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MFC - 006
Folklore: Canon, Multimediality, Interdisciplinarity and Social Epistemology

Block

3

FOLKLORE AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

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BLOCK 3 : FOLKLORE AND INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Dear Students,

Welcome to the Block 3 of the Course VI of the M.A. programme in Folklore and Culture Studies (MAFCS). This block is titled as "Folklore and Interdisciplinarity," and it consists of five units, namely, "Folklore: Historical Perspectives," "Folklore and Gender Studies," "Folklore and Anthropology," "Folklore and Subaltern Studies," and "Folklore as Performative and Visual Culture." In this block, you will study the interface of folklore as a discipline with the number of diverse areas thus mentioned. As you will go through these units, you will realise that the development of folklore did not take place in blissful isolation. In fact, it had to negotiate and deal with a number of subjects that were on the rise simultaneous with its own development. You will understand that folklore, along with these other disciplines, forms part of the larger area of engagement called the human sciences, which not only studies patterns of human behaviour but also delves into the ever-changing and ever-evolving natures of interaction between human beings and the natural–cultural habitat he/she is born into. The study of history, gender studies, anthropology, subaltern studies, performance studies, and the like also provides certain windows and perspectives on understanding the dynamics of folk cultures across the diverse geographies of the world. While history provides a temporal range to locate and map the scope of folklores within a particular society or milieu, anthropology situates the investigation *vis-à-vis* human evolution, growth and variation. Furthermore, gender studies focusses upon exposing the discriminatory dynamics between men and women in terms of their respective positions within the society, while subaltern studies provides the space for the articulation of oppressed and silenced voices from the margins of the society. You will surely agree that folklore, being closely associated with the roots of human cultures, has much in common with these disciplines. It is important, therefore, for us to understand and appreciate these multiple interfaces that endow folklore with a truly interdisciplinary dimension. In the course of this block, you will also read about folklore as expressed through performance and visual cultures, how these modes of expressions enrich the oral and textual traditions in cultures, and how they together constitute a larger multilayered and multi-textual field of study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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UNIT 1 FOLKLORE: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Structure

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Learn the meaning of folklore, folkloristics and history,
- Understand the role of history in folkloristic study,
- Learn the historical evolution of folklore as a discipline in India,
- Gain insights into how the people perceive their world in their own way and pass it down to the next generation
- Realise the significance of folkloristic and historical study in non-literate communities.
- Understand the relationship between the historian and folklorist

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A concept of folklore is seen as the discussion between the two or more people face to face which is known to them since the past, i.e., they do not talk about the new thing but the widely known thing which has been passed from the previous generation to them.

The word folklore is made of two words 'folk' and 'lore', was coined by the Englishman William Thoms in 1846. Here,'folk' means a social group that includes two or more

persons with common traits, who express their shared identity through distinctive traditions. 'Lore' comes from old English 'instruction'—it is knowledge and traditions of a particular group, frequently passed along by word of mouth. 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. This includes oral tradition such as tales, proverbs and jokes. They include material culture ranging from traditional building style to handsome toys common to the group. Folklore also includes customary lore, taking actions for folk beliefs, 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. History is the scientific study of past which has evolved from Greek word 'historia', means 'inquiry', i.e., knowledge acquired by investigation.

Folklore refers to the traditional beliefs and stories of a community. This includes folktales, myths, legends, beliefs, practices, superstitions, etc. This highlights that folklore captures a wide span. It can be stated that folklore of a particular group of people is built in accordance with their culture. People make sense of their surrounding world through the usage of folklore. The various superstitions, stories, beliefs all add up to the creation of this cultural heritage, and history is a narration of the events which have happened among mankind, including an account of the rise and fall of nations, as well as of other great changes which have affected the political and social condition of the human race. History is culture. Different cultures shape different histories. Without resort to falsification, historians select different facts and arrange them differently because historians live in a different society governed by different needs. Writers throughout Europe drew liberally as well on story collections from the Near East, such as the pre-eighth century Sanskrit fable book the *Panchatantra* and Somdeva's eleventh-century work *Kathasaritsagara*. Because of the tendency and freedom among writers of the time to copy, recopy and edit, many of the same stories appeared in writing again and again. Such tales became even more widely known as individuals, who learned them from written sources, re-told them to live audiences in varied settings, including courts, churches, marketplaces, drinking establishments, and homes.

Folklore emerged as a new field of learning in the nineteenth century, when antiquarians in England and Philologists in Germany began to look closely at the ways of the lower classes. In 1812, the German brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm commenced publishing influential volumes of oral folk narratives and interpretations of Germanic mythology. The word they used to denote this subject was *volkskunde*. Then, on 22 August 1846, an English antiquarian, William John Thoms, sent a letter to the Athenaeum, a magazine catering to the intellectually curious, suggesting that the new word "Folk-lore" be then forth adopted in place of the cumbersome phrase "popular antiquities". The term caught on and proved its value in defining a new area of knowledge and subject of inquiry, but it has also caused confusion and controversy. To the layman, and to the academic man too, folklore suggests falsity, wrongness, fantasy, and distortion. Or, it may conjure up pictures of granny woman spinning traditional tales in mountain cabins or gaily costumed peasants performing seasonal dances. In the present work, folklore will mean both a field of learning and the whole subject matter of that field. History as a term possesses the same ambiguity, standing for the discipline and for the content, but it does not create the same possible misunderstanding.

A concept of folklore and an interest in the expressive traditions from which the concept is derived existed along before the word 'folklore' was coined. From the beginning of recorded history, writers called attention to what they considered fantastic stories and

exotic customs. The ancient Greeks were among the first to commit to writing oft-told tales they called myths and to make such narratives the subjects of discussion and debate. Folk history and academic history cannot be separated by truth, for both are as true as their practitioners can make them. Nor can they be separated by significance, for both are meaningful in context, absurd when shattered into fragments. Differences do remain.

A minor difference between folk and academic histories is to be found in the medium of communication. In oral history, it is difficult to preserve the unmemorable, the welter of dull details and fine webs of qualification that make written arguments seem complex and convincing do not belong in good tales. Oral history cannot be boring. Yet, in oral history, it is harder to lie. Face to face with a small and knowledgeable audience, the historian is checked constantly and prevented from drifting off along lines of thought that shifting, shifting permute into falsehood in the solitude of the study.

It was earlier known as the fantastic stories about anything before the folklore term was coined; means even when the term 'folklore' was not coined, the fantastic stories and exotic customs were being transmitted to each other.

Ancient Greeks were the first one to discuss or debate the folklore which was known as Myth. The Chi-Cheng was developed as Chinese anthology during 551 BC to 479 BC. The Roman historian talks about the traditions and customs of German Tribes in his text *Germania* (AD 98). *Kojiki* (AD 712, English edition in 1882) and *Nihongi* (AD 720, English edition in 1896) were Japanese historical texts which mentioned about the myths, legends and folksongs for the chronological narratives which has further developed as the folkloristic study after the decline of the ancient civilization. Early chroniclers,Venerable Bede and William of Malmesbury, discussed the popular stories of Virgin Mary's miracles and Christian saints' lives in the texts. Many short moral compilations were used as the source by the medieval priests as sermons to be passed to their people. Writers of European region even compiled many texts influenced from the Sanskrit texts drawn from the *Panchatantra* and *Kathasaritsagara*, and therefore, with the repetition of same stories again and again mentioned in the writings, they widely spread among the people and also influenced them to transmit the discussion into various settings, including courts, churches, market places, drinking establishments and homes.

Folklore became as the source for the authors, researchers from the middle century through the first half of 18th century as many writes like Italian writer Giovanni Boccaccio (AD 1313-1375) and English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (AD 1342-1400) discussed many oral storytelling or folktales. Many humorous stories were widely told during the Renaissance for the entertainment purposes,which later on passed through generations and became widely known narratives. Stories like fools cutting the branch of tree on which he was sitting (AD 1240), burning homes to kill the rodents and insects (AD 1282).

History stands for the series of past events in the existence of nation, individual, etc. As per dictionary connotation, it is chronological record or narrative of past events. In academic circles, the primary meaning of term history is that it is the scientific study of events. Historiography represents the writing of history, especially of the writing of history based on the critical examination of sources, the selection of particulars from the authentic materials in those sources, and the synthesis of those particulars into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods. The term 'historiography' refers to the theory and history of historical writing.

History is the study of life in society in the past, in all aspects, in relation to present developments and future hopes. It is the story of man in time, an inquiry into the past based on evidence. Indeed, evidences are the raw materials of history teaching and learning. It is an inquiry into what happened in the past, when it happened, and how it happened. It is an inquiry into the inevitable changes in human affairs in the past and the ways these changes affect, influence or determine the patterns of life in the society. History and folklore both explain past events, but history as the subject provides us the chronology of the events with the help of primary or secondary sources, whereas folklore too explains past events and cultures but as a subject it does not provide us the chronology nor it have the reasonable sources to prove.

Folklore comprises traditional creations of people, primitive or civilized. These are achieved by using sounds and words in metricalas well as prose forms, and include folk beliefs or superstitions, customs and performances, dances and plays. Folklore is the generic term to designate the customs, beliefs, traditions, tales, magical practices, proverbs, songs, etc., in short, the accumulated knowledge of a homogenous unsophisticated people, tied together not only by common physical bonds, but also by emotional ones which color their every expression, giving it unity and individual distinction.

Even folkloristics themselves have widely divergent views about what constitutes folklore. One of the reasons for this is that the concept about the nature of folklore itself has undergone considerable change over the years.

According to Archer Taylor, folklore is the material handed down traditionally either by word of mouth or by custom and practice.W.R. Bascom says that folklore comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and techniques that are learnt by imitation and example as well as by the product of such crafts.

Folklore is history almost as old as the human society. There has been no society—not excluding the most ancient or most primitive in which knowledge, belief, customs, etc. have been shared and handed down. As Bascom says, folklore is one of the important parts that go to make up the culture of given people…there is no known culture which does not include folklore.

The study of folklore is hardly two hundred years old. Scholars agree that interest in the systematic collection and preservation of folklore started in Europe—in Germany, to be precise—towards the last part of the 18th century, almost in the synchronization with the two intellectual movements of Romanticism and Nationalism. Two young German brothers, Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, assiduously took up the task of collecting, examining and publishing German tales and myths in a systematic manner. It is a generally agreed that the history of modern folklore studies began with the publication of the volume of German folktales under the title *Kinder und Hausmarchen* (Children's and Householders' tales) in 1812 by the Grimm brothers. However, the new discipline was known in Germany by the designation *volkskunde*, and the term continues to be used even now.

Often phrases such as folklore studies and folklore research were used to refer to the study, as distinguished from the materials. Folkloristics has been coined to mean the discipline, as the scientific study of folklore. However, the use of such terms as folklore studies and folklore research and even folklore to identify the field of study, still continues. It is called as folklore studies, folklore research or folkloristics, this particular field of

knowledge reminded more or less minor and marginal subject, both inside and outside the groves of academia.

As Durga Bhagwat, a celebrated scholar of Indian society and culture points out, "India is a land which is known for its love of stories. From the very remote times Indians have looked upon stories and songs as special divinities." Indian folklore also figured prominently in the development of modern folkloristics. Once J. Grimm (1835) had postulated a connection between Indian and European mythology, and Max Mueller (1856) had elaborated upon it, the study of Indian folklore became essential to the development of folklore theory in the latter half of the 19th century. That was the initial stage of the study of Indian folklore along modern academic lines in which Indian folklore research was dominated by philologists and linguists working in Sanskrit, Persian or Arabic with little, if any, direct knowledge of India. The second phase was marked by the shift from classical text to field collection in India, done mostly by the British Government officials, both civil and military, and their wives, as well as Christian missionaries. In the third period, there was combination of the methods of field collection and philology, again engaged in the mostly by Western scholars, with only one or two Indian scholars occasionally joining in. In the fourth period, beginning around the 1950s, anthropologists and language specialists began to record the major genres of verbal folklore in most regions of India. During this time, the primary role in the study of India, including the field of folklore, passed from Britain to America.

Soon after Independence, "the nationalist movement spurred new respect for, interest in, folk traditions". Starting from the around this time, folklore programmes were setup in some Indian Universities. One of the earliest such programmes was started at Gauhati University by the late Birinchi Kumar Barua, way back in 1955.The fifth and current period of research in Indian folklore started approximately in the 1980s. Extensive field research, particularly explorations into new fields as well as the induction of new perspectives, characterizes this period. There have been closer and deeper academic exchanges between Indian and foreign scholars. The result has been that the conceptual basis of the field is shifting; ethnographic and linguistic skill in South Asian research have now been enriched by the comparative reach and specialized focus of folklore studies. This combination of new materials and new approaches promises to find new meanings for India folklore.

1.2 FOLKLORE: A HISTORICAL SCIENCE?

As we have seen in the preceding section, folkloristics has from the beginning been involved with a past-oriented perception. Folklore, according to this perception, belonged to an earlier age and had come to be retained in the present age in the beliefs, practices, tales, myths, ballads, etc., of the peasantry living in the countryside. The business of the folklorist was to identify such folklore items to collect them, and if possible, to interpret them. It is significant that before the coining of the term 'folklore', the phrase that was in vogue in the English language to designate folklore items happened to be 'popular antiquities', the very word 'antiquity' suggesting pastness. William John Thoms' description of folklore itself reveals in no uncertain terms that folklore was made only of material that belonged to the bygone days—the manners, customs, observations, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time, records of old time, some recollection of now neglected custom, some fading legends, local traditions, or fragmentary ballads.

In fact, Thoms' description of folklore represented the 19th century attitude towards folklore. Folklore then was conceived of as things surviving from the past that were fast disappearing. It was thus incumbent upon the folklorists to concentrate their efforts in the collection and preservation of this fast-vanishing survival. Collect or perish seems to have been watchword making the rounds in the world of folklore at that time.

Also, in the 19th century, currents of nationalism and romanticism induced many to engage in the collection of oral traditions, preferably from peasants in rural areas. These traditions, as it was thought, were dying out. As such, it was urgent to collect them before they were totally lost.

1.3 COLLABORATION BETWEEN HISTORIAN AND FOLKLORIST: THE COMMON GROUND

1.3.1 Transmission of Information and Source Material

Historical research is the term applied to the work necessary for the establishing of occurrences, happenings, or events in the field with which the historian is concerned. It is clearly stated here that the facts that historians deal with are not their own experience but only relics, tracks or traces of the occurrence based on accounts of the occurrences, or something that is the end-product of such occurrences, which could be written, verbal or material.

This expert opinion on historiography, apart from displaying an open-minded and pragmatic attitude towards traditional source material of history, also underlines a few other relevant points which are of vital importance for our discussion here, and with which we will deal more elaborately in this section and also in the next. These points are:

a) Verbal accounts can be and have been original sources for historiography,

b) The distinction between verbal and the written is not of fundamental significance, and

c) The subjective element may be present in both written and traditional sources, and it is for the historian to make allowances for it in both.

However, there appears to be among many historians a kind of distrust or guarded skepticism about the admissibility of verbal or unwritten material for the purpose of constructing history. There are several reasons for the distrust or skepticism but some of the reasons for such distrust or skepticism may be listed as follows:

a) Whatever is unwritten or in the oral tradition is unreliable;

b) Good history must be based on the facts supported by documents or other tangible evidences; and

c) Illiterate peoples do not care for chronology and thus do not have a sense of history.

1.3.2 The Oral-Written Issue

Whatever is written is more prestigious and trustworthy than whatever is not—this idea somehow seems to be ingrained in many sections of the scholastic world, including that of history and historiography. But this excessive veneration for the written material

is clearly misplaced. There is no necessary or inevitable dichotomy between the oral and written traditions. In fact, often the written tradition starts with the putting down of the oral material into writing and the occurrence of various types of oral material is a common feature of all written traditions.

Bynum examines this oral-written issue in the context of history in the following way:

> According to a familiar doctrine, there is no scientific history except in the scholarly, written tradition of western historiography since Herodotous and Thucydides. Writing no doubt does encourages deliberate reflection and accurate statement. A scrupulous historian must prize these qualities dearly in other men's depositions about what happened in the past. But at the very fast best, not every valuable eye-witness or participant in historically significant events has had time or inclination to write down what he knows, not even if he has known how to write and what writings is, and every historian has sometime had to admit evidence someone's oral account of historical happenings. Nor does one necessarily need to bend the usual rules of historical evidence to accept such oral accounts as good history.

