sanskrit. The moral of the story is that our innate nature can never change, despite external appearances.

### **Sulasa and Sattuka**

The story of Sulasa and Sattuka is from [the famous Jatakatales](#), a lengthy work of literature that talks about Gautama Buddha's previous births.

Once there lived a beautiful prostitute named Sulasa. One day, she saw a group of soldiers dragging a man towards the place of execution, and instantly fell in love with him. That man was the feared robber Sattuka. Sulasa hurriedly sent a thousand gold pieces to the chief constable in exchange for Sattuka's freedom. She then married him and promised to give up her old life. After a blissful few months of marriage, Sattuka realised that he wasn't the type to be tied down to a single place or person.

He decided to kill his wife, steal all her ornaments and flee town.

The next day he lied to Sulasa, saying that he had promised a deity on top of a mountain that he'd make offerings if he managed to escape execution. He then made Sulasa put on all her ornaments out of respect to the deity, and took her to the mountain top. When they reached the summit, he revealed his evil plan. Sulasa was shocked but she was quick to think on her feet as well. She told Sattuka that she wanted to pay obeisance to her husband from all four sides for the very last time.

She knelt in front of him, then on the left and right sides, but when she stepped behind him she took hold of Sattuka and threw him over a cliff. Seeing this, the deity who lived on the mountain said:

‘Wisdom at times is not confined to men / A woman can chew wisdom now and then.

/Wisdomattimesisnotconfinedtomen/Womenarequickincounselnowand then.’

### **Between Two Wives**

A middle-aged man had two wives, one about the same age as him and the other much younger. Since the wives quarreled a lot, the man built two houses for each of them in different parts of town. They came to a mutual agreement that the man would stay with each of them on alternate days. Whenever he stayed with the younger wife, she plucked out his grey hair, as she wanted her husband to look younger. When he stayed with his first wife, she plucked out all his dark hair, as she didn’t want him to look any younger than herself. As a result, the poor man ended up without a single hair on his head.

### **The Mongoose and the Farmer’s Wife**

One day a farmer and his wife were blessed with a son. They decided to get a mongoose as a companion for him. A few months later, the couple had to go out, leaving their son at home. While the wife was worried about leaving the baby alone, the farmer assured her that the mongoose would look after him while they were away. The farmer’s wife returned earlier than her husband and found that the mongoose’s mouth was stained with blood. She immediately accused the animal of killing her child, and in a fit of rage threw a heavy box at the mongoose. She then rushed in to check on her son, but what she found was a dead snake lying in the room while her baby was safe and sound. Seeing this, the farmer’s wife realised that the mongoose had actually saved her son’s life. Realising her mistake, she went out to see if the animal was all right, but it was too late and the mongoose had breathed its last. She was absolutely heartbroken and reproached herself for her actions.

This is another Panchatantra tale, and the story is often told to children to teach them how acting in haste can have dire consequences.

<https://fairytalez.com/region/indian/>

## **FOLK SONGS**

### **Bihugeet – Assam**

They have the sweetest melodies and heart touching lyrics of the daily life. Their songs talk about life in the farmland, the picturesque rural Assam, their dreams, aspirations and of course, love. Bihugeet is generally associated with the Bihu dance, performed by group of young girls and boys, dressed in their traditional attire, holding each other and swaying in unison. Bihu beats are generally very groovy but in a very tranquil, unwinding manner. Makes you move your body even before you know it.

### **Lavani – Maharashtra**

The folk music from the western parts of the country essentially dance music played general to the foot tapping beats of the dholki. The songs are generally sung by women, and although the style is folk, there are a lot of classical elements which makes it all the more interesting. Lavani songs are often used in theatrical performances with erotic or socio- politically charged lyrics. Over the years, the music has also had its influence over Indian pop music.

### **Baul – Bengal**

Baul is a word that is derived from the Sanskrit word, Batul that means divine inspired insanity. The lyrics are mostly full of philosophical metaphors while the melodies resonate through the open fields of rural Bengal, ebbing into the horizon. With instruments such as Khamak, Ektara and Dotara, the Bauls, inspired by Hinduism as well as Sufism, sing their songs as they travel for a philosophical enlightenment.

### **Naatupura Paatu – Tamil Nadu**

A very interesting style of folk music, originating in Tamil Nadu, Naatapura Paatu is also played in parts of Rajasthan. The music consists of Gamathisai, which is the folk music of the village and Gana, the city folk music.

The songs are generally accompanied by traditional drums and Shehnai and they're often accompanied by traditional dance performance.

### **Various traditional folk of Punjab**

The most popular folk music of India that has taken Bollywood by storm, and has even made it international. As you look past the commercial aspects, Punjabi is one of the most lively styles with effervescent, contagious energy that travels fast and blind but there's a lot more to it than just Bhangra.

Folk romances of Punjab simply stir your heart, especially the ones with the

narrative of Jugni, the innocent female butterfly who observes various aspects of life. **Zeliang – Nagaland**

An incredible primitive style of music, that talks about the history of Nagaland as well as romance in the lives of Zeliang tribe, the music has a primal essence that you instinctively relate to. Their lyrics range from, romance, stories of their ancestors to songs of harvest. The music is generally performed in groups and dance and dialogues in between.

### **Koli – Maharashtra**

This is the song of the fishermen. The songs talk about their life at sea, fishing. Koli music is dance based and hence, the music is essentially associated with their distinctive dance form. They're mostly loud, lively and fast paced.

As the music is generally accompanied by dance, the moves often include the sway of hands as if rowing with an oar, signifying their life as fishermen.

### **Bhatiali – Bengal**

As Koli is for the fishermen of Maharashtra, Bhatiali is for the boatmen of Bengal. However, the lyrics and style of music is different and so is the philosophy. The subject matter of the music deals with Prakriti-tatva or the matters of nature and the music is often restrained with flowing melodies.

The songs often leave you melancholic as they describe deep realizations of life by the boatmen during their lonely journeys, away from home.

### **Maand – Rajasthan**

Although a traditional folk singing style in Rajasthan, Maand is also recognized in the classical cycle. Quite interestingly, the soulful music with its expressive scales of the Sarangee, and the lyrics talking about the life in Rajasthan in their very own nuances, is neither regarded fully classical nor folk.

However, the music is a blessing for any lover of art and is one of the most enriched folk styles of the country.

### **Kajari – Bihar and Uttar Pradesh**

Another style of folk music with classical influences, Kajari is believed to have originated in Mirzapur. The music is known to be moony, melancholic, sung by women during long, lonely days of monsoon when their husbands have been away for too long. Legend has it that a young woman, Kajal, missed her husband so much during the monsoons that she cried at the feet of God and her cries, eventually formed into Kajari.