1.3.3 The Question of Objectivity

On the question of objectivity, Carr takes a bold stand and makes some extremely sensible observation. It can thus be concluded that although one has to be more careful with oral materials as sources of history because it has no proof written somewhere and was transmitted orally mostly, the problems and methods for treating such materials are basically the same as with written materials. To quote Bymun again:

> Some of the problems and methods of dealing with oral history are, then, not different from those familiar to Western Historiography since Thucydides whose own sources of history were often oral. If there is any greater or unique difficulty about oral sources of historical information as contrasted written or archaeological ones, perhaps it is only those oral sources so soon become unrefusable. Properly speaking, oral sources are people, in a short time they die, and there is no dependent able way on consulting them once they are dead.

1.3.4 History and the 'Non-Literate' Communities

The wish to understand historical events rationally is (not) an exclusive property of the historians; on the contrary, all mankind manifestly shares it with them. The problem is only that one man's reason is another man's prejudice or superstitions, and one man's history is another man's fable. Raglan states that the peasants and non-literate peoples have no concept of history and thus can have no interest in it.

History is the recital in chronological sequence of events which are known to have occurred. Without precise chronology, there can be no history, since the essence of history is the relation of events in their correct sequence.

1.3.5 Reconstructing History from Tradition: The African Ex perience

As we have seen in the previous sub-section, the non-literate communities do have history as well as a sense of history—although of a different kind—in spite of the fact that European ethnocentric thinking has persisted in denying this fact. Of course, scholars—particularly anthropologists and folklorists—have endeavored to highlight

the important of utilizing the oral traditions of non-literate peoples for the purpose of history-writing.

This fundamental belief in the continuity of life is an essential element of traditional African historiography. All over sub-Saharan Africa, the relevance of the dead to the life of the present and future generations is a common feature. There is a deep-seated belief that each community was founded by an ancestor or group of ancestors and the community owed all their possessions to them.

Each community—family, clan, village, town or state—however large or small, had an established tradition concerning its origin. The community might split up, migrate and assimilate new elements, or be conquered by others or absorbed by new immigrants. At each stage of transformation, the tradition was recrystallized to accommodate changed conditions, and a new tradition of origin was formulated by the new community. This tradition became the core of the community's view of history. The very process of tradition-making and acculturation in the community, and of transmission of tradition to succeeding generations developed a consciousness of history that became widespread in Africa.

1.3.6 Oral Tradition as Valid Material for Historical Research

Historian and folklorist can find common ground in the area of traditional history. Such history may include personal, family, neighborhood and township historical traditions. In countries where literacy, formal school and printed publications dominate the culture, traditional history is slighted or scorned by professional historians. Yet in these societies, large numbers and groups of people still possess their own traditions. They differ markedly form conventional written history.

A distinguished professor of history and folklore, Dorson, knew what he was talking about. What he calls the 'folklore tradition', and which is also designated as the 'oral tradition' is definitely a potential source from which historical material can be culled with profit. However, it should be made clear that the connection between history and the oral tradition is not a direct one but the dependence has some special significance in literature. Oral tradition encompasses a variety of components, and thus, they must be treated with appropriate methodologies to extract historical material. But there is another specific field which is quite close to oral tradition, though not always a part of it. Known as 'oral history', this field has a limited scope compared to, oral tradition and as the nomenclature it suggests, it comes almost directly under the purview of history. We shall now try or illumine the respective natures of these two fields form the academic point of view.

1.3.7 Oral History

According to one definition, oral history is essentially an account of first-hand historical experience, recalled retrospectively and communicates to an interviewer for historical purposes. Another definition state that "oral history is the recording and interpretation of spoken testimonials about an individual's past."

Oral history itself has a long history, dating back to the time of the ancient Greeks, when historians like Thucydides collected memories of the experiences of the individuals for the purpose of historical records. Oral history is considered to be an ideal method for holding the mirror up to the experiences, attitudes and ideologies at the grassroots level in the recent past. This method has been characterized as the recovery mode by

some—since it helps in the recovery of experiences of those who are marginalized. Oral history may take more than one form. Oral testimonial may be used for the purpose of giving a detailed account of a person's life: it is then called life history of personal narrative. When it is used for historical reconstruction and analysis of social change, cross-analysis is resorted to. Life history interviews are structured or semi-structured. When cross-analysis is done on oral testimony, larger samples with more structured interviews are brought into play. While oral history accounts were in the form of written transcripts, the coming of sound recording by the end of the 19th century changed the picture. Today, of course, the tape recorder and the video camera have revolutionized the field.

1.3.8 Oral Tradition

We had the occasion to say something on tradition in a preceding section in another context—that of the association of tradition with the historical sense. Etymologically, tradition is traced back to the Latin word, tradition which means transmission or handing down. Francis Bacon is known to have used it in the sense expressing and transferring knowledge as far back as 1605. However, tradition came to be associated in the 18th century more intimately with folklore material like songs, ballads, tales, proverbs, customs and so on, when romantic nationalism prompted societies to look back with nostalgia at their respective national heritages. Such folklore material, it was agreed, belonged to the oral tradition.

R.M. Dorson, in his *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, suggests some important criteria for evaluating the historical validity of oral traditions, which are listed below:

a) Identification of folklore material grafted onto historical settings;

b) Allowance for personal and emotional bias coloring a tradition;

c) Cross-checks of multiple traditions;

d) Corroboration of a tradition from printed records;

e) Corroboration of a tradition from geographical landmarks;

f) Corroboration of a tradition from material culture; and

g) Knowledge of the character of an informant.

If such guidelines are carefully followed, then it is possible for the historian to handle historical traditions effectively and profitably. Oral traditional fiction, observes Bynum, is always a rich and ready source of reasonable explanations for past experience. Historians have deplored this fact, while literary people have reveledin it, but whether they like it or not, it is a fact, and a fact of central importance to both the humanities and social sciences.

1.4 LET US SUM UP

In the course of this chapter, a humble effort has been made to establish that folklore and history—although apparently removed from each other—have much common ground in various respects. Co-operation between the folklorist and the historian is not only a possibility but also a necessity, in the interest of a fuller and better comprehension of the past as related to the present. In India, where the two levels of the classic and the folk have been operating in a close symbiotic relationship since ancient times, this

co-operation assumes all the more significance. It focusses on Indian folklore and Indian history which is largely not given that much importance till now but the recent trends assume the implication of it in larger interest. And more so in regions like the African continent and even North-East India which offer such a great wealth of material to work with in terms of the written and the unwritten, the tangible and the intangible, the believed and the documented, etc. It opens up the prospects of a meaningful dialogue, not only between folklore and history, but also encompassing several others disciplines such as cultural anthropology, archaeology, social work, tribal studies and linguistics, which seem to be very bright indeed.

1.5 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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1.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the role of oral traditions in historical research?

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2. How has folklore evolved as a discipline in India?

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3. Write a note on the history offolklore as a discipline.

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4. What do you mean by folkloristic perspective in academics and research?

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5. How relevant is oral tradition in an illiterate society?

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6. What do you mean by history and historiography?

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7. How does one clarify the validity and relevance of folk traditions for historical research?

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8. Write a short note on the relationship between folklorists and historians?

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9. Critically analyses the role of folklore in history as a discipline.

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10. What are the major challenges for the folklorists in relatingto history in the academic parlance?

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UNIT 2 FOLKLORE AND GENDER STUDIES

Structure

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, the learners should be able to:

- Explain the core contents of gender studies;
- Elucidate the focus areas of gender studies, feminism and women studies; and
- Delineate the role of folklores in gender studies.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

"Pull you skirt down", "don't cry like a girl", "speak softly, you are a girl', "be a man", many of you must have faced these rebukes while you were growing up. These are some of the common phrases that are used as part of our socialisation and enculturation process while we are growing up. Cultivating such behaviours leads to the creation of gender-specific roles, what we are supposed to do or not supposed to indulge in as a male or a female. Herein, there would arise numerous questions in your mind, like why should a girl and a boy have different upbringings? Why different codes of conduct and behaviour for boys and girls? Why can't a boy cry? Why are boys are not allowed to express their emotions in public or with tears? When hurt physically we cry out in pain, but why is a boy asked to control his tears and 'be a man'? Likewise, a girl is expected to walk like a lady, speak softly thus, from the very childhood the construction of gender-specific behaviour, roles and responsibilities takes place. Thus, we can relate here to Simon de Beauvoir's apt description "One is not born, but made a woman", meaning the feminine qualities in a female child is not genetic, but acquired as per the societal norms through the socialisation process. These are some of the gender-related questions that we would take up in this unit and see how folklores have played a role in conjuringand taking forward many of these cultural myths and norms.

In this unit, we would try to first understand the meaning of gender and how it is different from sex. Thereafter we would try to comprehend and analyse the context of gender studies, women studies and feminism as most times we tend to understand them as same. With an understanding of the main concepts in gender studies, we would move on to explore how folklores situate itself in gender studies.

2.2 DEFINING SEX AND GENDER

Let us begin this section with a small exercise. Walk out on to the balcony and observe the people that are passing by. Now let's start classifying them as per their perceived gender. Are you able to classify them? Yes, it is relatively an easy task. You can identify them as either a 'boy, man, girl, or woman;' based on their physical features. Now wait a minute, was it only the physical appearance that you looked at? What about the colour of the clothes? Did you look at the type of clothes that the 'boy/girl' was wearing? How the hair was, how it was tied, the type of other accessories like earrings, watch, rings, etc. being worn or the type of bag etc., being carried by the person must have been taken into account when you were trying to assess the gender of the person? Yes, you did; these are the modes used in classifying in the gendering process. So, in a way even objects are gendered, like many of you must be knowing that, in Western societies, blue colour is associated with a boy and pink with a girl. If anyone deviates from this norm,she/he would be looked upon as 'different'. Again, the question arises why can't a girl like the blue colour or play with cars instead of dolls? Thus, the process of gendering includes not only the physical self, but also all the other components of material objects like things used; types of clothes worn, spaces, professions etc.—you name any aspect and one would find the gender in it. For long even professions were earmarked for a man or a woman separately. In the defence sector, women were not eligible for higher positions as it was believed to be an all-men's job. However, with changing times things are being looked at differently. When one contemplates these issues, the realisation that gender is basically a social construct that is drawn through the enculturation and socialisation process strikes our minds. According to Tylor (1991: 183), enculturation is "a process by which a human being adapts to their culture and learns to fulfill the functions of his/her status and role.The family is the primary space where the enculturation process begins." In the same way, socialization is defined as "the way in which a society integrates its members and the process by which individuals learn to adapt to their society" (ibid. 489).

As from the above description, we have come to the understanding that gender is a social construct. But than what is the difference between 'sex' and 'gender'? The term 'sex' stands for the biological differences between men and women. These differences that are related to hormones, chromosomes and genitalia. One significant aspect that one needs to understand that the biological and physiological differences in men and women do not account for the fact that they are unequal or one is subordinate to the other. The difference in the organs of reproduction in the males and females are different no doubt, yet it fails to explain why there has to be a difference in the physical and social ways. In other words, why males and females have to behave in a particular manner as assigned by the society in terms of roles, responsibilities and duties is not a concern of the sex that they are born with, rather the creation of masculine and feminine qualities that relates to gender is a social construct. It has no relation to the way a person is born. These disparities are socially and culturally constructed. It is even noteworthy to point out here that the concept of gender goes beyond 'male' and 'female' as oppositional sexual categories. It includes more than two genders (male, females and others). If we look into our own Indian society the concept of third gender has always been there, otherwise commonly known as 'hijras' have been a part of our society, whose blessings during the life-cycle rituals like marriage and birth are well-accepted. Though for long they were not given a status, but in the recent past this has changed. The concept of male is to male and female is to female is also not a biologically accepted norm if we look at the fact of organ donations. The vital organs in the human

body like cornea, heart, liver etc. can be donated from a female to a male and vice versa. Thus, the recent arguments of scholars like Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*(1990), Benhabib (1992), and Moore (1994) that the notion of 'sex', or the nature of the 'biological' make-up of men and women, is itself a social constructionneeds retrospection (Kumar 2020: 106-7). Gender as a 'symbolic construct' has been the core of the debate for long, and what we conceive as a biological 'given' may well conflict and contrast with other peoples' ideas, lived experiences and reality (Strathern 1992; Overing, 1986). Borrowing from Appelbaum and Chambliss, we can say that gender refers to behavioural differences between males and females that are culturally based and socially learned (1997:218). One needs to understand here that 'masculinity' and 'femininity' are gender categorisations while 'male' and 'female' are categorized based on sex. Highlighting the differences between sex and gender, Ann Oakley (1972: 18) notes while "gender is a matter of culture; it refers to the societal classification into masculine and feminine", "sex is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female; the visible differences in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function."

2.2.1 Gender Studies, Feminism and Women's Studies

So far, we have been trying to understand the construct of 'sex' and 'gender', now let us find out what is the core of gender studies, women's studies and feminism—are these same? If not, where is the departure, if any? Gender studies basically focuses on the differences and differential roles, responsibilities and in what way the society perceives men and women. Gender studies deals with the various influences like ideological or cosmological that goes on to the creation of culturally appropriate gender behaviour, roles and models, we have explained this concept with numerous examples in the previous section where we had discussed enculturation and socialisation process. Gender is a universal theme though different cultures have different gender constructs based on the cultural and social relations like the economic, political, legal, including the kinship ties. Say, for example, the cultural norms would vary from a matrilineal society to a patrilineal one. Feminism, on the other hand, is a political ideology and a methodology that tends to reveal the roots of the patriarchal oppression and the power relations involved in it. It advocates rights of women and the stress is on equality of the sexes. The third dimension is women's studies, which focuses only on women, the idea is to gather more information about her roles, activities, problems and issues that needs attention and also about which much work is not available. Now let us try to understand the focal areas of gender studies, women's studies and feminists' studies with a simple example. Let's take herein, the example of a matrilineal society like the Khasis of Meghalaya and see how the same study would be looked upon by the above three categories. The Khasi women are known to own the business ventures. The market is the space for the womenfolk, where they carry out their business and are allowed to move around freely and bargain with men, when they come to the market for purchase, whereas, in a patrilineal society, it would be difficult for a woman to set up business as it is not the norm for a woman to work outside of the house. Now when gender studies take this up as a subject of study they would look into the roles of both the women and men and how the roles define their responsibilities based on labour, while within the domain of women studies the focus shall lie on understanding the role of women alone and how her role defines her status in the society, whereas the feminists' would look at the same study from the perspective of the women's rights in the society based on her work, division of labour, as in such societies the authority still lies with the men, that is, with the woman's brother. With this brief on gender studies, feminism and women's

studies, let us move on to the core of this topic of folklores in gender studies. In the next section,we shall see how folklores are placed within the realm of gender studies with a few examples.

2.3 CONTEXTUALISING FOLKLORE IN GENDER STUDIES

As a child, many of you must have grown up listening to the tales of Cinderella or Snow White. The description of the tall, charming, handsome and fearless prince in all these tales had been etched in our memories as we grew up. At the subconscious level, as a young girl, an image is conceived that a man has to be strong, tall and handsome. A knight in shining armour, ready to rescue the lady when in danger. Even the young boys nurture the notion that they have to be strong and fearless when they grow up. Every man tries to project this strong side and rarely would anyone of them confess that they too are afraid of the dark or the idea, concept and believes in ghost stories frightens them. Thus, the folklores become a part of the socialisation process, where the norms of behaviour and how one must act, one's roles and responsibilities are presaged. Most of the popular folklores are rooted in the hegemony of the patriarchal society and thus, have projected the woman as the weaker one who needs protection.

Folklores are rooted in the everyday lives of the people, what they experience, say for example oppression or domestic violence about which a woman is not able to express freely finds a voice in the songs and tales. These folklores have thus aroused the interest of the gender theorists to understand the construct of the patriarchal norms that has been passed on through generations. Jordan and de Caro in their work had discussed three broad avenues that the folklorist's literature on women can be looked at; i.e., "the images of women that are projected in verbal folklore and the extent to which negative images have been used to condition attitudes; women's oral genres and performance and female use of folklores, which may be different from male use; and female folk performers and artists"(1986: 502). The first area relates to how women has been projected in the folklores, the second one explores women's social roles in the private and public domains that influence their creativity that is depicted in their expression of the worldviews through arts, and the third area looks at how women has been accepted or not accepted as an artist or performer. While Richard Dorson had divided oral literature into four broad divisions a) oral literature, b) material culture, c) social folk customs, and d) performing folk arts (cf. Kalita 2020: 497),it would be a herculean task to present herein all the aspects of folklore and gender studies, so we would try to explain only a few avenues.