## **DulpodGoa**

Among various folk genres of Goa, Dulpod is probably the genre that expresses the true Goanese essence. The music carries the perfect sense of congruence between Indian and western culture and it is rhythmic, mostly anonymous and talks about the day to day lives of the Goanese people.

Generally, the Dulpod songs are composed on a six by eight count of the beat which makes the cadence refreshingly uplifting.

## **Introduction to Proverb, Riddle and Charm:**

Three of the shorter forms of folk literature—proverbs, riddles, and charms—are not confined to oral expression but have appeared in written literature for a very long time. The proverb that expresses in terse form a statement embodying observations about the nature of life or about wise or unwise conduct may be so much an oral tradition as to serve in some preliterate societies as a sanction for decisions and may even be employed as lawyers employ court precedents. In literature it dominates certain books of the Old Testament and is found even earlier in Sumerian writings. There has been a continual give and take between oral and written proverbs so that the history of each item demands a special investigation.

While the proverb makes a clear and distinct statement, the purpose of the riddle is usually to deceive the listener about its meaning. A description is given and then the answer is demanded as to what has been meant. Among examples in literature are the riddle of the sphinx in Sophocles and the Anglo-Saxon riddles, based on earlier Latin forms. In oral literature the riddle may be part of a contest of wits. But even if the answer is known, the listeners enjoy hearing them over and over. In Western culture the riddle is especially cultivated by children. Charms, whether for producing magic effects or for divining the future, also exist in folk literature as well as in the well-known Anglo-Saxon written form. The study of these extends over all parts of the world and back to the earliest records.

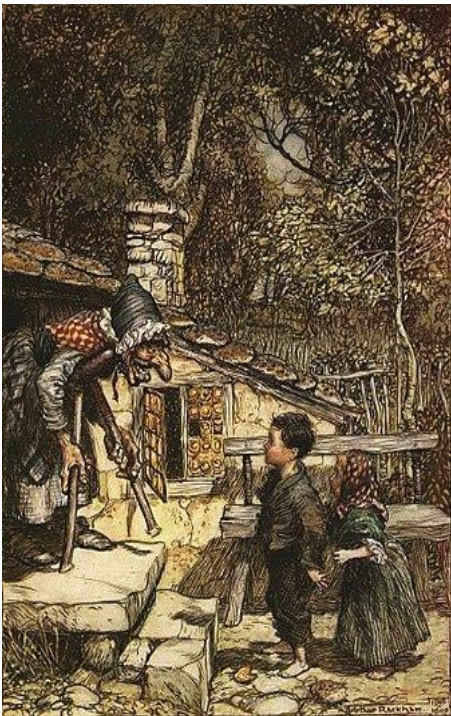
## **Riddle:**

A riddle is a statement or question or phrase having a double or veiled meaning, put forth as a puzzle to be solved. Riddles are of two types: enigmas, which are problems generally expressed in metaphorical or allegorical language that require ingenuity and careful thinking for their solution, and conundra, which are questions relying for their effects on punning in either the question or the answer.

## **Folk Riddles:**

Every culture and group of people have their own folklore. Folklore is stories that are passed on from generation to generation through spoken language. For this reason folklore is the oldest form of history we have. It was also very useful before the invention of written language, allowing parents and grandparents to pass their knowledge on to their children in a memorable way. One common feature in folklore that exists in almost every society is the presence of riddles; many popular folktales contain riddles that are important to the story, and in turn, important to the societies that told them.

Folklore uses riddles for a variety of reasons such as helping characters learn a lesson and for purely entertainment value. One great example of folk tales using riddles comes from the story entitle "The Riddle", tale number 22 of the Brothers Grimm collection. This is the story of a



prince who goes on a journey with his servant and ends up at a witch's house.

While there, his horse is accidentally poisoned. His horse in turn poisons the bird who eats it. The prince plans to later eat the bird but it ends up getting eaten by thieves who would have otherwise robbed them. Finally he arrives at a princess who he tells he will marry as long as she can answer his riddle:

**What slew none, and yet slew twelve?**

Of course the princess can't answer this so she sends her maid to spy on the prince in his sleep two nights in a row. But both times it is his servant as a decoy who rips her robes off. The third night the princess comes herself and the prince is in his bed. He reveals to her the answer but he also takes her robe. The next day she knows the riddle, but she has cheated so she must marry him. In this particular folklore, riddles are used to promote the moral of the story: You must account for your wrongdoings.

Another great example of folklore and riddles comes from the bible. In the bible the Queen of Sheba visits King Solomon and wants to test his wisdom, so she asks him some 'hard questions.' There is some legend and folklore that describes what she asks him:

Whenever there is a strong gale, this thing is always at the forefront. It makes a great and bitter shout, and bows down its head as a bulrush. It is a thing lauded by the rich and wealthy, yet deplored by the poor; a thing of praise to the dead, yet strongly detested by the living. It is the happiness of birds, yet the grief of all fishes. What is it?

The king answers correctly with "Flax linen!" In this folklore riddles are used to prove one's intelligence, namely, King Solomon.

The number of riddles that can be found in folklore is numerous, riddles themselves are even considered riddles by themselves. They are a great way to create metaphors, convey a message, and prove intelligence.

### **Folk Proverb:**

**Proverb**, succinct and pithy saying in general use, expressing commonly held ideas and beliefs. Proverbs are part of every spoken language and are related to such other forms of folk literature as riddles and fables that have originated in oral tradition. Comparisons of proverbs found in various parts of the world show that the same kernel of wisdom may be gleaned under different cultural conditions and languages. The biblical proverb "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," for example, has an equivalent among the Nandi of East Africa: "A goat's hide buys a goat's hide, and a gourd, a gourd." Both form part of codes of behaviour and exemplify the proverb's use for the transmission of tribal wisdom and rules of conduct. Often, the same proverb may be found in many variants. In Europe this may result from the international currency of Latin proverbs in the Middle Ages. The proverb known in English as "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush" originated in medieval Latin, and variants of it are found in Romanian, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, German, and Icelandic. Many biblical proverbs have parallels in ancient Greece. "A soft answer turneth away wrath" was known to Aeschylus as well as to Solomon, and "Physician, heal thyself" (Luke 4:23) was also known to the Greeks.

Certain stylistic similarities have been found in proverbs from the same part of the world. Middle Eastern proverbs, for instance, make frequent use of hyperbole and colourful pictorial forms of expression. Typical is the proverbial Egyptian description of a lucky man: "Fling him in the Nile and he will come up with a fish in his mouth." Classical Latin proverbs are typically pithy and terse (e.g., *Praemonitus, praemunitis*; "forewarned is forearmed"). Many languages use rhyme, alliteration, and wordplay in their proverbs, as in the Scots "Many a mickle makes



a muckle” (“Many small things make one big thing”). Folk proverbs are commonly illustrated with homely imagery—household objects, farm animals and pets, and the events of daily life. Proverbs come from many sources, most of them anonymous and all of them difficult to trace. Their first appearance in literary form is often an adaptation of an oral saying. Abraham Lincoln is said to have invented the saying about not swapping horses in the middle of the river, but he may only have used a proverb already current. Popular usage sometimes creates new proverbs from old ones; e.g., the biblical proverb, “The love of money is the root of all evil” has become “Money is the root of all evil.” Many still-current proverbs refer to obsolete customs. The common “If the cap fits, wear it,” for instance, refers to the medieval fool’s cap. Proverbs sometimes embody superstitions (“Marry in May, repent alway”), weather lore (“Rain before seven, fine before eleven”), or medical advice (“Early to bed, early to rise, / Makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise”).

Most literate societies have valued their proverbs and collected them for posterity. There are ancient Egyptian collections dating from as early as 2500 BC. Sumerian inscriptions give grammatical rules in proverbial form. Proverbs were used in ancient China for ethical instruction, and the Vedic writings of India used them to expound philosophical ideas. The biblical book of Proverbs, traditionally associated with Solomon, actually includes sayings from earlier compilations.

One of the earliest English proverb collections is the so-called *Proverbs of Alfred* (c. 1150–80), containing religious and moral precepts. The use of proverbs in monasteries to teach novices Latin, in schools of rhetoric, and in sermons, homilies, and didactic works made them widely known and led to their preservation in manuscripts.

The use of proverbs in literature and oratory was at its height in England in the 16th and 17th centuries. John Heywood wrote a dialogue in proverbs (1546; later enlarged) and Michael Drayton a sonnet; and in the 16th century a speech in proverbs was made in the House of Commons.

In North America the best-known use of proverbs is probably in *Poor Richard’s*, an almanac published annually between 1732 and 1757 by Benjamin Franklin. Many of Poor Richard’s sayings were traditional European proverbs reworked by Franklin and given an American context when appropriate. The study of folklore in the 20th century brought renewed interest in the proverb as a reflection of folk culture.



**SATHYABAMA**

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

Accredited "A" Grade by NAAC | 12B Status by UGC | Approved by AICTE

[www.sathyabama.ac.in](http://www.sathyabama.ac.in)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608 – UNIT V**

**SATHYABAMA**  
**INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND**  
**TECHNOLOGY**  
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)

**FOLK LITERATURE – SHS1608**  
**Course Materials**

**UNIT - 5 Current Trends in Folk Literature**

Post Colonialism and Post Modernism Concepts - Feminism Gender Concepts - Gender and Society

**CURRENT TRENDS IN FOLK LITERATURE**

Folk literature is a part and parcel of the language and culture of any society. Folk literature, also called folklore or oral tradition, is the lore (traditional knowledge and beliefs) of cultures having no written language. It is transmitted by word of mouth and consists, as does written literature, of both prose and verse narratives, poems and songs, myths, dramas, rituals, proverbs, riddles, and the like. Nearly all known peoples, now or in the past, have produced it.

Folk literature is studied for its intrinsic merit and for enjoyment, more as an independent literary genre, but using these materials as an integral part of our educational and socialization process is conspicuous by its absence. The stories that are included in elementary school textbooks years ago continue to be repeated, even with newer discoveries of folklore materials. These may be used to imbibe values, style of language, and many other important learning items in the minds of learners. India is a country with a tremendous cultural diversity. Each culture has its own knowledge system. Since Independence, collection, preservation, analysis, and study of folk literature have received a lot of attention in all the major languages of India.

However, use of materials from folk literature for purposes of instruction at various levels of education is rather minimal. The three models of education, non-formal, formal, and informal that go from teaching literacy to literature and other subjects, can make use of folk literature as a powerful educational tool. This paper focuses on the system of knowledge construction embedded into its socio-cultural context. Here is an attempt to recognize the pedagogical potential folk literature offers for creative language curriculum, rhetoric, history, socialization, civics, and related subjects. As per the Encyclopedia Britannica, "Of the origins of folk literature, as of the origins of human language, there is no way of knowing. None of the literature available today is primitive in any sense, and only the present-day results can be observed of practices extending over many thousands of years. Speculations therefore can only concern such human needs as may give rise to oral literature, not to its ultimate origin." Need and Relevance.

Folk literature includes all the myths, legends, epics, fables, and folktales passed down by word of mouth through the generations. The authors of traditional literature are usually unknown or unidentifiable. . These stories have endured because they are entertaining, they embody the culture's belief system, and they contain fundamental human truths by which people have lived for centuries. Knowing the characters and situations of folk literature is part of being culturally literate. . Folk literature, regardless of its place of

origin, seems clearly to have arisen to meet a variety of human needs: 1. The need to explain the mysteries of the natural world 2. The need to articulate our fears and dreams 3. The need to impose order on the apparent random, even chaotic, nature of life.

4. The need to entertain ourselves and each other. Their brevity, action, easily understandable characters, recurring features, fantastic elements, and happy endings particularly appeal to children between the ages of three and eight. Folk literature can help children begin to develop a sense of morality. It helps children to sort out good and evil in the world and to identify with the good. The beginnings of written literature in Sumer and Egypt 5,000 or 6,000 years ago took place in a world that knew only folk literature. During the millennia, written literature has been surrounded and sometimes all but overwhelmed by the humbler activity of the unlettered. All societies have produced some men and women of great natural endowment—shamans, priests, rulers, and warriors—and from them have come the greatest stimulus toward producing and listening to myths, tales, and songs. To these the common man has listened to such effect that sometimes he himself has become a bard. Not everywhere has the oral literature impinged so directly on the written as in the works of Homer, which almost presents a transition from the preliterate to the literate world. But many folktales have found their place in literature. The medieval romances, especially the Breton lays, drew freely on these folk sources, sometimes directly.

As the Middle Ages lead into the Renaissance, the influence of folk literature on the work of writers increases in importance, so that it is sometimes difficult to draw a sharp line of distinction between them. In literary forms such as the fabliau, many anecdotes may have come ultimately from tales current among unlettered storytellers, but these have usually been reworked by writers, some of them belonging in the main stream of literature, like Boccaccio or Chaucer. Only later, in the 16th and 17th centuries, in such works as those of Gianfrancesco Straparola and Giambattista Basile, did writers go directly to folk literature itself for much of their material. Indian Context: India occupies a specific place in the history of World Folklore. The marvelous tales from the Indian subcontinent have contributed in shaping the theoretical growth of folkloristics itself. For example, Max Müller's works on Indian Myths and

Theodore Reif's translation of the world famous 'Panchatantra' gave rise to the theory of Indian origin of the fairy tale. The vast narrative material existing in the subcontinent has the unique fortune of possessing the oldest narrative traditions in the world. Besides the 'Rigveda', the Ramayana, the Mahabharat, the Puranas and the Upanishads, have all claims on being called an encyclopedia of Indian religion and mythology. Narayan Pandit's 'Itihasa', Gunadhy's 'Brihatkatha', Somdeva's 'Kathasaritsagar', Sirdasa's 'Vetal Panchavimashiti', and other works such as 'Sukhasaptadi', 'Jatakas' are the best examples. Historical Perspectives: From the linguistic point of view, the Indian subcontinent has a very rich cultural diversity. All the four major languages (Indo-European, Dravidian, Tibeto-Burman and Austroasiatic) are spoken here.