In all societies, folklores play a major role in defining the position of women. The earliest of the works that we can refer here to is that of Johann Jakob Bachofen's *Myth, Religion and Mother Right* (1967). This study of myths positioned matriarchy as the earliest human social organisation in terms of the family. Bachofen juxtaposes that, in the early days, when there was anarchy, marriage was not institutionalised, there a state of promiscuity prevailed, thus, children could be traced only through the mother. In this regard, Bachofen took into account the myths of the Amazons to be historical in their origins, and thus, "gave proof of the existence of ancient female governed nations and matriarchies" (Nenola 1999: 27). Folklores resonate with the culture of a society in which it circulates, it is a widely accepted fact. This was much propagated by Franz Boasway back when anthropology was emerging as a field science. He urged anthropologists to study the societies to understand the present as in 'here' and

'now' to contextualise the cultural relativism, and to see the relevance within the context of the society, rather than trying to decipher its history and evolution. The myths and legends were collected for understanding the connotations and relevance it had in the society. The emphasis was on the context of the folklores rather than the narrations itself. Lévi-Strauss too had looked at myths to understand the structure of society and how its functions. His work culminated in the alliance theory that has been much debated and discussed by the gender theorists and anthropologists from the way women and their role and responsibility in bridging alliances through marriage has been looked at. The functional approach of Malinowski has for long been the key to the study of folklores and gender roles with the use of intensive, long extended stay in the field along with the use of local language.

Most of the work on gender studies and folklores have drawn from the myths, legends, folk songs, dances, folktales etc. that are a part of every society. Broadly, the role and performance of women in folklores related to gender studies may be divided into three segments at a) home, b) work space and c) ritual performance and performers. Each society has a folktale related to the origin of their society or other related items of everyday use that are unique to their society alone. In almost all the folklores related to the origin of the society, each society has a tale that depicts that they were the original human beings on earth. These oral tales in many ways also relate to the text available in the societies that has imbibed writing skills. Though there are some folklores that are unique to one particular society alone. Let us examine the one such folklore and look at this dimension of how women are being projected through myths in Santhal musical instruments in Mathur's (2013) work. By studying the myths, Mathur deciphers the creation and the use of the objects that gives it a gendered significance. In her work, she explores the Santhali tale of the seven brothers and their sister, whom they killed so as to taste her flesh. The youngest brother couldnot eat his share and finally laid it down at the mound of the white ants near a pond. Later, a tree that bore beautiful flowers grew there from which a melodious sound could be heard. An ascetic who used to collect flowers from the tree heard the melodious sound and cut a branch from this tree to make the 'dhodrobanam' a fiddle that had the shape of a woman. Mathur (2013) in her work reflected that, in the creation of musical instruments, gendering is seen right from the tree from which a branch is cut to make the fiddle, that itself is feminine as per the myth that the tree grew out of the flesh of the girl. The shape of the fiddle that resembles a woman also relates to the gender. The myth also projects the Santhali's patriarchal norms where the woman is treated as a 'object' or 'property' of the man, as the fiddle too is not given away by the man who makes it as the girl was unmarried.

Channa, in the introduction to the work on *Gendering Material Culture* writes that "Women's expressions have often been seen as forms of protest and a critique of patriarchy just because the women are in a position to realize inequality and injustice, not by any analytical or academic expertise, but through their own bodies" (2013:7). The folklore studies have taken into account many such cases like songs sung as part of marriage, the folklores related to Holi and other occasions within the Indian context wherein women have presented their cases through the expression in songs and dance. In terms of voices, herein we can also cite the example of *lath mar holi*. In one of the legends, it is suggested that once Kishana was trying to smear Radha with Holi and her friends came to her defence with sticks (*lath*) stick and (*mar*) beat or hit. This is enacted during Holi in most places, more so in Barsana the birth place of Radha, Uttar Pradesh (Mukherjee 2018). This act in many places is also between a husband and a wife, when she uses the stick on her husband during Holi. This act is seen as a role

reversal where the woman expresses her otherwise subjugated and suppressed feelings in everyday life within a patriarchal society where she does not get to voice her feelings. The songs of the women folk are expressions of what they go through in their everyday lives like their marriage, the way she is treated by her in-laws or husband or the Dalit woman's anguish as to the treatment meted out to her etc. The women languishes and speaks through her songs about the diverse aspects of these acts of sometimes violence and injustice that is meted out to her in everyday life, which she otherwise is not able to voice.

Now let us explore how women as a performer is placed within the private and the public space. Gender studies in this regard has tried to look at the position of women through her life histories, where the focus is not on the context or the text of the folklores but the woman herself as the performer. Such studies have tried to understand the different spheres where the performance is distinctly marked between a men and women. We can take the example of the death rituals in many countries like China (where it originated), Japan, Korea, India etc. where the mourners are specifically females. The mourners are hired to lament the death as it is believed the more they can express grief the easier it becomes for the soul to move on to the other world. In the Indian context, we have the *Rudaali* performers specifically in Rajasthan, but also found in other parts of the country. These women performers are hired to express grief by wailing, screaming and crying for the departed soul. Men are not seen as potential mourners as they are believed to be strong and are not allowed to express their grief in public within the patriarchal construct. During my fieldwork in a Karbi village in Assam, I met the Uchepi, the chief performer of rituals for the ancestor worship. She not only leads the rituals, but also is the head cook for the ancestors for whom she has to prepare all the meals and the chief mourner during the *Chomangkan* festival (ancestor worship) that is celebrated over a period of four days (Zaman 1998). *Chomangkan* is a ritual for the ancestors performed by the Karbis of Assam. The Karbis represent a tribe that is found in both the hills and plains of Assam. *Chomangkan* is basically a celebration for the departed soul to move from this world to the other, which is accompanied by rituals, food, drinks, dances and songs. The festivities last for three nights and four days. The Uchepi is assigned as the chief mourner or priestess of the village and she plays the pivotal role during the *Chomangkan* festival. Likewise, in the Jagannath temple in Puri, during the *Navakalreva* festival, the *Mahari* (consort of the Lord, otherwise known as *Devadasi* in other parts of the country) performs the ritual and rites of a widow for seven days when the *daru* (log) as per the myths and legends has to be kept in confinement for it to shape itself into the image of the Lord. Since the time of taking out the old image of the Lord till it is replaced with the new image of the Lord, the *Mahari* as his wife takes up the role and laments as the widow of the Lord (Zaman 2007). In the Meitei community of Manipur, the gendered and the ritualized body is seen in the ritual performers such as the Maibi (the sacred priestess of Manipur). Their songs and dances play a major role in the expression of wellbeing that the Maibi ushers in through her ritualistic prayers performed for the community (Biswas 2013).

In this regard, we must also note the importance of documenting life history as an anthropological method of collecting first-hand data in the field situation. Life history is used by anthropologists to reveal the extensive account of a person's life, whether written or narrated by the person, or byothers, or by both (Langness 1965). The researcher tries to understand the complete life history of the narrator. Pedro Martinez's life history written by Oscar Lewis,which describes the life of an ordinary Mexican person and his family in great detail, is one of the most celebrated work. These life

histories also provide the link to the role of the women in the folktales and how they carry forward the traditions as ritual performers. But again, there are avenues where the voice of the women is not heard, as the genre is believed to be for the men. One such example comes from Chatterji's work on exploring the *Jhumur* (dance and songs of the tea plantation workers) songs. Chatterji (2013) observed that the *Jhumur* songs mostly expressed the relationship between a mother and a child. In her work, she presents the case of Shyamola, a lady with a child, who expresses her anguish of having a not normal child and pens her feelings in a song. This song reflects the major dichotomy in the presentation of the *Jhumur* songs as the *Jhumur* songs are being sung by males, because it is a masculine genre. Barthes (1990) states that the lyrics adopt the feminine voice, yet the tone and musical form are thought to be masculine (Chatterji 2013: 34). Thus, Shyamola's song represents the voice that would never be expressed or heard in public, yet she finds a way through her songs to express and present her anguish that she goes through in everyday life.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

Folklores and gender studies have come a long way since its inception. In the early years, the folklores presented the narratives, but slowly it moved beyond to express the cultural context of the tales. The society is reflected much in the folklores, more so in a patriarchal space where the women's voice in everyday life is muted, she finds expression in the folklores. The presentation of the folklores at times has a component of role reversals as in the case of *lath mar*Holi where the ordinary is replaced by what is not ordinary or commonplace. The suppressed voice finds expression on this day when the woman picks up the stick, otherwise of which she is at the receiving end. Gender studies and folklores have moved beyond the narrations, and today the life history of the presenter is also an important addition where the narrator's story gives the background to the folklores. The story of the Uchepi or the Mahari presents their cases as the narrators of traditions that have been passed down for years, generation after generation.

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2.6 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is gender?

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2. How is sex different from gender?

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3. Is gender a social construct? Critically analyse.

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4. What is the focus area of gender studies? Does it include only the study of women?

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5. Explain the goals and objectives of women's studies.

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6. What is feminism?

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7. Analyse the portrayal of women in folklores within the context of gender studies.

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8. How does gender studies look at folklores?

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9. Discuss the women's voice in folklores?

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10. Define life history.

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UNIT 3 FOLKLORE AND ANTHROPOLOGY

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, the learners should be able to:

- Explain the core contents of anthropology;
- Discuss the relevance of folklores in anthropology;
- Discuss fieldwork as a method for studying folklores; and
- Delineate the contributions of anthropology towards the study of folklore.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In many of the anthropological discourses, the different tribes had deciphered the meaning of their tribe's name as 'humans' or 'original inhabitants'. They have stated that they were the original 'humans' on earth. Misra (2013: 3) had recorded that, for the Ho tribals living in Chotanagpur region or in adjoining Odisha, the literal meaning of Ho in the native language means 'human beings.' The Santhals—a generic term for the tribes of Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal—prefer to call themselves as 'hor' which simply means a '(hu)man' (Mathur 2013: 54). Likewise, while I was doing my fieldwork in a Karbi village in the Nagaon district of Assam, the name of the village 'Socheng Dhenta' in the Karbi dialect meant 'beginning of (hu)mankind' as this village is the base of Karbi culture, under whose jurisdiction, there are 128 other Karbi villages and the term 'Karbi' itself means a '(hu)man' (Zaman 2003: 43-44).The question here is where and how does anthropological studies gather this data from? The folklores that include myths, tales, legends etc. provide these data, and it is through fieldwork that an anthropologist gathers such information. Folklores thus are universal as every society has their own stories about their origin and development.

With this introduction, let us begin this unit with an understanding of the contents of anthropology. In the first section, so as to familiarise the learners with the meaning of

anthropology, we shall begin with the definition, what do anthropologists study and how? In the next section, we would provide the understanding of how folklores are situated within the realm of anthropological studies. The approach to folklores that an anthropological study takes into account and how data on folklores is collected in anthropology would be taken up in the next section, followed by the summary of the unit.

3.2 DEFINING ANTHROPOLOGY

3.2.1 What Is Anthropology?

The term 'anthropology' is derived from the two Greek words 'anthropos' meaning (hu)man and 'logos' that stands for 'study or science'. Anthropology deals with understanding the lives of human beings in time and space. Time basically echoes the geological timescale that is used to delineate the timeframe of human evolution, growth and variation. Space deals with the ecological and environmental relationship of human populations that inhabit the various geographical areas on earth. Anthropology also involves the study of the past cultures and how present cultures are flourishing. It is the study of human beings in totality, unlike other subjects where only a particular aspect of human being is taken into account like the geneticist who deals with the genetic makeup of human beings to understand variation and commonality, or history which deals with what happened in the past, or even psychology which studies the human mind.

The American Anthropological Association defines anthropology as "the study of humans, past and present. To understand the full sweep and complexity of cultures across all of human history, anthropology draws and builds upon knowledge from the social and biological sciences as well as the humanities and physical sciences. A central concern of anthropologists is the application of knowledge to the solution of human problems." Wolf (1964) states "anthropology is less a subject matter than a bond between subject matters. It is in part history, part literature; in part natural science, part social science; it strives to study men both from within and without; it represents both a manner of looking at man and a vision of man-the most scientific of the humanities, the most humanist of sciences."

3.2.2 What Do Anthropologists Study?

Anthropology, as an academic discipline, with its four-fold field approach a) physical or biological anthropology, b) social and cultural anthropology, c) archaeological anthropology, and d) linguistic anthropology, tries to understand human beings both from the scientific and humanistic perspectives. Franz Boas, regarded as the father of modern anthropology in America, had proposed and promoted this four-fold approach to ascertain holistic study of humankind living in societies. He emphasised on empirical data collection in order to understand cultural relativism, that is to understand the significance of norms, rituals, practices etc. within the context of the society, the phrase being 'here' and now' while understanding a culture. The anthropologists aim at understanding three basic questions:

- Who we are? (Study of the past and the present)
- How we came to be? (Origin and evolution), and
- Why we are, the way we are? (Variations)

These three major questions form the basis for the study of human beings in anthropology. Be it the social, the biological, the archaeological or the linguistic anthropologists, the aim is to understand the origin, evolution, variation, diversity and change that has marked human lives, society and culture living in different environmental conditions.

Have you ever wondered why your eye colour is black or brown while some others have blue or grey eye colour? Some have straight hair while others have wavy or frizzly hair. This curiosity to know why there is variations in skin, eye, hair colour etc., leads the physical/ biological anthropologists to enquire about the existence of human variation. They try and find scientific explanations behind such variations. Why some people are short while others are tall? The genetic makeup of human beings is studied along with the role that environment plays in such variations. To know more about the past, the primates are taken into consideration in anthropological studies under primatology.

Within the rubric of social and cultural anthropology, the focus of the study is society and culture. The foremost contribution of the subject has been in the understanding of the various societies and cultures across the globe both objectively and subjectively, doing away with biases and prejudices, while presenting their relative importance. Social and cultural anthropology seeks to understand the social institutions and the cultural attributes that construct human societies in a holistic manner.

Anthropologists' interest in the past, how people lived during the different cultural periods is the subject matter of archaeological anthropology. The aim is to reconstruct the human past through the study of the different tool types used by prehistoric (hu)man of which there are no written records. The study of cave arts, the stone tools of the different cultural periods within the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and the Neolithic period, the arts and artifacts of the Chalcolithic periods and the past civilizations, dating the past through absolute and relative dating methods are some of the ways how the life of the prehistoric human beings is recreated.

Language is known as the vehicle for culture. Yet there is no single culture nor a single language. Communications, however, has always been there between people speaking different languages. Linguistic anthropology involves the study of the languages that act as a medium of communication among people belonging to different linguistic groups. It includes not only verbal languages, but both body and sign language. A recent study has shown a village in Turkey where people communicate via whistling. Some of the dialects are fast disappearing in the face of modernisation and globalisation, preserving and documenting such dialects forms a major activity of the linguistic anthropologists (Gunjan and Zaman 2020: 10-12).

3.2.3 How We Study Anthropology?

The emergence of anthropology is rooted in the European white men's journey of exploration and colonisation of the East during the late nineteenth century. The anthropologists of that era were trying to understand the variations in cultures among human populations based on the narrations of the travellers, the administrators, the missionaries. etc., who travelled to far off places and brought back 'exotic' stories of the lands, peoples and their cultures. These anthropologists, later criticised as 'armchair anthropologists', relied on the data brought back by the secondary sources and personally did not venture out for data collection. The *Golden Bough*, published in 1890, by Sir James Frazer was one of the earliest classical works on anthropology that was based on such stories and tales of the travellers, the administrators, the

missionaries, etc. on the lives and culture of the people they had encountered in their journeys.