This linguistic diversity is reflected in cultural diversity of equal magnitude. Alexander's (327 B.C.) invasion resulted in the establishment of the first Indian Empire under great kings like Chandragupta Maurya and Ashoka. In medieval Indian literature the earliest works in many of the languages were sectarian, designed to advance or to celebrate some unorthodox regional belief. Examples are the Caryapadas in Bengali, Tantric verses of the 12th century, and the Lilacaritra (circa 1280), in Marathi. In Kannada (Kanarese) from the 10th century, and later in Gujarati from the 13th century, the first truly indigenous works are Jain romances; ostensibly the lives of Jain saints, these are actually popular tales based on Sanskrit and Pali themes. Another example is from Rajasthan, which addresses the bardic tales of chivalry and heroic resistance to the first Muslim invasions - such as the

12th-century epic poem Prithiraja-raso by Chand Bardai of Lahore. Most important of all, for later Indian literature, were the first traces in the vernacular languages of the northern Indian cults of Krishna and of Kṛṣṇa. Included are the 12th-century poems by Jaydev, called the Gitugovinda (The Cowherd's Song); and about 1400, a group of religious love poems written in Maithili (eastern Hindi of Bihar) by the poet Vidyapati were a seminal influence on the cult of Radha-Krishna in Bengal. The Bhakti Tradition The full flowering of the Radha-Krishna cult, under the Hindu mystics Chaitanya in Bengal and Vallabhacharya at Mathura, involved bhakti (a personal devotion to a god).

The earlier traces of this attitude are found in the work of the Tamil Alvars (mystics who wrote ecstatic hymns to Vishnu between the 7th and 10th centuries). At a later surge of bhakti flooded every channel of Indian intellectual and religious life. Bhakti was also addressed to Rama (an avatar of Vishnu), most notably in the Avadhi (eastern Hindi) works of Tulsī Das; his Ramcharitmanas (Lake of the Acts of Rama, 1574-77; trans. 1952) has become the authoritative. The early gurus or founders of the Sikh religion, especially Nanak and Arjun, composed bhakti hymns to their concepts of deity. These are the first written documents in Punjabi (Panjabi) and form part of the Adi Granth (First, or Original, Book), the sacred scripture of the Sikhs, which was first compiled by Arjun in 1604. In the 16th century, the Rajaasthani princess and poet Mira Bai addressed her bhakti lyric verse to Krishna, as did the Gujarati poet Narsimh Mehta. Heroes, Villains and in between: Indian folk heroes in Sanskrit epics and history and also in freedom movement are well known to every one. They have found a place in written literature. But in Indian cultural sub-system, Indian folk heroes are most popular. The castes and tribes of India have maintained their diversities of culture through their language and religion and customs. So, in addition to national heroes, regional heroes and local folk and tribal heroes are alive in the collective memory of the people. If, for example we consider the Santals or the Gonds, we find that the Santals have their culture hero "Beer kherwal" and "Bidu Chandan", Gonds have their folk hero "Chital Singh Chatri". Banjara folk hero is "Lakha Banjara" or "Raja Isalu". But not only heroes, the heroines of Indian folklore have also significant contribution in shaping the culture of India. Banjara epics are heroine-centric. These epics reflect the "sati" cult. Oral epics with heroic actions of heroes and heroines produce a "counter texts" as opposed to the written texts.

The younger brother killing his elder brother and becoming a hero is part of an oral epic, which is forbidden in classical epics. Folk heroes are some times deified and are worshipped in the village. There is a thin line of difference between a mythic hero and romantic hero in Indian folklore. In Kalahandi, oral epics are available among the ethnic singers performed in ritual context and social context. Dr Mahendra Mishra, a folklorist has conducted research on oral epics in Kalahandi taking seven ethnic groups. Dr. Chitrasen Pasayat has made an extensive study of different folk and tribal forms of Yatra like Dhanu yatra, Kandhen-budhi yatra, Chudakhai yatra, Sulia yatra, Patkhanda yatra, Budha-dangar yatra, Khandabasa yatra, Chhatar yatra, Sital-sasthi yatra and examined the 'hero characters' of the local deities. Indian oral epics are found wherever there are caste based culture. Prof. Lauri Honko from Turku, Finland with Prof. Vivek Rai and Dr K Chinnapa Gawda have conducted extensive field work and research on Siri Epic and have come out with three volumes on Siri Epic. Similarly Prof. Peter J Claus has done intensive work on Tulu epics. Aditya Mallick on Devnarayan Epic, Pulikondq Subbachary on jambupurana, Dr JD Smith on Pabuji epic are some of the commendable work that have been drawn attention of the wider readership.. The scientific study of Indian folklore was slow to begin: early collectors felt far freer to creatively re-interpret source material, and collected their material with a view to the picturesque rather than the representative.

A. K. Ramanujan's theoretical and aesthetic contributions span several disciplinary areas. Context-sensitivity is a theme that appears not only in Ramanujan's cultural essays, but

also appears in his writing about Indian folklore and classic poetry. In "Where Mirrors are Windows," (1989) and in "Three Hundred Ramayanas" (1991), for example, he discusses the "intertextual" nature of Indian literature, written and oral ... He says, "What is merely suggested in one poem may become central in a 'repetition' or an 'imitation' of it. His essay "Where Mirrors Are Windows: Toward an Anthology of Reflections" (1989), and his commentaries in *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (1967) and *Folktales from India, Oral Tales from Twenty Indian Languages* (1991) are good examples of his work in Indian folklore studies. Rudyard Kipling was interested in folklore, dealing with English folklore in works such as *Puck of Pook Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies*. His experiences in India led him to also create similar works with Indian themes. Kipling spent a great deal of his life in India, and was familiar with the Hindi language. His works such as the two *Jungle Boob* contain a great deal of stories that are written after the manner of traditional folktales. Indian themes also appear in his *Just So Stories*, and many of the characters bear recognisable names from Indian languages. During the same period, Helen Bannerman penned the now notorious Indian-themed tale of *Little Black Sambo*, which represented itself to be an Indian folktale. Post Independence, disciplines and methods from anthropology began to be used in the creation of more in-depth surveys of Indian folklore. Folklorists of India can be broadly divided into three phases. Phase I were the British Administrators who collected the local knowledge and folklore to understand the subjects they want to rule. Next (phase II), were the missionaries who wanted to acquire the language of the people to recreate their religious literature for evangelical purposes. The third phase was the post independent period in the country where many universities, institutes and individuals started studying folklore. The purpose was to search for a national identity through legends, myths, and epics. In course of time; academic institutions and universities in the country started opening departments on folklore in their respective regions, more in south India to maintain their cultural identity and also maintain language and culture. Scholars like Dr Satyendra, Devendra Satyarthi, Krishnadev Upadhyaya, Jhabberchand Meghani, Prafulla Dutta Goswami, Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Kunj Bihari Dash, Chitrasen Pasayat, Sornnath Dhar, Ramgarib Choube, Jagadish Chandra Trigunayan and many more were the pioneer in working on folklore. Of course, the trend was more literary than analytical. It was during 1980s that the central Institute of Indian Languages and the American Institute of Indian Studies started their systemic study on Folklore any after that many western as well as eastern scholars pursued their studies on folklore as a discipline.