With time, the white men ventured out to the 'far off exotic places' to collect first-hand information, thus, establishing anthropology as a field science. Fieldwork that involved living among the people and speaking their language to understand their way of life became the hallmark of anthropological study. In a way, it was Malinowski's work among the Trobriand Islanders which was based on a long-extended stay among the people, learning the local language and living their way of life that established fieldwork as a scientific method. The aim is to gather knowledge as an insider (emic) and not just study the people objectively. In anthropological studies, subjectivity is the key where the anthropologist aim is to understand the relativeness of the society and its cultures with the catch words being 'here' and 'now'. The significance of fieldwork lies in understanding three basic questions:

- What people think they ought to do? (ideal behaviour)
- What people say they do? (normative behaviour)
- What people really do? (actual behaviour)

Let us try to understand this aspect with an example. If I ask you "Do you brush your teeth at night?" Many of you might say yes, as we all know it is a norm to brush our teeth before going to bed at night. But do we always actually brush our teeth at night? We might at times give it a miss, if we are feeling lazy or tired or too sleepy. These aspects would not be known unless we do an in-depth study and that is what anthropologists do, dig out the real behaviour 'what people actually do' rather than go with the ideal behaviour of people when 'they say what they do' through intensive fieldwork where rapport building plays a major role.

*This section has been partly adapted from the course BANS 183: Tourism Anthropology, Unit 1. The unit was contributed by the same author as a co-author.

3.3 FOLKLORE THROUGH AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL LENS

Let us begin this section by tracing when the disciplines of folklore and anthropology began. The study of folklores as a discipline started in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, while anthropology as a discipline came up in the third quarter of the same century. For the learners, it would be interesting to note that anthropologists and folklorists have different views on the approach of studying folklores. Bascom, an anthropologist known for his work on folklores, in an article titled "Folklore and Anthropology", had brought about this significance when he had stated, "The dual affiliations of folklore with the humanities on the one hand and with social science on the other are well recognized" (1953: 283). This statement brings out the fact that there are basically two approaches to the study of folklores. One is the humanistic approach that looks at folklore as a creative process—that is linked with music, drama and literary arts. The other approach looks at folklores as an integral part of the society that is viewed within the context of culture. The anthropologists focus on the study of folklores as part of culture (Datta 2012).

Folklore means 'folk learning'; it comprehends all knowledge that is transmitted by word of mouth and all crafts and other techniques that are learned by imitation or

example, as well as the products of these crafts. Folklore includes folk art, folk crafts, folk tools, folk costume, folk custom, folk belief, folk medicine, folk recipes, folk music, folk dance, folk games, folk gestures, and folk speech, as well as those verbal forms of expression which have been called folk literature but which are better described as verbal art (Bascom 1973: 4; the said definition was later included in *International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences*, vol. V, 1972).

Now let us try to understand the connotation of culture in anthropological discourse. Many of us must have come across these common jargons "Those people have no culture" or "The family is very cultured". In layman's term, culture is attributed to refined behaviour, and a good taste in the finer qualities of life like classical music, dance, theatre, etc. When we look at a person, we try to gauge one's behaviour towards another human being, one's manners and etiquettes like how one sits at a dining table and uses the cutlery etc., which we attribute to polished behaviour or a suggestion that the person possesses culture (Zaman 2020: 64-65). Such statements reflect that culture is something that needs to be achieved. One has to strive to be cultured. Culture,at most times, is also linked with the finer taste, achievements or music, art, dance, drama, etc. However, in the anthropological parlance, 'culture is the way of life'. Culture is unique to human society. The cognitive capacities and ability to think, use hands to produce creative artefacts and convey meanings through speech makes human beings the sole custodian of culture. Any society be it a simple or an advanced one has culture. The societies might vary in their cultural practices; however, no culture can be graded in a scale, nor termed as superior or inferior.

So, the question that arises now is how do we acquire culture as human beings? When a child is born, he/she is not born to just a set of parents, but is born with a social and cultural identity. By virtue of his/her birth, the child becomes the member of a particular society. A child of the King is born with the tag of being the next heir, or based on his/her family's religion or caste she/he becomes a member of that particular group. A child is also born with kinship ties which determines whom to marry and who are out of bounds. Thus, within this volley of relationships, culture is learned by the child, the way of life is passed down from one generation to the other, mostly through oral traditions: legends, myths, songs, dance, drama, idioms, etc. which also forms a part of the folklores. Culture thus is that component of our everyday lives that comprises our activities that we acquire, learnand perform as a member of a society. Thus, culture is not an individual act but collective behaviour.

Cultural practices have to be looked at from the viewpoint of its importance and relevance within the context of the society. Many a times, cultural practices are shunned as outsiders do not understand the relevance of the same within the context of the society. For example, in many parts of India, the norm is to eat with hand, whereas in countries like Korea, Japan, China, chopsticks are used, while in Western societies spoon, knives or forks are used. Now, a person from a Western society might find the way of eating food using fingers as repulsive, however, within the context of food, when rice and dal (staple diet of Indians) is mixed together it is easier to be picked up with the fingers than with chopsticks or knives or forks. Likewise, in the countries where chopsticks are used, they eat sticky rice or noodles that can be easily managed with chopsticks. The practice of how food is eaten is also linked to the type of food available in that region. Thus, the environment also has a role in shaping the culture of a society. Herein, we can place Herskovits' work where he had referred to culture as the "(hu)man made part of the environment". The dress that we wear, the food that we eat, the taboos that are there is all part of culture. Culture is thus a part of our everyday lives.

The study of culture has been the central theme of anthropological studies. From the very beginning when anthropology started as a subject, it was the culture of the people in the far-off places that were seen as 'exotic' by the European white men that ignited the interest in the study of the 'other'. The white men in their quest for new places had come across these varied cultures that were different from their own and thus, the comparative study of cultures came into being. The earliest theory that was propagated was of evolutionism, and the white men placed their own culture at the helm of the so-called'civilized'group, and the other cultures in various stages of evolution or being evolved that was trying to reach the level higher-up, thus giving rise to the question of ethnocentric views, that was severely criticised by the later anthropologists. Yet, till date, the focus of anthropology still is on the study of culture though the viewpoints have changed. Within this domain of study of culture, folklores play a very important role.

Anthropological studies have contextualised folklores as part of culture, that part of the social heritage that a person learns as a member of a society. Bascom, in his work. explains the relevance of folklores within the realm of anthropological studies as "folklore serves to sanction and validate religious, social, political, and economic institutions, and to play an important role as an educative device in their transmission from one generation to another, there can be no thorough analysis of any of these other parts of culture which does not give serious consideration to folklore" (1953: 284). However, one must also understand that folklore, to the anthropologist, is just a part of a culture and not culture per say. The myths, legends, stories, etc. help in understanding the parts of culture that aid in studying the culture in totality, which goes to complete the 'thick ethnography' of the people. Folklores are analysed "in the same way as other customs and traditions, in terms of forms and functions or of interrelation with other aspects of culture" (Bascom 1981: 28-29).

Among the major anthropological works that had used myths and mythology, one is of Claude Lévi-Strauss.A French anthropologist and an ethnologist, his work and ideas led to the development of the theories of structuralism and structural anthropology. The central theme in his intellectual and academic pursuits was based on mythology. Lévi-Strauss's work and approach to myths and their role in kinship, magic, religion etc. have been explored via linguistics. Thus, his work remains one of the major pathbreaking works. Using structural analysis, Lévi-Strauss had traced the myths through language and tried to establish that myths have similar tales and stories across cultures. While referring to the relevance of myths, Lévi-Strauss had stated "a myth always refers to events alleged to have taken place long ago. But what gives the myths operational value is that the specific pattern described is timeless; it explains the present and the past as well as the future" (1979: 208-209, cited in Datta 2012). In the next section with an example, let us try to understand where folklore is situated within the study of anthropology or how anthropologists perceive folklores.

If you remember, in the introduction part, we had cited examples of the tribes where each tribe associates itself as the 'original inhabitants.' These revelations have come from the folklores of the tribes; the songs, the dramas, myths and legends that revolve around the history of their origin. Herein, what is important is to understand the context of the folklore studies in anthropology and how the anthropologists situate these folklores within the context of culture. Let us take an example of the Chomangkan festival of the Karbis of Assam. The term 'Chomangkan' is derived from the words 'chomang' meaning Khasi and 'kan' meaning dance, aterm that reflects a Khasi tradition. However, Chomangkan is basically a death ritual that entails ancestor worship among the Karbis.

This festival, as per oral tradition, was an elaborate dead ceremony that was performed by the Khasi king for Thong Nokbe, a Karbi youth adopted by the Khasis as he bought laurels for the tribe. However, with time, the atrocities of the Khasi king increased, and Thong Nokbe rebelled against the king and was killed in the battlefield. However, as he was adopted by the Khasi King, elaborate death rituals accompanied by songs and dances were performed by the Khasi king for him that lasted for three nights and four days. This death ceremony became a part of the Karbi tradition and till date is practiced among the Karbis. The four-day long festival is basically a celebration accompanied by songs and dances and various rituals for the departed souls (Zaman 2003: 45). Though with time and financial burden, the celebration of Chomangkan is almost dying away, yet its impact of non-performance is seen in the names of the Karbi population. It is a norm that a child in a family can be named only after an ancestor for whom the Chomangkan festival has been performed.Thus, in the village, there was repetition of names among the Karbis, as in each family only for a few ancestors the Chomangkan festival could be performed. Thus, when an anthropologist looks at the folklores related to this incident, it is basically studied as a part of the cultural and ritual practices of the Karbis. The significance of the folklores lies in the understanding of the culture and its ramifications. Like, for among the Karbis, the names are very common and repetitive which reflects the effects of non-performance of the Chomangkan festival.

Within the ambit of anthropological studies, the study of folklores has its own concerns too. One of the attributes of studying folklores is to understand the significance and function of the folklores within the context of the society. The folklores, besides being entertaining, had also been a source of education in the non-literate societies. The rendering of folklores reminds the society of the values, customs and beliefs that has been passed on from one generation to the other. However, it has also been seen that, many a times, the folklores had acted as subtle pressure when there has been a deviation from the accepted societal norms. The winds of change in any society which deviates from the earlier accepted norms, have been challenged and questioned by the folklores. Yet, the folklores are dynamic, and they have a way of adding new verses and tales into it, as these are derived from everyday life. With the COVID-19 situation, many of the folklores in the near future would add this phase in the tales, how the society had faced this untoward situation, how the society had coped with the mental and emotional stress, the losses and grieving in the families, etc.

3.4 ANTHROPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO STUDYING FOLKLORE

The rise of anthropology as a discipline, as stated in the earlier section, has its roots in the Western world. The industrialisation of the European nationswas a major cause for exploration and exploitation of other spaces; the need being resources to find resources in order to feed their industries and also find a market for the finished products. Thus started a history of exploration and exploitation of new spaces, non-Western regions, that were different from the Western world in their way of life. The early anthropologists wrote about the lives and cultures of these non-Western people based on the stories brought back by the travelers, the missionaries, the administrators, etc.; the scholars indulged in speculative thinking based on the comparative method of study used in biology.These as the comparisons were based on the premises of inequality putting the Western culture (civilization) on a higher scale while placing the non-Western societies at the bottom of the scale and labelled 'primitive'.The later anthropologists severely

criticized the viewpoint of the armchair anthropologists, as they never collected first-hand information and also because these studies were laced with ethnocentrism.

One of the earliest recorded fieldworks in anthropological discourse is that of Franz Boas, who, in the early 1800, had worked among the Inuit of Baffin Islands in early 1800. Kwakiutl's Winter ceremony at Tsaxis was photographed in 1854 and recorded by him. The Kwakiutl were studied for over 40 years, and, during this period, 16 mm motion picture footage of dances and games were shot, and songs and music were recorded, which remains one of the earliest works on folklores by an anthropologist.

Bronislaw Malinowski's work among the Trobriand Islanders till date remains one of the monumental works that set the trend for long extended and intensive fieldwork in anthropology. A scholar of Polish origin, who studied anthropology under C.G. Seligman in Great Britain, Malinowski's work laid down the premises of fieldwork. Malinowski spent close to thirty-one months with the Trobriand Islanders, where he pitched his tent, right in the middle of the village of Omarakana and learned the local language to collect information.

Now, as a student of folklore studies, you must be wondering what is the significance of the above fieldwork tradition? The emphasis of Malinowski's work was on long extended stay, intensive fieldwork that involved living among the 'native' people observing and local learning the language for understanding the nuances of the field. Folklores, as you all are by now acquainted with, are made up of literary materials like the legends, myths, ballads, songs, rhymes, proverbs, jokes, tales, and so on and so forth. For recording and interpretating the folklores, it is important that the folklores are correctly understood. For this to happen, learning the local language becomes imperative, else the true meaning of the folklores could be 'lost in translation'. During his stay in the field, Malinowski had collected an enormous amount of material on folklores and myths that were connected with the beliefs and traditions of the society. He further tried to assess their relevance and significance in the societies under study. Malinowski described that the interconnectedness of myths and beliefs are seen in their rituals, like the Trobriand islanders are seafaring people, and before they leave for a long fishing expedition, elaborate rituals are being performed to appease for a successful trip and that the fishermen are saved from the wrath and untoward incidences in the deep waters. In his work *Myths in Psychology* (1926), Malinowski had reflected on the proper and improper ways of studying myths. This work is seminal as his observations have been the guiding principles for folklorists too. In anthropological analysis of folklores, the emphasis is not on the folklores itself, but situating it within the context of meanings that comes from the understanding of the people and their culture. Here, one can quote Malinowski "The text, of course, is extremely important, but without the context it remains lifeless". The anthropological approach towards studying folklores is based on the emphasis of understanding the meanings within which the folklores are situated that are recorded through ethnographicstudy.

In the Indian context, since the inception of anthropological studies, the emphasis on folklores have been situated within the study of tribes. The oral traditions, among many of the earlier pre-literate societies, had been the main source of data. Some of the early works are by scholars like Cole's *Santal Folklore in Indian Antiquary* (1875), A. Campbell's *Santal Folk* Tales (1891), J.D. Anderson's *A Collection of Kachari Folk Tales and Rhymes* (1895),Bodding's *Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected Folklore* (1925), and many more. Anthropologist Verrier Elwin's (1902-1964) contribution too needs to be accounted herein as a large section of tribal oral

tradition—myths, folk poetry, riddles, folksongs, festival, tribal deity, legend, art, dance and folk medicine–marked his works (Ghosh & Mullick 2020: 529).

Some of the major anthropological works on folklores by Verrier Elwin are: *Songs of the Forest: The Folk Poetry of the Gonds* (1935), *Folk-songs of the Maikal Hills* (1944), *Folk-songs of Chhattisgarh* (1946), *Myths of Middle India* (1949), *The Tribal Art of Middle India: APersonal Record* (1951), *Tribal Myths of Orissa* (1954), *Myths of the North-east Frontier of India,* Volume 1(1958), *Folk Paintings of India* (1967), and *Folk-tales of Mahakoshal* (1980).

3.5 LET US SUM UP

"And then they danced". This is one of the aspects within a culture that many anthropologists have observed during their fieldwork. The study of dance, music, arts, oral traditions have always been an integral part of anthropological studies. Anthropologists rely on the folklores to understand such presentations within the context of culture. The study of folklores within the rubric of anthropology is conducted via fieldwork wherein the researcher gathers information for the presentation of the thick ethnography. Using the emic approach, an anthropologist situates the study of folklores in order to understand the deeper structure and meanings that make up the norms, values, organisations etc. to arrive at the overall picture of the society.

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3.7 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is anthropology?

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2. Name the different branches of anthropology.

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3. Suggest which branches of folklores would be studied in anthropology.

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4. Define culture as per anthropological parlance.

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5. How does anthropology look at folklores?

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6. Are folklores part of culture?

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7. Suggest if anyone can study folklores as part of cultural traditions in anthropology?

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8. Do you think the COVID-19 pandemic would reflect in folklores in the near future?

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9. What is the anthropological approach to study folklores?

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10. Define emic view.

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UNIT 4 FOLKLORE AND SUBALTERN STUDIES

Structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Appreciate what is indicated by the terms 'folk' and 'folklore'
- Understand the position of folklore in subaltern studies
- Analyse folklore as the voice of marginalized, depressed people
- Comprehend the idea of hegemony and folklore
- Learn how folklore represents the subaltern

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The term "folk" first appeared in Germany. At this early age of conception, it was used to denote social groups other than the cultural elite and similar social and cultural categories. Within a complex society, these lower strata and the peasants are the primary, culture-carrying social strata. After one hundred years and more, Alan Dundes tried to redefine the term "folk" to allow lore amongst those who cannot be considered "folk" by university definitions. Folklorists have long assumed that the word "folk" means illiterate, and folklore scholars consider other groups old-fashioned or exotic. Folklorists are now researching different media, including print, to see how people communicate their lore or the traditional way of living and learning.