The pioneer of the folklorists in contemporary India are Jawaharlal Handoo, Chitrasen Pasayat, Sadhana Naithani, Kishore Bhattacharjee, Anjali Padhi, Kailash Patnaik, VA Vivek Rai, Inte Komal Kothari, Raghavan Payanad, M Ramakrishnan, Nandini Sahu and many more. A trend has emerged of new folklorists, who are committed to understand folklore from an Indian point of view than to see the whole subjects from the western model. Some of them prefer to understand folklore from the folklore provider and consultants who are the creator and consumers of folklore. User of folklore, know what folklore is, since they use folklore with purpose and meaning. But theoreticians see folklore from their theoretical angle. From an ethical point of view, folklorist should learn from the folk to be as practicable as possible and folk should give the hidden meaning of folklore to the folklorists, so that both of their interpretations can help give a new meaning to folklore and explore the possibility of use of folklore in new socio-cultural domain. National Folklore Support Center, Chennai (since the last decade) has created a space for the new scholars who are pursuing the study of folklore.. One important breakthrough in the field of folklore is that it is no more confined to the study in the four walls of academic domain; rather, it has again found its space within and among the folk to get their true meaning.

## POST COLONIALISM AND POST MODERNISM CONCEPTS

As Britain's dominion began to wane, the exploited colonies began to map out a new identity for their own political futures and slowly began to seek their own voices. Two such postcolonial voices appear in Caryl Phillips's **Crossing the River**, and Michael Ondaatje's **In the Skin of a Lion**.

Even though Caryl Phillips was born in St. Kitts in the eastern Caribbean, his parents soon after transported him to England at the age of 3 months. Ondaatje, on the other hand, who was born in Sri Lanka, at the age of nine moved to Britain, where, like Phillips, he received his education. Today, both enjoy a reputation as postcolonial writers. Phillips's novel delves into postcolonial themes, as does Ondaatje's. However, unlike earlier postcolonial writers, both Ondaatje and Caryl Phillips employ postmodernist ideas. So, in this essay, I examine these two postcolonial novels with respect to their own postcolonial dilemmas, simultaneously exploring to what extent the two novels reflect the theories of postmodernism used in the cause of the postcolonialism.

First, why would a postcolonial novel reflect the ideas of postmodernism? Perhaps because the two different movements are not so different in their aims. Roger Berger also notices that a relationship exists between the two when he says:

Postmodernism is simultaneously (or variously) a textual practice (often oppositional, sometimes not), a subcultural style or fashion, a definition of western, postindustrial culture and the emergent or always already dominant global culture. At the same time, postcolonialism is simultaneously (or variously) a geographical site, an existential condition, a political reality, a textual practice, and the emergent or dominant global culture (or counter-culture).

In this passage, Berger mentions that postmodernism and postcolonialism converge in some respective purposes. First, both are a "textual practice." Second, the two movements examine an "emergent or dominant global culture." However, they do differ in that postcolonial novels usually have a geographical nature to them, while expressing an existential condition. Also, both explore the idea of authority or as Berger says, a "dominant global culture," and perhaps this is why there is yet no definite "boundary" drawn between the two movements. However, Richards does attempt to draw a clearer line between the two with respect to the idea of authority. He says that postcolonial writers attempt to "unmask European authority" while postmodernists attempt to unmask authority in general. So it seems that both movements investigate the ideas of "control" in different settings.

One theory of postmodernism stipulates that language is one vehicle by which authority obtains control. And since postcolonial novels explore the implications of European authority on "postcolonials," wasn't it inevitable that postcolonial writers would have been faced with the problem of how language can be manipulated for the purpose of European control. Tiffin recognizes that colonizers use language to control the colonized. She says that the "dialectic of self and other, indigene and exile, language and place, slave and free, which is the matrix of post-European literature is also an essential part of an inherited understanding of the way in which language and power operate **in the world**" (171). Perhaps Tiffin's idea that "language and power operate in the world" together also implies that "power" remains in power by its ability to control public and private language. If so, then an attempt for linguistic control might explain why one postcolonial writer, Salman Rushdie, would write to "conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free" (17).

It is to no surprise that postcolonial writers would use language to deconstruct European identity. This is in fact one method chosen by postcolonial writers to reestablish their own unique identity. Tiffin has also noted that postcolonial writers attempt to deconstruct European identity:

The dis/mantling, de/mystification and unmasking of European authority that has been an essential political and cultural strategy towards decolonisation and the retrieval of creation of an independent identity from the beginning persists as a prime impuse [sic] in all postcolonial literatures. [171]

Tiffin also argues that one struggle the postcolonial writers face in particular is the struggle over the "word." This not only includes non-fiction, but all written language. Her reason is as follows: "the history of postcolonial territories, was, until recently, largely a narrative constructed by the colonizers, its functions, and language(s) in which they are written, operate as a means to cultural control" (173). When the two movements accept the idea that a relationship exists between power and language, for the sake of control, a type of symbiotic relationship develops simultaneously between them. However, one wishes to deconstruct the "center" of authority in general while the other is concerned with the European component.

Even Rushdie admits to the postcolonial writer's desire to reconstruct history through language. He says, "What seems to me to be happening is that those peoples who were once colonized by the language are now rapidly remaking it—they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers" (64). And by remaking the language, the postcolonial writers have associated themselves to one particular theory of postmodernism. That theory, expressed by postmodernism, is the reconstruction of language, and because both non-fiction and fiction are constructed by language, an attempt to reconstruct all literature is in the making too.