4.1.1 The "Folk"

The term "folk" or "volk" was first used in ethnological studies in Germany, in terms like *volksleben* (folklife), *volkslied* (folksong), and *volksglaube* (folk faith& belief). However, it first appeared as "folklore" in the English language by William John Thoms in 1846. Thus, the term "folk" has been used to denote social groups other than the cultural elite and similar social and cultural categories of a population since its inception on the academic stage.Over more than a century and a half, the term "folk" has been used in various academic fields. Several nationalistic and political ideologies and recent academic orientations have contributed to various interpretations of that term, resulting in several debates about who the "folk" are.

Folklore is a historically European science that emerged from elite intellectual developments following the romantic philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Romanticists began their search for the "noble savage" outside civilised Europe and its extensions in the new (colonised) world, yearning for that past "state of nature." Overall, Ake Hultkranz correctly identified the term that,

- folk refers to the nation. This definition is quite adequate in certain languages, such as German (*volk*), French (*pueble*), Spanish (*pueblo*), and Arabic (*sha'b*); however, it is impossible in English.
- folk designates the lower stratum (*unterschicht*). This interpretation, given by M. Manhardt, Eduard Hoffmann-Krayer, and Hans Naumann, played a major role in German *volkskunde*. It designated social masses who were unsophisticated and unanalytic. This distinction between "elite" and "folk" has been heavily criticized since the 1920s.
- folk refers to an old-fashioned segment within a complex civilization—civilization being complex and typically widespread culture characterized by advanced technological resources and spiritual achievements of high order (in science and art). In Europe and Latin America, the lower stratum was considered identical with peasant society and rural social groups. Robert Redfield described the "folk" as including "peasants and rustic people who are not wholly independent of cities." In this respect, reference is to the concept of a dependent society or "half society," which, unlike a "primitive" community, does not stand in isolation from the rest of the nation. By contrast, primitive cultures are excluded from the folk category because they are, at least theoretically, complete in themselves and are isolates.
- folk labels the basic culture-carrying social stratum within a complex society. This viewpoint has been particularly emphasized by the American sociologists. It is especially applicable to large societies with a population composed of diverse ethnic groups, each with its corresponding culture (e.g., Italian, French, Japanese, and African American). One "culture" is perceived as the basic one; others are not.
- Folk denotes a social group connected by a common tradition and a peculiar feeling of communion, the basis of which is a common historical background. This mystical definition is based on a group's *esprit de corps*; it allows for a very flexible view of the criteria according to which a primary group is reckoned, with an individual's sense of belonging playing the decisive role (as quoted by El-Shamy 2011, 520).

On the other hand, folk is a social group united by a shared tradition and a distinct sense of belonging, both based on a shared historical background. This mystical definition is based on the *esprit de corps* of a group; it allows for a very flexible view of the criteria by which a primary group is measured. An individual's sense of belonging plays the most crucial role.

Alan Dundes attempted to redefine the term folk in 1965 to allow for the presence of lore among those who, by academic definitions, may not be viewed as "folk." He stated that the term "can refer to any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is" (1965, 2).

Folklore students should keep in mind that "lore" is a cultural term, whereas "folk" is a sociological reality. Although it is believed that no "folk" exists without "lore", it is essential to note that no one lives without lore. For an individual who shares a cultural element with other community members, the presence of folkloric components will not immediately turn that person into a folk; in the same way, the intellectual element of a folk's culture will not make someone a folk member of the elite.

4.1.2 Folk and the Lore

William John Thoms coined the term "folklore", proposing that the Anglo-Saxon compound folklore be used instead of the *popular antiquities* or *popular literature* to describe "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs," and other "olden time" materials. Thoms was influenced by the brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's works. They were, in turn, indebted to Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), who saw the arts of the common people (*das Volk*) as a reflection of a nation's true spirit. Unfortunately, when industrialization brought rapid change to traditional landscapes and informal ways of life, it was unusual to see folklore as a priceless national or all-human testimony from ancient times. Nevertheless, both the formal study of folklore—"folkloristics" and casual interest in it are still linked to nostalgia and apprehension about modernity.

Folklorists worldwide believed that the term "folk" refers to illiterate peasants and other groups that are considered archaic or exotic by folklorists. However, in recent decades, folklorists have come to believe that the folk are all human beings. Folklore processes involve all people, regardless of the group—sometimes as performers, often as audiences. All people come to share the folklore of many groups during their lifetimes, often crossing social and territorial boundaries.

The "lore" is the traditional knowledge, doing, or way of life mostly passed down orally or through everyday practices. Folklore forms variations within standardised structures or plot outlines, owing to such informal channels of communication. On the other hand, we cannot consider informal channels to be the only means of transmitting folklore. It has long been transmitted in various ways, including legal and religious documents, newspapers, and, more recently, television, video, and all forms of electronic media. Furthermore, well-known artists and authors have long communicated traditional themes and structures through their works. Folklorists are now researching all these different media, including print, to see how people share their lore in every arena of day-to-day life. Many films, comic books, and advertisements are based on ancient and widely circulated themes that can be attributed to their success. In films, magazines, and real-life stories, the transformation of the poor and orphaned fairy-tale heroine into a rich and beautiful queen has been re-enacted repeatedly. Some folklore themes have a psychological pull that draws people to recreate them in various modes and media century after century.

Folklorists have long viewed traditions as a repository of standardised themes, structures, and forms of knowledge that are widely distributed worldwide while also being adapted to a variety of cultures. In a tradition-directed group, these themes, structures, and forms are said to have been passed down from generation to generation. Folklore is a creative way to influence social behaviour. Folklore has become a powerful vehicle through which people can examine or critique their lives because of its aesthetic force. People create or challenge, mirror or express, and maintain or disprove values important to them in folklore. Even the simplest anecdote can express profound existential concerns. Here, an account from Odia folklore that depicts the caste position in higher academia and the subaltern's oppression, suffering, and struggle.

Ekalavya

During the Dwapar era, Eklavya approached Guru Drona and asked him to teach *yudhhavidya* or martial arts. "I cannot teach you because you are a member of the Savar community," Drona said reluctantly. So, he learned on his own and acknowledged Drona as his inspiration. However, instead of encouraging, Drona asked him to sever his thumb as *gurudakshina*. Many years later, in the 21st century, Eklavya was a researcher at a premier technological institute of the country. When Professor Drona realised that the student was only the Ekalavya of the Dwapara era, he got outraged. Because it was a democracy, no one had the authority to expel him from the institution, but he was repeatedly critical of Eklavya's research for different reasons. Eventually, he ordered him to leave the lab, citing his frequent failures in his research work (Bag 2012, 46).

Tradition, according to folklorists, is a construction in which the past is always interpreted in the present. All traditions, in this sense, entail change. Past interpretations can be unintentional or intentional, unconscious, or conscious. Inventions based on traditional forms that people perceive to be particularly valuable are commonly used as national symbols worldwide. As a result, the creation and selection of national symbols are fraught with cultural politics. However, folklorists have been involved in nation-building, and the ensuing class and power struggles, around the world.

4.2 FOLKLORE AND THE SUBALTERN

At the early inception of folklore, the very nature of "folk" was the only sense of subaltern. Some folklorists, such as Vladimir Propp have opined that, "Folklore is, first and foremost, the art of the oppressed classes, both peasants and workers, but also of the intermediate strata that gravitate toward the lower social classes" (1997, 5). Peasants and the proletariat create folklore as a form of defiance and opposition to the dominant classes, who express themselves through art and literature. However, folklore is not limited to the lower classes or oppressed ones; the upper classes and those in positions of power also have lore. Unlike anthropologists and sociologists, who usually concentrate on the community as the ethnographic object, folklorists focus on form and genre.

Nevertheless, folklorists have always been aware of their role in the development of the category of folklore. Around the world, nationalist, populist, revolutionary, and colonialist scholars have continued to create cultural objects in the hopes of modeling social futures. Gramsci saw folklore as a springboard for revolution. Folklore, as he saw, was an incoherent philosophy cobbled together from cultural relics that had found their way to the lower echelons of society. The social construction of "the folk"and the

relationship between texts and social power are overt critical interventions in the process by which folklore may influence other political manifestations of "the people." They have made significant contributions to critiques of power and oppressive or dominant moralities.

4.2.1 Subaltern Studies

The term "subaltern" has a long and illustrious past. During the Middle Ages, it was primarily used to describe serfs and peasants in England. The military's lower ranks later adopted it by 1700. After Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), an Italian Marxist and Communist Party leader, it gained widespread scholarly acceptance. Gramsci used the term in a broader sense of "class." He believes that the history of the oppressed is almost always intertwined with the history of the ruling classes. Furthermore, this history is "fragmentary and episodic" in nature.

The Subaltern Studies began its illustrious career in England at the end of the 1970s when a small group of English and Indian historians discussed subaltern themes and started a new journal in India. *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* has been published in three volumes by Oxford University Press in New Delhi. Since 1982, these have been published annually, and their success has prompted Ranajit Guha to edit three additional volumes over the next five years. By 1993, the group he recalls as "a collection of marginalised academics" had gained enough international clout that the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group was inspired by this interdisciplinary organisation of South Asian scholars led by Ranajit Guha. Burton Stein could point to the growing interest in Subaltern Studies as evidence that the 1980s were "a decade of historical efflorescence" in South Asian studies by 1990. Subaltern Studies has emerged as a weapon, magnet, target, lightning rod, hitching post, icon, gold mine, and fortress for scholars from history to political science, anthropology, sociology, literary criticism, and cultural studies in the last three decades.

Subaltern Studies originality arose from its desire to rewrite the nation outside the state-centred national discourse that replicates colonial power and knowledge in a globalised world. This new kind of national history comprises scattered moments and fragments of those sought after by subaltern historians in colonialism's ethnographic present. Moreover, writing such history is subversive to cultural politics in that it exposes oppressive forms of power and knowledge while also offering liberating alternatives. In this project, historians and postcolonial critics join forces to fight colonial modernity and ensure a better future for subaltern peoples by learning to listen to them, allowing them to speak, speaking out against powers that oppress them, and documenting their history.

4.2.2 Gramsci on Folklore

Gramsci situates folklore in a socio-cultural context, "within the framework of a nation and its culture," but in opposition to official worldviews. Gramsci's worldview is that folklore is distinctive of strata of society, namely the "people," which can be defined as "all the subaltern and instrumental classes in every civilization that has existed up to now," therefore a diverse collective. Consequently, folklore must be viewed as a reflection of the people's cultural circumstances.

Gramsci insisted that "folklore must not be seen as something eccentric, strange, or charming, but as something serious and important" (1985, 191).Nonetheless, he proposed that educators examine how traditional customs influence schoolchildren to

discover what other conceptions of the world and life are active, allowing teachers to target these alternatives and replace them with "superior" notions.

As a historical process, the concept of the subaltern has inextricably been linked to the state and to an unavoidable relationship with hegemonic culture. Because the Romantic notion only applied to peasants, the idea of the subaltern is larger than the notion of the folk. Folklore, in Gramsci's formulation, is thus a component of the culture of subaltern groups. They may be very different from one another, and their culture is very heterogeneous in origin, consisting of elements generated within the group and elements borrowed from hegemonic groups. Still, they all have one thing in common: none of these groups exercises hegemony. As a result, the term "popular" does not refer to any inherent quality; instead, it refers to one's position. Gramsci saw folklore as a prominent feature of social life with political repercussions. The message itself may be said to reveal that Gramsci was interested in the political influence of folklore.

Gramsci takes folklore very seriously since, to him, it was "lowest level of popular culture," a potentially imprisoning conventional worldview that people who only comprehend the world through its veil can be trapped in. In his "Observations," folklore is

> 'a conception of the world and life'implicit to a large extent in determinate (in time and space) strata of society and in opposition (also for the most part implicit, mechanical, and objective) to 'official' conceptions of the world (or in a broader sense, the conceptions of the cultured parts of historically determinate societies) that have succeeded one another in the historical process. (1985, 189)

Further, Gramsci asserts that folklore is fragmentary—incoherent, systematic, and consistent—because it is stratified.

The basic concept of Gramsci's ideas about folklore and language, commonsense, religion, and even human personality, is the idea of fragmentation by stratification. And the stratification he refers to is where a particular body of knowledge is a repository for discarded ideas that were formerly thought of as correct by a prominent class. Finally, folklore stands in opposition to the establishment. In that case, it is to be expected that it will fight back somehow, through the methods that Gramsci attributes to the dominant worldviews and practices. Because modern science and philosophy are tied first, it is not a surprise that they lead the rankings. In addition to classifying creative art, Gramsci also contrasts the more localised aesthetics of folk art with broader creations, classifying folk art as exhibiting a more significant concern for localized aesthetics.

Gramsci claims that the study of folklore may contribute to remedying shortcomings in traditional schooling. Also, as Gramsci notes, before Mussolini's rule, children were taught science, "civic rights and duties," which "conflicted with the magical conception of the world and nature they absorbed from an environment steeped in folklore"—or, as he states bluntly, "the school combated folklore" (1971, 34).

Gramsci examines vernacular politics through the study of common sense, another embodiment of spontaneous philosophy. Common sense is defined as a view of the universe that is acquired blindly in many social and cultural environments and influences the moral individuality of the average person. Gramsci does note that though common sense and folklore may appear similar, there are notable differences. Folklore tends to be more conservative than common sense at both a political and chronological level, as folklore is more reticent to change in its estimation. Unlike dialect, which is generally restricted to a particular provincial region, common sense deals with class divisions.

The different social classes have a common sense of rivalry with other classes, when measured against the system of class hierarchy that defines social stratification. Common sense, according to Gramsci, lacks the notion of causality when applying it to judgment, given the prominence of tradition in folklore. It means that common sense encourages people to consider their social status when they notice stratification, even if it seems natural. As an adherent of the theory of cultural hegemony, Gramsci argued that folklore is unlikely to influence reflexivity because it is the most conservative and traditional type of knowledge.

Gramsci's novel distinction between common sense (*il senso commune*) and good sense (*il buon senso*) revolves around the degree of contemplation involved. Good sense is the "healthy core" of common sense, which should be improved by teaching (1971: 328). There is more to good sense than applying reasonable tactics permitted by a particular hegemonic order, as in keeping silent during fascism. A person with a good sense also possesses social and empirical knowledge and the ability to understand how different hegemonic functions appreciate the philosophy of praxis. Philosophy proper is more aligned with excellent sense than with common sense. According to Gramsci, processes that progressively liberate understanding will include folklore, common sense, good sense, and philosophy. Overall, Gramsci sought an education programme that would replace folklore with science, civics, and common sense and proceed to philosophy and a singular vernacular.

Gramsci's pedagogical agenda is necessary for the significance of his work in folklore studies. Upon understanding the difference between folklore and mythology, he recognised that one could study the worldview through folklore; as he stated, "I could research folklore as a conception of the world." Marxist ideology holds that traditional folklore is an "opiate of the masses," a deceptive device that helps keep the working classes passive and in their place. Folklore had to be eradicated to free the oppressed rural peasants and urban proletarian workers from their servitude. Gramsci supported educational endeavours. So, he felt that teachers should better comprehend their students' worldview by studying folklore and, in that way, provide a better education. Gramsci considered folklore to be a valuable and necessary material for serious study. Rather than being dismissed or trivialized, it contrasts with other twentieth-century intellectuals who invoked Gramsci to justify their distinctions between folk and scholars. Gramsci advocated for a radical shared identification between the two. Overcoming reliance on folklore, according to Gramsci, is an early step toward the abolition of class inequality. He criticizes fellow folklorists for being enamoured with their objects of study, believing this to be a misplaced desire that contributes to the perpetuation of the few remaining systems of social hierarchy.