Tiffin argues that both postmodernism and postcolonialism share strategies but have different motives:

A number of strategies, such as the move away from realist representation, the refusal of closure, the exposure of the politics of metaphor, the interrogation of forms, the rehabilitation of allegory and the attach on binary structuration of concept and language, are characteristics of both the generally postcolonial and the European postmodern, but they are energised by different theoretical assumptions and by vastly different political motivations. [172]

Tiffin makes an excellent distinction here again between the theories of postcolonialism and postmodernism when she says, "they are energised by different theoretical assumptions (postmodernism) and by vastly different political (postcolonialism) motivations." A postmodernists focuses on aesthetics, and perhaps authority in general, but a postcolonial writer's explores the implications of European authority. If so, then this might explain why postcolonialism is more of a political movement in contrast to a cultural movement, i.e. postmodernism.

Another "intersection" happens between postcolonialism and postmodernism when they both desire to bring the "marginal" to the "center." The "marginal" are those who have been left out of literature in the past or history in general. In **Post Modern Times** Gene Edward Veith claims that postmodernists bring the marginal into the center "by rewriting history in favor of those who have been excluded from power -- women, homosexuals, blacks, Native Americans, and other victims of oppression" (57). And Tiffin suggests the same about postcolonial writers. She says, the postcolonial "writer adopts the positions of



those already written out of, or marginalised by, the western record of historical materialism oppressed or annihilated peoples, [and] women" (176). Cameron Richards recognizes this "intersection" when he says, "Put another way, postcolonialism like postmodernism (and modernism) functions in terms of sexual, racial, class, economic and even stylistic differences, [and are] reducible to the spatial metaphor of a centre-margins opposition" (3). And if we consider Caryl Phillips' **Crossing the River**, the characters in his novel are women, blacks, and are those who are oppressed and marginalised. Furthermore, if we examine the stylistic devices Phillips uses to "bring the marginal to the center" the postmodernist ideas discussed above become evident in his novel too. They are there in fact to reinforce his ideas of postcolonialism, one of them is his attempt to deconstruct the European "traditional" identity.

## **FEMINISM**

Feminist theory encompasses a range of ideas, reflecting the diversity of women worldwide. Feminism counters traditional philosophy with new ways of addressing issues affecting humanity, calling for the replacement of the presiding patriarchal order with a system that emphasizes equal rights, justice, and fairness. Liberal feminists cite women's oppression as rooted in social, political, and legal constraints. Radical libertarian feminists hold that the patriarchal system that oppresses women must be completely eliminated and that women should be free to exercise total sexual and reproductive freedom. Radical cultural feminists urge women to extricate themselves from the institution of compulsory heterosexuality. Marxist-socialist feminists claim it is impossible for anyone, especially women, to achieve true freedom in a class-based society.

Multicultural feminists explain how the idea of 'sameness' could counterintuitively be used as an instrument of oppression rather than liberation. Postmodern feminists challenge Western dualistic thinking. Global feminists stress the universal interests of women worldwide. Ecofeminists focus on the connection among humans to the nonhuman world. Feminist theory has impacted virtually all structures, systems, and disciplines, challenging traditional ontological and epistemological assumptions about human nature as well as 'maleness' and 'femaleness.' Modern feminism, which began 200 years ago, has evolved in three waves. The first wave dealt with suffrage; the second centered on equal access; and the current wave is focusing on global equality.

## **FEMINISM - GENDER CONCEPTS**

The term gender entered sociological discourse as a way of conceptualising male-female differences at the end of the 1960s (Stoller 1968), a product of the rise of the women's liberation movement - feminism's second wave. Since then the value and meaning of the concept has been widely contested amongst feminists, sociologists and other academics. Some feminists have, for instance, argued that attention to gender and gender relations can lead to a denial of women's oppression and 'excludes and silences many women' (Gackson 1992: 31). The category of gender, they contend, is more neutral and academically acceptable than that of woman, for which it often serves as a substitute (see Scott 1986: 1056). Its use depoliticises the feminist project. In the mental health field,

therefore, the need is for studies of women and mental disorder, not of gender and mental disorder.

Similarly the burgeoning work on men and masculinity during the last five to ten years (Hearn 1987; Hearn and Morgan 1990; Segal 1990; Morgan 1992), might equally be taken to require separate studies of men and mental disorder. Furthermore, even those who argue that any adequate analysis must incorporate both women and men, do not agree that gender is the most appropriate concept to employ, some preferring the older concept of sex, rather than the more recent term gender. This chapter explores debates both about the concept of gender and about how gender divisions and gender relations can best be 31 J. Busfield, *Men, Women and Madness* © Joan Busfield 1996 32 Gender, Constructs and Services theorised. I argue that an analysis in terms of gender does offer the most fruitful way of enhancing our understanding of mental disorder in women as well as men, and that such an approach allows, indeed requires, an examination of women's oppression - an examination that can be used to facilitate political action. Gender must be analysed at the level of social structure and material relations as well as of the individual and individual meanings. I begin by examining the concept of gender.

The Concept of Gender Gender, as an analytical category designed to refer to and aid the understanding of the social and cultural origins of male-female differences in personal characteristics and behaviour, was introduced as a challenge to biological determinism. Biological sex was to be contrasted with social 'gender' - the former denoting bodily differences between men and women in the reproductive organs, the latter differences in male and female qualities and behaviour which were held to be a product of social factors and could not be reduced to matters of biology. In British sociology, Ann Oakley's text *Sex, Gender and Society*, first published in 1972, heralded the new linguistic and analytic precision that allowed feminists not only to distinguish the social from the biological when considering male and female behaviour, but also to avoid the old ambiguity in meaning between sex as sexuality and sex as the broader corpus of male-female differences. As a result, the old language of sex roles and sexual divisions was, by the middle of the 1970s, being replaced by the language of gender roles and gender divisions. And instead of an assumption of natural differences between men and women, there was a growing emphasis on the way in which gender differences are socially constructed and vary across time and place. The precise definition of the term gender varies. Stoller in *Sex and Gender* (1968), the book said to have introduced the new terminological contrast, linked gender with notions of masculinity and femininity - that is, the characteristics or qualities regarded as appropriate to men and women

## **Gender terminology**

In order to distinguish biological differences from social/psychological ones and to talk about the latter, feminists appropriated the term 'gender'. Psychologists writing on transsexuality were the first to employ gender terminology in this sense. Until the 1960s, 'gender' was often used to refer to masculine and feminine words, like *le* and *la* in French. However, in order to explain why some people felt that they were 'trapped in the wrong bodies', the psychologist Robert Stoller (1968) began using the terms 'sex' to pick out biological traits and 'gender' to pick out the amount of femininity and masculinity a person exhibited. Although (by and large) a person's sex and gender complemented each other, separating out these terms seemed to make theoretical sense allowing Stoller to explain the phenomenon of transsexuality: transsexuals' sex and gender simply don't

match.

Along with psychologists like Stoller, feminists found it useful to distinguish sex and gender. This enabled them to argue that many differences between women and men were socially produced and, therefore, changeable. Gayle Rubin (for instance) uses the phrase 'sex/gender system' in order to describe "a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention" (1975, 165). Rubin employed this system to articulate that "part of social life which is the locus of the oppression of women" (1975, 159) describing gender as the "socially imposed division of the sexes" (1975, 179). Rubin's thought was that although biological differences are fixed, gender differences are the oppressive results of social interventions that dictate how women and men should behave. Women are oppressed *as women* and "by having to *be* women" (Rubin 1975, 204). However, since gender is social, it is thought to be mutable and alterable by political and social reform that would ultimately bring an end to women's subordination. Feminism should aim to create a "genderless (though not sexless) society, in which one's sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love" (Rubin 1975, 204).

In some earlier interpretations, like Rubin's, sex and gender were thought to complement one another. The slogan 'Gender is the social interpretation of sex' captures this view. Nicholson calls this 'the coat-rack view' of gender: our sexed bodies are like coat racks and "provide the site upon which gender [is] constructed" (1994, 81). Gender conceived of as masculinity and femininity is superimposed upon the 'coat-rack' of sex as each society imposes on sexed bodies their cultural conceptions of how males and females should behave. This socially constructs gender differences – or the amount of femininity/masculinity of a person – upon our sexed bodies. That is, according to this interpretation, all humans are either male or female; their sex is fixed. But cultures interpret sexed bodies differently and project different norms on those bodies thereby creating feminine and masculine persons. Distinguishing sex and gender, however, also enables the two to come apart: they are separable in that one can be sexed male and yet be gendered a woman, or vice versa (Haslanger 2000b; Stoljar 1995).

So, this group of feminist arguments against biological determinism suggested that gender differences result from cultural practices and social expectations. Nowadays it is more common to denote this by saying that gender is socially constructed. This means that genders (women and men) and gendered traits (like being nurturing or ambitious) are the "intended or unintended product[s] of a social practice" (Haslanger 1995, 97). But which social practices construct gender, what social construction is and what being of a certain gender amounts to are major feminist controversies. There is no consensus on these issues. (See the entry on [intersections between analytic and continental feminism](#) for more on different ways to understand gender.)

## **GENDER AND SOCIETY**

### **Gender socialisation**

One way to interpret Beauvoir's claim that one is not born but rather becomes a woman is to take it as a claim about gender socialisation: females become women through a process whereby they acquire feminine traits and learn feminine behaviour. Masculinity and femininity are thought to be products of nurture or how individuals are brought up. They are *causally constructed* (Haslanger 1995, 98): social forces either have a causal role in bringing gendered individuals into existence or (to some substantial sense) shape the way we are *qua* women and men. And the mechanism of construction is social learning. For instance, Kate Millett takes gender differences to have "essentially cultural, rather than

biological bases” that result from differential treatment (1971, 28–9). For her, gender is “the sum total of the parents', the peers', and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression” (Millett 1971, 31). Feminine and masculine gender-norms, however, are problematic in that gendered behaviour conveniently fits with and reinforces women's subordination so that women are socialised into subordinate social roles: they learn to be passive, ignorant, docile, emotional helpmeets for men (Millett 1971, 26). However, since these roles are simply learned, we can create more equal societies by ‘unlearning’ social roles. That is, feminists should aim to diminish the influence of socialisation.

Social learning theorists hold that a huge array of different influences socialise us as women and men. This being the case, it is extremely difficult to counter gender socialisation. For instance, parents often unconsciously treat their female and male children differently. When parents have been asked to describe their 24-hour old infants, they have done so using gender-stereotypic language: boys are describes as strong, alert and coordinated and girls as tiny, soft and delicate. Parents' treatment of their infants further reflects these descriptions whether they are aware of this or not (Renzetti & Curran 1992, 32). Some socialisation is more overt: children are often dressed in gender stereotypical clothes and colours (boys are dressed in blue, girls in pink) and parents tend to buy their children gender stereotypical toys. They also (intentionally or not) tend to reinforce certain ‘appropriate’ behaviours. While the precise form of gender socialization has changed since the onset of second-wave feminism, even today girls are discouraged from playing sports like football or from playing ‘rough and tumble’ games and are more likely than boys to be given dolls or cooking toys to play with; boys are told not to ‘cry like a baby’ and are more likely to be given masculine toys like trucks and guns (for more, see Kimmel 2000, 122–126).<sup>[1]</sup>

According to social learning theorists, children are also influenced by what they observe in the world around them. This, again, makes countering gender socialisation difficult. For one, children's books have portrayed males and females in blatantly stereotypical ways: for instance, males as adventurers and leaders, and females as helpers and followers. One way to address gender stereotyping in children's books has been to portray females in independent roles and males as non-aggressive and nurturing (Renzetti & Curran 1992, 35). Some publishers have attempted an alternative approach by making their characters, for instance, gender-neutral animals or genderless imaginary creatures (like TV's Teletubbies). However, parents reading books with gender-neutral or genderless characters often undermine the publishers' efforts by reading them to their children in ways that depict the characters as either feminine or masculine. According to Renzetti and Curran, parents labelled the overwhelming majority of gender-neutral characters masculine whereas those characters that fit feminine gender stereotypes (for instance, by being helpful and caring) were labelled feminine (1992, 35). Socialising influences like these are still thought to send implicit messages regarding how females and males should act and are expected to act shaping us into feminine and masculine persons.

## **Gender as feminine and masculine personality**

Nancy Chodorow (1978; 1995) has criticised social learning theory as too simplistic to explain gender differences (see also Deaux & Major 1990; Gatens 1996). Instead, she holds that gender is a matter of having feminine and masculine personalities that develop in early infancy as responses to prevalent parenting practices. In particular, gendered personalities develop because women tend to be the primary caretakers of small children. Chodorow holds that because mothers (or other prominent females) tend to care for infants, infant male and female psychic development differs. Crudely put: the mother-daughter relationship differs from the mother-son relationship because mothers are more likely to identify with their daughters than their sons. This unconsciously prompts the

mother to encourage her son to psychologically individuate himself from her thereby prompting him to develop well defined and rigid ego boundaries. However, the mother unconsciously discourages the daughter from individuating herself thereby prompting the daughter to develop flexible and blurry ego boundaries. Childhood gender socialisation further builds on and reinforces these unconsciously developed ego boundaries finally producing feminine and masculine persons (1995, 202–206). This perspective has its roots in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, although Chodorow's approach differs in many ways from Freud's.

Gendered personalities are supposedly manifested in common gender stereotypical behaviour. Take emotional dependency. Women are stereotypically more emotional and emotionally dependent upon others around them, supposedly finding it difficult to distinguish their own interests and wellbeing from the interests and wellbeing of their children and partners. This is said to be because of their blurry and (somewhat) confused ego boundaries: women find it hard to distinguish their own needs from the needs of those around them because they cannot sufficiently individuate themselves from those close to them. By contrast, men are stereotypically emotionally detached, preferring a career where dispassionate and distanced thinking are virtues. These traits are said to result from men's well-defined ego boundaries that enable them to prioritise their own needs and interests sometimes at the expense of others' needs and interests.