4.2.3 The Lore of Subaltern

There was a surge of interest in the literature, activities, and beliefs exhibited by the European lower classes in the nineteenth century. They are also classified as vernacular in folklore, culture, and language studies. When anthropologist Margaret Lantis redefined the term "vernacular" to refer to "the commonplace" in 1960, it became popular for usage in cultural theory more broadly. For her, "high" culture was solely accessible to society's elites, while "vernacular culture" was open to everybody. As a result of this usage, the phrase "culture theory" become associated with two meanings and trajectories. Vernacular forms are those available to individuals or groups who are subservient to institutions, and they are also a common resource available to everyone through informal social interaction.

However, the term "vernacular" can be interpreted in three theoretically distinct ways. For starters, the vernacular is frequently imagined as a local expression different from larger institutional discourses. According to this the vernacular voice is that of the subordinate counteragent seeking to be heard over the hegemony. In a second theoretical framework, the vernacular is conceived of a shared resource, a *sensus communis* or *community doxa*. According to this "common resource" perspective, the vernacular is a communal chorus that emerges from the diversity of voices speaking in the non-institutional discursive spaces of quotidian life. Both conceptions are based on a strict division that ignores vernacular and institutional interdependence. The third conception, the "dialectical" vernacular, addresses this concern by returning to the word's ancient origins to emphasize that what is vernacular is only so when it is distinguished from what must come structurally before it—the institutional. As a result, these institutions are inextricably linked to the vernacular. This viewpoint frees the vernacular from the obligation to demonstrate genuine ties to a specific tradition or community. At the same time, it accounts for the appearance of vernacular meanings embedded in largely institutional objects or expressive behaviours. As just a result, the dialectical conception of the vernacular resists essentializing any expression as entirely vernacular or folkloric.

The subaltern folk view emphasizes a community of individuals or groups that are alternatives to institutions, the common resource view of life in the context of human expression. Subaltern lore can be viewed as a non-institutional expression that can be used to empower marginalized groups. It finds a crucial identity in people who are marginalized because they are inevitably empowered. The critical identification of the term in the common resource conception is found in conditions that allow for informal social processes to affect the speech of agents over time.

When studying contemporary expressions that mix institutional and non-institutional materials, such as social media, a dialectical conception of the vernacular is particularly beneficial. The result combines institutional and vernacular or subaltern expression when commercially generated institutional recordings are blended into a local live performance. In internet-based folk expression, such entanglements of mass media, commercial, and folkloric expression are particularly widespread. Both the upper and lower classes combine commercially generated media or social media content to create hybrid "vids," "mashups," or "image macros," to convey their everyday inventiveness. These are the products of today's "folk" and "subaltern lore"—ordinary people making meaning for themselves out of what they have on hand in their cultural repertoire.

4.2.4 Folklore and Hegemony

According to Marxist philosophy, cultural hegemony is the dominance of the ruling class by manipulating its culture and making a class of rulers the accepted cultural norm. Thus, the social, political, and economic status quo is justified by this generally accepted dominant ideology. Cultural hegemony suggests that the ruling class's imposed cultural norms or bourgeois cultural hegemony should not be regarded as natural and inevitable but as a product of the ruling class's power. Such knowledge and practice are essential to the intellectual and political freedom of the proletariat, so that workers and peasants, and urban and rural dwellers, can build a culture that is specifically adapted to their social and economic needs as social classes.

Cultural hegemony in a society is a complex of stratified social structures. Each social and economic class has a social purpose and an internal class logic that allows its members to behave in ways distinct from those of other social classes coexisting with

them. The classes will be able to converge into a society with a greater social mission because of their different social purposes. When a person perceives the social structures of bourgeois cultural hegemony, personal common sense plays a dual, structural role (private and public) in daily life. But the small segment of the social order stratum that each person experiences as the status quo of life in society; "the way things are." Individuals' perceptions of the more significant nature of cultural hegemony's systematic socio-economic exploitation are hampered by the emergence of personal common perceptual limitations. Because of the disparity in perceptions of the status quo—bourgeois culture's socio-economic hierarchy—most people are more concerned with their immediate (private) personal concerns than with distant (public) regards. They thus do not consider or question the fundamental sources of their socio-economic oppression and its social, personal, and political discontents.

Before moving on to the analysis and adaptation of Gramsci's theories, it is helpful to review Gramsci's views on folklore. Gramsci's concept of hegemony incorporates and expands on ideas about ideology and culture, as explored in Raymond Williams' work *Marxism and Literature* (1977). According to Gramsci, those in power do not govern strictly by force; instead, they must gain the consent of the ruled. Hegemonic governments are concerned with the consciousness and mentalities of their people to establish hegemony. To some extent, a regime takes precedence because others accept its concepts and, consequently, its conditions of existence on the periphery. In the opinion of Williams, the concepts discussed here have a double advantage, which makes them preferable to Marxist ideas that are not as refined. Before that, it connects dominance and subservience to social organization and socialization processes—as Gramsci asserts, "in every 'hegemonic' relationship, the hegemonic actor is necessarily educational" (1971, 350).

Furthermore, hegemonyemphasises cultural activity as a fundamental rather than an auxiliary construct. Hegemony is a process, and because of that, it has educational aspects and stems from a desire for prestige. Identity creation is recognized as a crucial political action for both the powerful and the disempowered in hegemony. It is never complete or perfect or permanent—they rise, fall, integrate, and are integrated into others. Even though hegemonic positions arise relative to other ways of organising consciousness, these positions are relatively stable. Hegemonic control is constantly being fought for, both locally and globally.

Folklore records previous ways of thinking about hegemony as a body of performances and localised knowledge. More importantly, for Gramsci, folklore has constitutive potential because many people believe and practice the ideals it represents, and they build their identities around them. Only traditional parochial views of the world and the inherent inconsistencies of these people, he thought, would organize politics. The belief that folklore contributed to the underground of the dominant regime of his time is partly a rational reason why he has charged intellectual teratology "the admirers of folklore who advocate its preservation" with "preventing educational and political mobility" (1971, 197). From this point of view, we must react to any serious investigation into the perspective of Gramsci.

4.2.5 Folklore: The Subaltern Representation and Position

Gramsci defines folklore as "more than a collection of ancient tales, songs, and legends." Instead, he claims that folklore is the perspective of a marginalised group on their lives and the world around them. Thus, folklore is never independent of the hegemonic

sphere, even though it does correspond to the formation of a distinct cultural perspective. Even if this antagonism is often passive or unintentional, subaltern cultures are opposed to and influenced by hegemonic worldviews.

Gramsci's subaltern research programme was developed and adapted to the context of (post)colonial India by the Subaltern Studies project. The project's main goal was to rewrite Indian history between colonialism and decolonization from the perspective of the rural poor. As a result, the Subaltern Studies historiographical project criticizes elitist approaches to India's colonialist, British, Indian (neo)nationalist, bourgeois history, which have misrepresented or downplayed the role of subaltern groups in both the independence struggle and the construction of the Indian nation.

Gayatri Spivak's postcolonial theory of the subaltern is predicated on the margin, which she refers to as the silenced center. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is the title of a seminal essay written by her. In this essay, Spivak examines the fate of the subaltern subject and how the politics of representation can taint it. Because only the privileged people in the society can have adequate representation, effective representation of the subaltern subjects may be futile. And, the subaltern will always be on the margins, in the silent center, in the center of voicelessness. Spivak believes that when a subaltern speaks, they lose their status as a subaltern. As a result, subalterns are marginalised people who lack a voice and find it difficult to speak. The crux of Spivak's argument is that those in positions of power cannot represent the oppressed. They are topics that should be able to speak for themselves. They should be creators of their voices and masters of their voices.

Partha Chatterjee argued that the history produced in India in the 1960s and 1970s, which he refers to as the "new scientific history" of post-colonial India, to which the Subaltern Studies owes its productive antagonism. It was institutionalised by consciously purging the popular and the penchant for being in old social history, making the profession of historical study less prestigious. As a "lived tradition" of the people, this "old social history" draws its materials from folk culture, dynastic histories, and literary mythologies. Even after the birth of scientific historiography, there were still "other large spaces" where this old form of social history was written, away from the purview of historians in major universities. Many of these old-fashioned writings were empirically similar to academic history scholars; they "shared an orientation to the popular" and were excluded fromlegitimate professional historiography. They were "rejected a permissible place in academia; they had to seek validation from the forces of the public domain." This old social history has returned to haunt the academic profession, which is now aligned with the goals of the nation-state to validate state-supported religious-nationalist practices and policies. Chatterjee argues that we should pay attention to this crisis and develop a "new analytic of the popular."

Subalternity has a dual aspect in Subaltern Studies. First, when searching for autonomous subaltern traces in the (post)colonial archive, Subaltern Studies treats subalterns as a sociological object of historiographical inquiry. Second, it has become a point of observation that corrects the historical neglect of the subaltern communities. As a result, the use of the term "subaltern" in Subaltern Studies is both epistemic and socio historical. Subalternity refers to a position outside the hegemonic domain, and it is used as a meta-theoretical tool to critique and revitalise historiography. Overall, and important is that the Gramscian critical folklore studies are founded on the "urgency of acclimating folklore and its correlates for political action and social change" (Gencarella 2010, 238).

4.2.5.1 *Bathou* and Other Accounts of Subaltern Folklore

In his paper "Folklore and Politics with Special Reference to the Bodo,"Faguna Barmahalia discussed that Bathou is the indigenous religion of the Bodos. The Bathou religion has recently been relegated to the revival line. Bathou's worship as the supreme god was resurrected as a result. This folk religion is now playing an important role in the Bodos' re-establishment of their identity. The adherents of Bathouism believe that other religious practices have distorted the original myths and religion, thereby marginalising their language, culture, and tradition. The modified form of the Bathou religion continues to play an essential role in re-creating the Bodos' identity. Many educated Bodos have returned to their ancestral faith. In the courtyards of many educated Bodo families today, we can see a Bathou altar.

Like the Bodos, the Meiteis of Manipur were converted into Vaishnavism under the Chaitanya School. In the first half of the 20th century, a group of Meitei cultural revivalists started to restore the lost Meitei cultural identity to search for cultural self-definition. A strong tendency among the Meiteis to retain the mirror of their ancient culture through the recapturing of their lost cultural history has been visible in the present society of the Meiteis. The indigenous religion of the Meiteis, Sanamahi Laining, has been successfully revived, and the number of followers is gradually increasing. Folklore has been used to raise awareness of minority identity in this revivalist movement.

Many traditional performing arts also play an important role in restoring the pre-Hindu culture of the Meiteis in this cultural revival movement. In the traditional Wari Leeba performing arts, storytelling has become an essential means to mobilise people into changing their attitudes to their cultural traditions. Since the population of Manipur has an original inclination towards history and music, Wari Leeba has a vital role to play in engaging people in the cultural revival movement. Wari Leeba is increasingly recognised as a tool to revive the indigenous culture to avoid cultural loss or uprooting. Thus, the counter-discourse regulates the Meiteis' cultural impoverishment during a period of Hinduization. The Meitei myths can demythologise foreign cultural historiography in Wari Leeba. It is now used to decolonise the mind.

Likewise, Dalits and Bahujan scholars, subaltern communities, have an independent, autonomous culture that rejects any resemblance to Brahminical hegemony and even questions its power. The performances of Dina-Bhadri and Reshma-Chuharmal are first-rate examples. Dina-Bhadri is an epic story about two Musahar (a traditional rat-catcher caste from Bihar) brothers who fought against the feudal system. Reshma-Chuharmal, on the other hand, is the story of Reshma, the daughter of a feudal landlord from the upper caste of Bhumihar, and Chuharmal, a cowherd and warrior from the lower caste of Dusadh. The legend of Chuharmal has long been popular in the Magahi region.Chuharmal was a thief, according to George A. Grierson (1885, 407). He, along with William Crooke (1896,197), painted a negative picture of Chuharmal. However, for a time, the lower caste Naxalite guerrillas fighting against the feudal landlords used slogans such as "Chuharmal Baba ki Jai!" (Hail Chuharmal!) and "Dina Bhadri ki Jai!" to honour caste legends such as Chuharmal and Dina Bhadri. (Dina-Bhadri salutes you).

Interestingly, during the Mandal movement in 1990, Chuharmal was portrayed as a lower caste hero. Lalu Prasad Yadav, the then-chief minister of Bihar, who rose to prominence as a charismatic leader from an OBC background, inaugurated the "Chuharmal Fair" and sought his blessings. Chuharmal was portrayed as a symbol of social justice. "O Pasi, Dusadh, Kalwar, Chamar, Dhamar brothers (Dalits and

Backward Classes), remember Baba Chuharmal and defeat the upper castes who believe that a king is born from the womb of a queen," pleaded Lalu Prasad Yadav (Prakash 2019, 234-239).

"The Sunbird"

A sunbird dug a hole in which to lay her eggs. Rainwater came down after it laid its eggs in the pit. When a cow stepped on it, the pit grew. A pig put his face in the pit and made it bigger. The hole grew more prominent. Then, a buffalo saw water in a big place and rolled there. It looked like a small pond. Finally, a farmer made the place into a pond. When he called a Brahmin to perform the ritual independently, the sunbird, pig, cow, and buffalo came and said, "Whose pond is this pond?" The farmer said, "I've dug it up, it's mine." These animals said, "So, where is our share?" (Mishra 2012, 149)

The Odia folktale, "*The Sunbird"*, is another subaltern narrative that calls power or authority into question. But, unfortunately, the domain of folklore, in which the subaltern speaks, narrates, critiques, and questions the system, power, history, religion, as well as other human aspects and socio-political positions, is frequently unheard. Therefore, Spivak believes that there must be an interaction between the class and the subaltern subject to ennoble and enable subaltern representation by the privileged class.

4.2.5.2 Subaltern Folklore and Literature

Folklore, particularly oral tradition, has become inextricably linked with the term "literature." Creative authors incorporate folk tales, proverbs, idioms, and other verbal expressions of concerned communities worldwide. Authors have attempted to document tales as their own since the beginning of the written literary period, and these have been retold, republished, and reproduced by several others. The ancient texts like *Gathasaptasatti* and *Brihatkatha* can be called as books of traditions, and they can be called the literatures of the ancient Indian languages such as Maharastri Prakrit, and Paiúâcî, which were, of course, the then subaltern speeches. And, according to a legend, King Satavahana rejected *Brihatkatha* since it was written in a language other than Sanskrit.

Sarala Das, an early Odia poet, most likely incorporated several stories into the Sanskrit Mahabharata and re-narrated it from his own sectarian perspectives. "Sâhâdâbrukshyamahâtmya (where Gandhari has been married to a toothbrush tree as her horoscope predicted that her husband would die immediately after her marriage)," and "Jhimânikhela (a kind of game likely Kabaddi was played by Kauravas and Pandavas)" from *Adiparba* are examples of such stories as well as cultural practices. The *Sarala Mahabharata* is a subaltern narrative in terms of language objectification. Writing the *Mahabharata* in Odia, Sarala Das makes it a point to break away from the Sanskrit original both in structure and spirit.Still, he unequivocally gives it a voice of protest to the monopoly of orthodoxy and the authoritarianism of the Brahmins down the ages.

Basudev Sunani, a well-known contemporary Odia poet, has two important anthologies: *Mahulabana* (*mahua* forest) and *Karadi Hata* (bamboo-shoot market). Among the poems included in these anthologies are "Kure-Patra" (Conessi Leaf), "Makar Biha" (Monkey Marriage), "Mandia Bila O Nani" (Millet Field and the Sister), "Chhelien Bai" (Goat-grazer's Elder-sister), and "Boel"(the local god and goddess's pilgrimage

on their day of worship). The poet attempts to capture the spirit of western Odisha's heritage and folklore through elegant similes and a story-telling technique, where nature and culture are depicted in a modern societal context. In another poem, "Coaching Centre", from the collection *Cast Out*, the poet attacks the convoluted age-old cultural practice of "purity" and "pollution."An upper-caste man is said to be polluted by the touch of an untouchable man. He gets purified by taking a dip in water and getting a change of clothes. But the poet questions why the same logic does not apply to the untouchables themselves. Why does their untouchability not go away? He writes:

> Howsoever much
> They rub themselves
> With soap and water
> And splash and dip
> And scrub and polish,
> They cannot shake off untouchability
> Which clings to their bodies. (Sunani 2008,11)

Sunani also documented folklore and their day-to-day culture in *Dalit SanskrutiraItihasa* (The History of Dalit Culture, 2009), as a passive folklore writer, attempting to recall the cultural past and reinstate the value.

In Odisha and across India, contemporary subaltern literary artists are seeking to include their culture and folklore into their work. Some of those discussed here are Narayan, Jacinta Kerketta, Usha Kiran, and Anuj Lugun.

Narayan's novel, *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* (2011), is based on Kerala's Malayarayar tribe. The story follows an Adivasi couple through various stages of their lives. It records a vivid account of their daily traditions, allowing the reader to learn about and experience the tribe's cultural traditions. Jacinta Kerketta is a promising young poet from the Oraon community. She moves through various aspects of Adivasi life in her anthology of poems *Angor* (2016). She offers a critical Adivasi perspective on the modern "development" model and its erosion of cultural and communitarian roots. *Motyarin* (1993) is also an anthology of poems by Usha Kiran Atram, a Gondi writer. Motyarin, the female head who oversees the overall activities in Gotul, is regarded as the most important center of knowledge in the Koitur community. She uses several metaphors for nature throughout the books, emphasising the close relationship between the Adivasis and the natural world. She asks the Adivasi community to fight against violence, injustice, the loss of culture, and the exploitation of Adivasi land. Anuj Lugun's anthology of short stories is called *Baagh aur Sugna Munda ki Beti* (2017). Throughout the book, Lugun explores this contradiction by presenting the Adivasi worldview and the destruction caused by capitalist and colonial ideologies.

The subaltern authors have been explicitly articulated and represented in subaltern literature that has borrowed its content and style from folklore. Using myth, folklore, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, language, whether oral or written, and pictures, still or moving, subaltern authors have questioned the status quo, while also imparting cultural value to the next generation to continue the tradition.

4.3 LET US SUM UP

Scholars of folklore have attempted to comprehend Gramsci's idea of folklore and its political implications for a couple of decades. Gramsci used the study of common

sense to investigate the politics of the vernacular. He claimed that because folklore is a conservative and traditional form of knowledge, it is unlikely to influence reflexivity. Gramsci believed that studying folklore would help teachers better understand their students' worldviews. He wanted to replace folklore with science, civics, common sense, and a unique vernacular in his education. To understand the significance of Gramsci's work, one must first understand his pedagogical agenda. From a second theoretical perspective, the vernacular is a shared resource, a *sensus communis*, or a community *doxa*. Subaltern lore can be thought of as a non-institutional form of expression used to empower marginalised people. Finally, the spirit of folklore studies should be changed and deepened and extended to achieve the desired result. Folklore should not be thought of as an eccentricity, an oddity, or a picturesque element, but rather as something serious and taken seriously. Only in this way will folklore teaching be more effective and result in the birth of new lore or voice among the common people.But, more importantly, as Gabriel stated, it "is in a true sense, a form of counterculture and cannot, by its very nature, become institutionalised or domesticated into a hegemonic culture" (2000, 111).

4.4 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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4.5 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How has the term "folk", ever since its first use in Germany, been conceptualized in folklore studies?

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2. Discuss how do we generate lore as "folk" and share it in our groups and with others.

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3. Is there a subaltern "lore"? Discuss it briefly.

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4. How does Marxism view cultural hegemony and folklore?

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5. Discuss folklore as the socio-cultural representation of subalterns.

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6. Subaltern folklore does more than speak; it also questions power. Discuss the statement citing evidence from folk narratives.

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7. What is your take on the relationship between folklore and literature? Discuss how have creative authors incorporated elements of folklore into their literature.

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8. Discuss Gramsci's observation on folklore in brief.

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9. Like the folk heroes Dina-Bhadri and Chuharmal, can you identify and discuss other folk heroes who have similarly influenced India's politics.

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10. Collect and discuss folk tales and songs from the subaltern groups that represent their issues.

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UNIT 5 FOLKLORE AS PERFORMATIVE AND VISUAL CULTURE

Structure

5.0 OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit the student will be able to:

- Draw in meanings of what is meant by a performative culture
- Analyse how performative culture works within folklore
- Discern critically performance theories and its applicability to folklore
- Draw in examples of folkloric performance from India
- Understand what we mean by visual culture and look at the various theories behind it
- Analyse various visual folk cultural traditions from India
- Look at urban folk visual as well as performative art

5.1 INTRODUCTION

While one must recognise the cultural values and the semantics behind folklore, we must see folklore as "actions and communications within a culture created by the

community members." As determined by Simon Bronner, folklore is practice and is a doing that is mediated by the individuals. Ben Amos also sees folklore sometimes as becoming an occupation and a trade and an evolved form of art and creativity. Roger Abraham talked about how one must look at cultural tradition being passed down generally and how it is performative. Folklore is artistic communication that is tangible, real and definitive. While it is dynamic and changes over time, it follows certain codes and conventions that are set within the traditional framework. Hence, we must cut across lines of just determining the context and society behind the folk culture and look at the specifics within the expressive content. It is a symbolic presentation of a contained yet dynamic heritage of a community. Kenneth Burke laid the foundations to study the performance-oriented folkloric studies that was carried further by Roger Abraham and Simon Bronner. Roger Abraham takes the studies of performance and visual culture a little further and says it is also important to look at the conditions that make the individual choose the artistic action and look at the agency of the person involved in that occupation.

Bauman says that it is important not only to define the aesthetic form but also look deeply at the mechanics of doing the event. The event undoubtedly has great social significance; however, one has to go beyond that and look at the mechanics of doing the creative action and the process beyond the event holds a pivotal meaning. Richard Bauman sees three important things behind any performative culture: 1) The central idea behind the artistic expression, the specific communication behind it; 2) The meanings behind the aesthetic practice and its social significance; and 3) Look at the aesthetic significance of the occasion, look at the codes of the artistic idea, that is dramatically the sets, costumes, text and visually the mechanics of creativity, materials used, etc. This makes the performative and visual culture special and out of the mundane daily activities. This not only gives meaning to that culture but also renders it a special uniqueness.

Performances hence need to go beyond the text, and one not only has to determine the individual behind the action, but also examine the context and representation of the act. One must also understand the self-reflexivity of the performer. Simon Bronner talks about identifying the five attributes of a performative culture—firstly, he says one must determine the uses of the performance which could be directly related to society or just for entertainment; secondly, one has to understand the hidden metaphors behind the performance; thirdly, one must look at the social relationships behind the performance, here the ideas of power and agency is examined; the fourth thing to keep in mind is how does the action then change the social structure, how does thought and action interact; and lastly, one has to see performances as practices that are constantly repeated and set in conventions.

Charles Briggs is of the opinion that one should strongly look at the interplay of psychoanalysis and performance. This, according to him, helps the audiences to look at the hidden meanings within the text. Going further from this premise, we can say that, as Roger Abraham has determined, we must see folklore in performance as a showcasing or demonstrating culture and is a product by which the performers come together within a system. One should also examine the relationship between the performer and the audience to whom it is being performed. However, one cannot deny the artistic freedom that the performer has and the improvisations he is allowed to make. As art is stylistic, it is different from daily life. Therefore, one must see this distinction when we examine folklore in performance. Folkloric performances also hence must enthrall and excite the audiences as it removes from the mundane way of life. Any performance

also creates a feeling of anticipation in the audience that the artistic experience must fulfil. The artist accordingly has a responsibility to the audience and to the form as he must make it appealing.

Creative performances also call for a final climax and a grand ending that will draw the people in the show. While it is true that any performance comes alive only when it is performed, we cannot overlook the historical context. As Charles W. Joyner opines, folklore performances should be seen in the behavioural aspects and also include the social, cultural, economic aspects within the larger context of history. Many variables determine the performance including the family, gender, age, class and caste in the context of India, and it also includes the individual performer's own ideas.

Going forward from all the above points, we can say with much determination that in the anthropological lens societies are always performing. Here, the significance of the social context of the performance becomes vital. In this respect, we must look at the pioneering work of Milton Singer. Singer deeply observed the Hindu traditions and Hinduism and determined the culture behind the performances. He believed if one observes the cultural performances deeply one will be able to discern the values behind it. Going further from Singer's revolutionary ideas, we can determine the social context behind it.

Accordingly, one must make a critical difference between performing culture and a cultural performance. A cultural performance is an event like a music performance or a play, while a performing culture is everyday practices of a member of a community. We must understand that performances are part of the heritage of the community and could include religious events. Events are bounded in set structures and follow some codes and regulations, while performing cultures are determined by age, sex, religion, caste, social, economic and political realities of the community. The next two sections will look at both performing cultures as well folklore as a performative culture specifically. We will look at some theoretical ideas behind it.

5.2 FOLKLORE AS PERFORMATIVE CULTURE (SOME THEORIES AND IDEAS)

5.2.1 The Sense of Self with the Community

Performative culture takes on meanings on the individual performer, that is the meaning of the self. We also need to determine how the artist works within his familial structure, his family, his community and the agency of self becomes important in this case. Karl Marx, in his book *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, recognizes that people make their own histories within constraining/enabling spatial contexts, and these develop locales or settings that foster interactions between individual selves and others and help to change or create new histories. The human body, therefore, becomes the site of identity formation that results out of such interactions between selves and others. Foucault believes that the power of knowledge (the knowledge of individual consciousness) leads the agency of change and power revisions in gender to operate. According to him, the internal knowledge or the acknowledgements of individual self- worth and self-merit become the determining factors that disseminate the effects of power. According to him, once the knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, and transposition, one is able to capture

the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power (*History of Sexuality* 69).

The family's role in setting strong patriarchal social relationships is highly influential, and the artist must negotiate within that space constantly. Going further, it is also important to remember here that performers in India today are placed in an economy that is largely neoliberal space, indicative by heavy urbanization, lavish lifestyle and migration of the rural populace in urban towns and cities. Performative folk culture is sometimes "just one more vehicle to mobilize capital for the corporate world" (V Sharma, *Performance and Affect in Neoliberal Times* 230).

The leading sociologist Irving Goffman determines that the presentation of the self of the artist is often based on opinions of the audiences. Hence, often performances have to impress or have a leading impact on viewers. Goffman hence determines physical spaces in the performance areas; the stage is a place where the perceptions of the viewers can be both controlled and constructed, while the backstage and the green room is where there is no control, and the performers can relax totally. Goffman also says that the theatre arena with its furniture, sets and lights is almost like an "external society".

5.2.2 Conventions of a Performative Culture

One important aspect that controls the audience into the performance and is a benchmark of performative culture are the costumes adorned by the artists. The clothing and the physical appearance both are strong attributes of a performer. According to Hilda Kuper, clothing carries within it a "bundle of cultural symbols". Power is not only revealed in the costumes, but becomes a device or a method to which impress the viewership. Often, we see that rituals create a world and costumes define that world. Richard Schechner talks about the importance of studying performative culture in its totality, which also includes the in-depth study of the costumes and hence one needs to adapt a broad-spectrum approach.

There is a match between the stage settings and the settings of the personal actor that helps the audience to get into the ambience of the folk performative culture. In the folk performances, the audiences come with certain expectations, and oftentimes we see that if codes and conventions of the folk performances are compromised, it can lead to discomfort amongst the viewers. Then, however aesthetically appealing the performances will be, they will always be viewed as a "failure". Hence, the folk performances are a living tradition which includes popular sayings, dances, music, dance, theatre and which takes place between the individual and the heritage.

Bruce McConachie determines that the theatre is one such place that draws in the audiences into a false world. Hence, it is an interesting psychological pulling of the viewers into the fictional text through the help of devices and these need to be discussed here. In performances, there is a greater amount of self-reflexivity as they are special and do not occur every day. They are bounded and can be analysed in set terms. They are not a part of daily occurrence and usually are fixed in a set time period. Here the "moments" become pivotal, as the consciousness of the spectator is a heightened sensibility. As McConachie determines, three mental concepts are merged in the viewers that help them get into the act of the performative culture, identity, character and the actor. This hence helps the audience to suspend their beliefs momentarily and get into the act. The bounded performative culture becomes a pulling factor due to certain methods that the performances go through. Let us look at them:

5.2.2.1 Rehearsal Process

While studying folk performative cultures, we must focus on the process of the rehearsal and not just the final show. Schechner, the leading performance studies scholar, advocates for a complete study of the performance that must include a complete study of the performance and production that should include the training and postproduction rehearsal techniques. Folk performative cultures are highly technical and specific to the culture and hence oftentimes require intense practice and skill.

It is this skill and technical experience that sometimes give the folk performative culture a long life. This skill is often taught generationally, making sure that too many improvisations do not occur, and keep in mind to replicate the original to as much detail as possible. This does not mean that folk performative culture does not change or innovate to the times, however the changes are well set within the paradigm of traditions.

Some folk performative cultures hence require a lifetime of training, the Kathakali dance dramatic form of Kerala is one such training where the performers are trained from their early ages. As the performers are skilled right from their early ages, by the time they are in their late teens, they are ready to perform. The article, "The Audience Experience: Measuring Quality in the Performing Arts", by Jennifer Radbourne *et al* says that audience preferences are also changing in today's complex world. The audience are no longer passive spectators; the audience expect to see something that would appeal to their emotions in the highest sense. Performance hence must speak to the audience and become a part of them.

Hence, the performers feel a kind of pressure given the expectations of the audience. Schechner sees the rehearsals like passage ways or rites of passage as seen by Victor Turner. The performers are, according to him, transported into another world and have a liminal experience, and the entire performance including the training and the show is a process that involves repetition daily. The entire gamut of experiences creates a different level of energy, tension and emotional release both for the viewers and actors. Besides the rehearsal and the audience appeal, there are other "framing devices" (Richard Bauman) that helps the performative culture to come alive. The text and the oral content of the show also becomes of great importance here.

5.2.2.2 The Textual and Oral Content of the Performances

Devices are set in the text of the performances which are bounded and are meta-communicative, meaning that they offer multiple layers of meanings and messages into the performances. Many of them are figurative speech, in Hindi they say "Ektha Raja" or there once lived a king. The moment these words are uttered by the performer a visual code is set and defined. Some of the speeches used in folk performative cultures are also religious in nature. Metaphors and similes are also used that pull in the imagination of the audiences. These devices help the audiences get into the flow of events in the show and help to understand the precedence of actions involved and those that will follow it.

In any performance culture, three things come into play within the text—the writer, the artist who performs, and the audience. The performances are loaded with meanings that describe the settings and situations of the plays. This plethora of information reaches the viewers in various ways who interpret it according to themselves. Whence the performative culture is iconic rather than literal. The intention of the spoken word hence becomes very important.

Richard Bauman recognises how language comes into interplay with social life; he sees that, in performances, we must recognise and validate the verbal art in play. He goes further to say that," Anthropologists and Folklorists similarly found performance-based studies responsive to their interest in play, the social construction of reality and reflexivity. One dimension that particularly excited many practitioners was the way performances move the use of heterogeneous stylistic resources, context sensitive meanings, and conflicting ideologies into a reflexive arena where they can be critically examined" (Bauman and Briggs 60).

Performance involves larger-than-life usage of texts that allows for a critical viewership. We must see that language involves social action. Utterances and speeches in performances are not void or empty. The artist and the writer of the performance have a vision, and their skill should be admired. They have the capacity to transform the social realities of the spectators. In folk primitive culture, we can see there is no author, however we must give credit to folktales and the proverbs which are showcased and which have been passed down generationally. Briggs even suggests that certain utterances involved in rituals also involve a certain significance. Bauman says that performances require a literary context that allows for agency of the performer to function. Folk performances involve great reflexivity, where there is an "art of speaking" (Bauman 73).

Here, the audience is also willing to suspend his belief in the normal happenings of the day and get into the verbal communication of the artist. However, each member of the audience does not receive the show as the other members, the experience is very personal. Here, the context of the performance has an importance in the reception of the audiences. In folk performative cultures, the context is often predetermined, however the effect that it might have on the viewers can differ which can be based on sex, gender, age, region, caste or class.

One must however go beyond the contexts of performances and look at the communities that perform the cultural experience. Norman Denzin recognises that a performative culture creates new spaces for social citizens and creates democratic dialogue where interaction can take place between even the subaltern groups whether performers or viewers. The performers create social interaction and create opportunities for larger participation of the larger community, especially in folk performative cultures. Here, we must understand we are going beyond the performances that occur within the communities but looking at the various ways communities emerge and grow through those performances. What are the ways in which people then interact with the performances? We can see how sometimes local and bounded performances that are bound to one region and community become national and international, this we can see in the case of Kathakali, Chhau dance, Bhangra, etc. or any other folk performance of India.