Chodorow thinks that these gender differences should and can be changed. Feminine and masculine personalities play a crucial role in women's oppression since they make females overly attentive to the needs of others and males emotionally deficient. In order to correct the situation, both male and female parents should be equally involved in parenting (Chodorow 1995, 214). This would help in ensuring that children develop sufficiently individuated senses of selves without becoming overly detached, which in turn helps to eradicate common gender stereotypical behaviours.

## **Women as a group**

The various critiques of the sex/gender distinction have called into question the viability of the category *women*. Feminism is the movement to end the oppression women as a group face. But, how should the category of women be understood if feminists accept the above arguments that gender construction is not uniform, that a sharp distinction between biological sex and social gender is false or (at least) not useful, and that various features associated with women play a role in what it is to be a woman, none of which are individually necessary and jointly sufficient (like a variety of social roles, positions, behaviours, traits, bodily features and experiences)? Feminists must be able to address cultural and social differences in gender construction if feminism is to be a genuinely inclusive movement and be careful not to posit commonalities that mask important ways in which women *qua* women differ. These concerns (among others) have generated a situation where (as Linda Alcoff puts it) feminists aim to speak and make political demands in the name of women, at the same time rejecting the idea that there is a unified category of women (2006, 152). If feminist critiques of the category *women* are successful, then what (if anything) binds women together, what is it to be a woman, and what kinds of demands can feminists make on behalf of women?

## **Gender nominalism**

### **Gendered social series**

Iris Young argues that unless there is “some sense in which ‘woman’ is the name of a social collective [that feminism represents], there is nothing specific to feminist politics” (1997, 13). In order to make the category *women* intelligible, she argues that women make up a series: a particular kind of social collective “whose members are unified passively by

the objects their actions are oriented around and/or by the objectified results of the material effects of the actions of the other” (Young 1997, 23). A series is distinct from a group in that, whereas members of groups are thought to self-consciously share certain goals, projects, traits and/ or self-conceptions, members of series pursue their own individual ends without necessarily having anything at all in common. Young holds that women are not bound together by a shared feature or experience (or set of features and experiences) since she takes Spelman's particularity argument to have established definitely that no such feature exists (1997, 13; see also: Frye 1996; Heyes 2000). Instead, women's category is unified by certain practico-inert realities or the ways in which women's lives and their actions are oriented around certain objects and everyday realities (Young 1997, 23–4). For example, bus commuters make up a series unified through their individual actions being organised around the same practico-inert objects of the bus and the practice of public transport. Women make up a series unified through women's lives and actions being organised around certain practico-inert objects and realities that position them *as women*.

Young identifies two broad groups of such practico-inert objects and realities. First, phenomena associated with female bodies (physical facts), biological processes that take place in female bodies (menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth) and social rules associated with these biological processes (social rules of menstruation, for instance). Second, gender-coded objects and practices: pronouns, verbal and visual representations of gender, gender-coded artefacts and social spaces, clothes, cosmetics, tools and furniture. So, women make up a series since their lives and actions are organised around female bodies and certain gender-coded objects. Their series is bound together passively and the unity is “not one that arises from the individuals called women” (Young 1997, 32).

Although Young's proposal purports to be a response to Spelman's worries, Stone has questioned whether it is, after all, susceptible to the particularity argument: ultimately, on Young's view, something women as women share (their practico-inert realities) binds them together (Stone 2004).

## **Gender as positionality**

Linda Alcoff holds that feminism faces an identity crisis: the category of women is feminism's starting point, but various critiques about gender have fragmented the category and it is not clear how feminists should understand what it is to be a woman (2006, chapter 5). In response, Alcoff develops an account of gender as *positionality* whereby “gender is, among other things, a position one occupies and from which one can act politically” (2006, 148). In particular, she takes one's social position to foster the development of specifically gendered identities (or self-conceptions): “The very subjectivity (or subjective experience of being a woman) and the very identity of women are constituted by women's position” (Alcoff 2006, 148). Alcoff holds that there is an objective basis for distinguishing individuals on the grounds of (actual or expected) reproductive roles:

*Women and men are differentiated by virtue of their different relationship of possibility to biological reproduction, with biological reproduction referring to conceiving, giving birth, and breast-feeding, involving one's body.* (Alcoff 2006, 172, italics in original)

The thought is that those standardly classified as biologically female, although they may not actually be able to reproduce, will encounter “a different set of practices, expectations, and feelings in regard to reproduction” than those standardly classified as male (Alcoff 2006, 172). Further, this differential relation to the possibility of reproduction is used as the basis for many cultural and social phenomena that position women and men: it can be

the basis of a variety of social segregations, it can engender the development of differential forms of embodiment experienced throughout life, and it can generate a wide variety of affective responses, from pride, delight, shame, guilt, regret, or great relief from having

successfully avoided reproduction. (Alcoff 2006, 172)

Reproduction, then, is an objective basis for distinguishing individuals that takes on a cultural dimension in that it positions women and men differently: depending on the kind of body one has, one's lived experience will differ. And this fosters the construction of gendered social identities: one's role in reproduction helps configure how one is socially positioned and this conditions the development of specifically gendered social identities.

Since women are socially positioned in various different contexts, “there is no gender essence all women share” (Alcoff 2006, 147–8). Nonetheless, Alcoff acknowledges that her account is akin to the original 1960s sex/gender distinction insofar as sex difference (understood in terms of the objective division of reproductive labour) provides the foundation for certain cultural arrangements (the development of a gendered social identity). But, with the benefit of hindsight

we can see that maintaining a distinction between the objective category of sexed identity and the varied and culturally contingent practices of gender does not presume an absolute distinction of the old-fashioned sort between culture and a reified nature. (Alcoff 2006, 175)

That is, her view avoids the implausible claim that sex is exclusively to do with nature and gender with culture. Rather, the distinction on the basis of reproductive possibilities shapes and is shaped by the sorts of cultural and social phenomena (like varieties of social segregation) these possibilities give rise to. For instance, technological interventions can alter sex differences illustrating that this is the case (Alcoff 2006, 175). Women's specifically gendered social identities that are constituted by their context dependent positions, then, provide the starting point for feminist politics.

#### References:

1. The Literature beyond Legends, Tales and Myths, Independently published; Amazon (Sep 2017)
2. Comparative Study of Northeastern Folklore and Modern Literary Works, Notion Press;(Aug 2020)
3. Indian Folk Literature in English Translation, Gullybaba Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.; (Jan 2020)
4. Orality and Folk Literature in the Age of Print Culture, Scientific Book Centre; (Jan 2015)