Further, we must understand that folk performance, being a social construct, also involves the participation in rituals as a performative form. The next section will look at this in detail.

5.2.3 Folk Performative Cultures and Rituals

Both Victor Turner and Richard Schechner paid attention to the performative quality behind the rituals. These scholars have studied the dialogue between ritual and performance and have looked at the ways in which both these categories interacted

with each other. Performance in this case becomes specific to a culture and is contained within heritage. As performance is never spontaneous and involves mediated action, rituals can also be seen within the same light. Victor Turner notes that everyday actions can be termed as theatrical or dramatic, in which the social interaction between the community members can become tense. These, according to him, are "metatheatre" as we can recognise social conflict and the erasing of tension.

The social drama involves four major phases: A breach occurs when an individual or a subgroup breaks conventions or a rule of society, this causes the second phase that is crisis in which the members are drawn to taking sides, the third phase is that of a redressal where solutions are tried to be drawn so that the tensions can be eased out. This leads us to the fourth phase where remedial actions are put forward. The remedial period can involve an intense reflexive period which could be internal or others giving advice. Some could also be public like protests and demonstrations.

This could either cause the community to come together or it will simply get fractured. In some communities, the members might move away from each other. Many of the social conflicts also get performed in rituals, and in folk-based storytelling through tales, proverbs and dramatic representations. Rituals are associated with religious beliefs that cannot be altered or changed. To see it as performative, one must associate the functionary aspects of the rituals. Rituals are transformatory, and behaviours are "restored" and mediated. Rituals are communicative like performances, and they both need to have social relevance. Rituals, like performative cultures, can be rational or irrational, they are also highly internal as they give a feeling of satisfaction to the participants. Rituals can be surmised to be the performative aspect of religion that involves dynamism to the social and cultural situations.

Performances that involve social action can also have deep political resonances. The next section will look at the ways in which the folk performative culture interacts with the political consciousness of the society.

5.2.4 Politics in Performative Cultures

Many performative cultures have a strong consequence on the socio-political reality of a community. For example, many folk songs and tales validate patriotism and help the community to come closer to the values of the nation. Singing the national anthem in events and in movie theatres can be seen as part of the political consciousness of a community.

On the flip side, we can also see the rights and the political concerns of a nation also are raised by a performative culture. We can see the shows of Jan Natya Manch and Indian Peoples' Theatre Association. One major theatre method for raising political voices is the "Theatre of the Oppressed" founded by Augusto Boal, a Brazilian activist, theatre practitioner and political figure. The technique used by him turns the spectators into active participants in the performances—he terms them as the "spect-actor". Here, the members of the audience were transformed in such a way that they find solutions to oppressive situations within their own society. This has been a part of political action, but it has also become now a part of therapy and education.

Therefore, the individual's sex, age, gender, caste and class have implications on the performances. The next section will look at the interactions between the gender and folk traditional performances.

5.2.5 Gender and Folk Performative Cultures

Gender is a constructed reality of society, while sex is biological. One of the pioneering scholars in this field has been Judith Butler. According to her, gender is a "stylized repetition of acts" (1988). Hence, these actions are embodied in the female body, the woman hence is constantly becoming fit into a rigid model of society. Gender performativity is a social construct by the performances of gender. Femininity or masculinity is a stereotypical patterned way of life. Hence, cultural codes that are ascribed both to the man and the woman are products of socio-cultural milieus and can be seen in the daily acts of both men and women.

According to Sue Ellen Case and Erica Stevens Abbitt, gender studies in performances should not be limited only to texts and performances, but should be stretched from "medium to medium—plays, dance, concerts, installations, improvised events and cabaret performances—as well throughout a variety of social codes, rituals and quotidian interactions" (925). While studying performances, we must also look at "lived experiences and cultural memory" of the performers (Debra Kaufman 9). Becoming a female or a woman in performance also should not be seen as one single incident that causes a rupture in the beings of being called a woman but as a slow and gradual process within the cultural setup. Hence, many factors come to play that define the being of a woman and one major factor to influence globalization and a neo liberal world. Let us discuss that in the below section.

5.2.6 Globalization and Folk Performative Cultures

We have already determined that performance is very much a part of social life. However, in today's world, all performances are a tiny part of a huge global world. The local everyday performances or a local performative culture is inter-border and porous. As Arjun Appadurai determines, the local is no longer bounded or specific and is a melting point of new ideas, migrations and movements that is influenced by fast growing technological advancements. Globalization has also created a mass culture ready for consumption between the performers and their audiences. Dwight Conquergood is of the opinion that transnational migrations, multiple migrations of people for work, causes a highly "porous world" (145). He releases that while studying performative culture there could be a binary between practice and theory and what is important for the academician is to see "knowing how" and "knowing who".

Jill Dolan goes further from these urging scholars and academicians to locate performances beyond the binaries of "self" and "others". She also makes a pertinent commentary on answering the questions of finding the geographical meanings of performances. What she means here is that Westerners should refrain from using their lens on subjects that are localized. While meeting points are to be seen in the wake of a huge technological network, Dolan opines that to negate the local and to generalize the performative culture might prove to be detrimental.

Hence, we must understand that many genres of performative culture are well grounded within their cultural foundations, and for them to become "fit for consumption" could make them unfit to be called authentic. They would in one way become subjects of "cultural imperialism." It is this imperialism that Jill Dolan wishes the academic community to be warned about. The growing interest in folk performances also raises the pivotal concern about protections of intellectual property. Dolan says that sometimes when we use design and technology in performances, while creating new and rich experiences for the audiences, they also negate the "real" geography of the show.

We must understand that globalization has led to a completely new genre of performance. Some of the shows are specific to media and consumers. Some shows created like political campaigns, protests, and viral videos are appearing constantly on the Internet that are not specific to any one culture. As the dependence of social media and related platforms are increasing phenomenally, these should also be seen as sites of cultural performances that are "staged" for the impact that is desired.

Hence, we have seen that while studying a performative culture, we must take a holistic approach and see it as ritual-based, a social construct that involves constructing and functioning of gender, the entire gamut of the technological and global world and the construction of a national culture. We must also understand how folk visual culture works. As both the performative culture and the visual culture are cogs of the same wheel, it is pivotal to understand its construction and functioning in societies.

5.3 FOLK VISUAL CULTURE

The study of visual culture has much more to do than just the study of images. One must look at all the various ways that the visual artifacts convey their meanings, while maintaining their aesthetic appeal. Hence, the study is multi-layered and has multiple intertextual meanings. In today's world, all meanings are constructed visually, we must accordingly understand how they function and perform. As Roland Barthes determines, one must understand the significance of how the symbols have become the signifier. While studying this, we also come to understand what moral codes are attached to the visual culture, what is "acceptable" and what is deemed as inappropriate. We get to understand how power is constructed within the cultural artifacts. We must therefore study visual culture in intersections, how it functions in society. Will we perceive a documentary film with the same eyes as a painting by a famous contemporary painter like M.F. Hussain? Why are certain visual representations of gods and goddesses venerated and where will we place them in our homes? How do we differ while seeing pictures of national heroes like Subhas Chandra in a museum or in a movie hall? Do then these spaces have different meanings to the viewers?

We must, as Gayatri Spivak has recognised, see the representations belonging to the under-represented, the misplaced and displaced people. As Irin Rogoff opines, visual culture is based on three components: 1) The historiography behind the visual culture, whether contested or not; 2) The narrative behind the visual culture, oral or technological; and 3) The desire or appeal that the culture evokes in the viewer.

5.4 DEFINITIONS OF VISUAL CULTURE

Images are not being fused with reality, but they are a reality today, they cannot be seen in isolation, and they are highly dynamic and interconnected to each other. As Duncum has determined, we must study visual culture as belonging to a highly connected global world. Culture is not something that is beyond us and is within our reach and control, and therefore visual culture is not something that is beyond our understanding. Paul Duncum emphasizes that the study of visual culture should move beyond art education and is a multidisciplinary field, and we can also study it in how it is practiced. It is complete with communicative ideas and messages that are multi-sensory. The studies of visual culture hence cannot be bound or limited.

Visual cultures also define the taste and preferences of a community and determine its social values. We must also study visual culture within the text of the entire gamut of the

internet and the hyperlinks. As Duncam has determined, we can see four types of producers of visual cultures: artisans, post artisans, market professionals and the corporate professional. Visual culture also determines our knowledge about "what we are seeing to what we know". One must hence determine the perception of the perceiver. We must however differentiate between the visual object and visual culture. Here, the visual object is the material and visual culture is knowledge creation of the visual object.

We must understand the grand metanarratives that are sometimes created around visual cultures, some seen as more important and advanced than others. This becomes relevant when we study folk visual cultures. Folk visual cultures have been always sidelined compared to the "high cultures" that are seen as more evolved and more dynamic. Alpers is of the opinion that culture is embedded in the visual culture that not only needs to be studied but also noticed, while Emily Apter wishes the scholars to pay attention to the cyber culture that all of us are placed in. Carol Armstrong opines that one must look at the ways in which power structures come to play within the complex whole situation of a visual culture. Susan Buck Morrs, on the other hand, feels that visual culture and artists would go "underground", if one does not have museums, art galleries and private collections. These cultural institutions therefore cannot be discarded.

Tom Conley says that visual cultures are based on a narrative, and that text could be unwritten or go largely unnoticed. However, we, according to Conley, cannot neglect the text behind the visual culture. Jonathan Carry determines the aspect of the visual element and puts forward the idea that visual studies involve the process of separation, specialization and abstraction. Thomas Crow wishes the scholars to determine the connections between philosophy and a visual culture.

Looking at photographs and cinema studies, Tom Gunning suggests that academicians look at this visual medium within the intersections of gender, age, caste and community and look at the power structures in play. According to Micheal Ann Holly and Stephen Melville, visual culture is based on historical realities as it produces subjectivities that need to be not only understood but also studied in totality. Martin Jay urges the thinkers to go beyond pseudo- intellectual debates and look at the aesthetic appeal of the visual culture as it meant to be a part of a total vision that is pleasing and appealing. On the other hand, Thomas Kuafann recognises the need to separate the aesthetics behind the visual element of the culture and look at it as part of society.

Sylvia Kolbowski advances visual culture as borderless and creating an intermingling of various disciplines. Sylvia Latin is dismayed at the way architecture has been totally neglected in the study of visual culture and therefore urges one to see the critical connections between architecture, art and visual culture. Helen Molesworth sees the decay in writing visual culture if written by non-artists and those who are not trained in art. While Keith Moxey wishes for deeper psychoanalysis behind the visual culture, Rodowick goes one step further and says that both the positive and the negative responses to the visual culture must be a subject of study. Geof Waitte says that one must look at the hidden meanings within the visual culture that cannot be apparently seen and Christopher Wood says as the visual cultures are full of metaphors, it is vital to study its reception.

Hence, we have seen from the above study that the study of a visual culture has taken on multiple meanings by scholars in the past as well as in the present times. It would be worthwhile to look at the totality of meanings while studying the visual culture and study holistically. Let us study visual culture in the new technological world of the 21st century.

5.5 VISUAL CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION

We must study the visual culture of today in the visual technologies that are very much prevalent in and around the globe today. The visual culture is sometimes surrounded so much by advertisements and the "art of selling" that it loses its meaning and significance. Visual culture is a product of social interactions, sometimes between the local culture and the large extended external culture. Every culture has some visual element that can be shared and the knowledge dissipated. Seeing is a visual experience, sight is different from perceiving. Media studies now are looking intently how the visual culture affects the local reception *vis-a-vis* the global.

The problems that are caused by globalisation is its totality and universality; it seems as though "the local was produced by the global" (Mitchelle 50). As Mitchelle says, one should go beyond visual images impacting the global, but look at a deeper level and determine the metaphors and meanings that can be constructed through these images. Culture is connected through networks; the cyberspace situates a culture within a hybrid space.

Globalization is a phenomenon that is technico-economic. James Clifford sees cultures as travelling in this space, in which inter-exchange and a flow takes place. In globalization, the aesthetics of experience can be relatable, some cultures might respond to it in a larger manner than others. The archetype of a visual culture can get destroyed or get reinvented. Some scholars see globalization as one type of cultural imperialism where the central power dominates the living and lifestyle of the other countries. While this is true in a limited manner, we can never forget the strong indigenous identities that are maintained by other countries. For example, our Indian movies have a very strong Indian undertone and are nothing like that of the West. Some academicians argue that one must study the influence of globalization on the visual culture by looking at the reception that the audience has towards this phenomenon.

Globalization, while causing some amounts of destructivity, also creates conditions for greater amounts of creativity. It has sharpened the cultural understanding of the global towards the local. While it protects the locals, it strongly recognizes the need to protect human rights and cultural dignity of the communities.

The visual culture is influenced by several factors, and one is gender. Let us briefly examine it.

5.6 GENDER AND VISUAL CULTURE

Gender is a part of visual culture, and every day we can see the representations of women in images, pictures, movies, sometimes in strong stereotypes. The folk visual culture, in particular, is strongly influenced by patriarchy; however, this does not mean that women have no agency or the power to change their situation today. The subjectivities of woman as artists in the visual culture are always replete as women being the mother, the angelic figure, the benign and the gentle. This is not to say that we are trying to negate these qualities found in a woman, but one has to see the gender representation of her in totality.

The art history and the textbooks also reflect only the situation of the male or the female in juxtaposition to the man. Womanhood is always seen as motherhood, and historical representations of women have always been done in that light. We must

understand that gender is a lived everyday experience, through which power can be experienced or made legitimate. However, we must keep in mind the visual representations of Hindu goddesses have always been one yielding power, like the images of Durga who kills the demon Mahisasura. Despite identities never being complete or bounded, the position of the women in visual culture has remained either strongly set in religion or patriarchal ideas of the community to which it belongs. What is needed is feminist pedagogies to arise and to see the visual culture in the critical lens of a man and woman relationship and also the position of genders that include the transgender and the LGBT community.

While visual culture depends highly on heritage and tradition, we must understand that power and position in the society influences the visual culture to a large extent. Often cultural artifacts evoke not only memories, but also the identity and gender of the individual or the members of the community. This power further gets entrenched in the symbols or the language of the visual culture. The next section will discuss this.

5.7 THE INTERACTION OF LANGUAGE WITH VISUAL CULTURE

The folk visual culture often gets embedded in meanings and cultural signifiers or symbols. Sometimes, we can see that the viewers move from what is already known or literally signified to the philosophical meaning behind the visual culture. Here, the hegemonic meanings are questioned in the context of the whole society. We can see the visual culture as a symbol or a code to knowledge. They are indicators to the consciousness of the society at large. Sometimes, we also need to look at how visual cultures interact with others and form contexts and see the entire picture. This could mean a careful examination of the narrative texts behind the visual culture and analysing the stories and tales behind it. Here, the reception can differ, while some viewers might accept the story others might reject it. So, the scholar has to be mentally prepared to be critiqued and questioned by not only his peers, but the society at large. Opposition could mean from closing the television set, to walking away from the gallery or moving to another object in the museum.

5.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied both the performative and visual culture and paid attention to the theoretical analysis of the scholars. We have come to understand that both the performative culture as well as visual culture as a discipline is highly dynamic and cannot be bound. It is a subject of interest not only to folklore, performance, arts and aesthetics, but also to sociology, anthropology, archaeology, history, philosophy, political science and social linguistics. In this unit, we have understood the analysis of many scholars of this field. Culture cannot be studied as a separate entity and is closely associated with society, power, gender and language. Besides this, we also cannot neglect the global world to which we belong and the influences of technology and mass media on both performative and visual culture. We must accordingly study both these genres of folk cultures as a part of process to which all humans belong.

5.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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5.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What is the difference between a performative culture and a performance?

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2. Why does the study of a performative culture become sometimes more important than the performance event?

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3. Does the idea of self occupy an important place in any folk performative culture?

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4. Name two conventions of a performative cultures.

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5. Why is the text important in folk performative cultures?

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6. Why should one study rituals as a part of folk performative cultures?

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7. How is gender constructed in folk performative cultures?

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8. Define visual culture.

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9. Why is psychoanalysis important to study visual culture?

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10. Why should we study globalization while analysing visual cultures?

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