

FOLKLORE RE-EVALUATED: RELEVANCE IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Abstract:

Folklore represents culture since it is linked to the manner of life of those who create it: rites, institutions, crafts, and so on. It also reflects their values, traditions, attitudes, and way of thinking. Folklore has the virtue of inspiring basic and straightforward thinking. Because folk stories are about man's relationship with nature, this education will instill in students an awareness of the environment, which is critical in today's world. Folklore gives us a better understanding of life and living. Folk stories, sayings, ballads, songs, and chants are used to communicate the testimonies. A community can communicate history, literature, law, and other information orally over generations without using a written system in this way. However, the term "folklore" may be defined in a variety of ways. Folklore is all folksy content (songs, traditions, and stories) to a layman. Folklore, in a broader sense, refers to a socio-cultural corpus distinctive to a particular ethnic group, and encompasses folk-behavior and folk-tradition research. In its broadest meaning, this phrase might be considered synonymous with folk literature and folklore. Folklore truly represents the socio-cultural environment of the people throughout history. This paper aims at mentioning the importance of folklore in the modern times.

Keywords: *Folklore, collective identity, irrationality, cultural preservation, culture.*

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Introduction

Folklore refers to a community's traditional beliefs, traditions, and culture handed down the generations by oral tradition or practice. Folk refers to members of distinct groups who share a similar characteristic, such as language, religion, culture, or traditions.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the word "folklore" first arose in Europe. It was initially connected with tradition, ancient rites, surviving festivals, old ditties and dateless melodies, antique myths, legends, fables, and timeless tales and proverbs.

Folklore also connoted irrationality, as seen by beliefs in ghosts and demons, fairies and goblins, sprites and spirits, and confidence in omens, amulets, and talismans, which seldom stood the test of common sense and experience.

These two characteristics of traditionality and irrationality, according to the urbane literati who coined the term "folklore" could only be found in peasant or primitive civilizations. As a result, they assigned a third feature to folklore: rurality. Folklore thrived in the countryside and in the vast spaces of the woods. Man's close engagement with nature in communities and hunting bands was the ultimate source of myth and poetry. Folklore was considered man's natural expression before the city, commerce, civilization, and culture polluted his life's purity. For many years, the trinity of characteristics — traditionality, irrationality, and rurality — would dominate the definition of folklore; in many cases, it still does. It established guidelines for the admission and rejection of stories, songs, and proverbs from the realm of folklore. Those with at least one of these characteristics were called "folk stories, folksongs, riddles, and folk-sayings," while those without were scorned.

These elements of meaning, in turn, developed other features, which together formed the sense of the idea of folklore in everyday usage, print, and speech. The authorship of folktales,

songs, and proverbs was veiled by the mantle of tradition, and transmission from generation to generation obscured their origins (Dan Ben Amos et al).

Objectives of the study

- To understand the concept of folklore.
- To understand the importance of folklore in present school education.
- To determine the significance of folklore in society at present times.

Importance of folklore in present times

Folklore is akin to human society's long-term memory. Without it, human civilization cannot — and does not function.

While history and high art document much of what a society recognizes as "official" or "high" culture, folklore transmits the "unofficial" stories, songs, jokes, dances, proverbs, foods, clothing, turns of speech, and ways of making and doing things that we engage with every day of our lives—even when we aren't aware of it.

Folklore encompasses all that matters to us, our loved ones, our friends, and our fellow community members, in all of the many ways that "community" may be imagined. When civilizations, or portions of societies, have disintegrated at various moments throughout history, the most vitally significant components of life frequently persist because individuals have transferred or orally transmitted that crucial feature of living on to others. Folklore is defined by the transmission of unofficial, view of culture. When things in society that are thought to be "too big to fail" do fail, it is the interpersonal, intramural workings of Folklore in all of its manifestations that assure the survival of the elements of life we like the most (Phurailatpam Jayalaxmi (2022)).

The term "folk" refers to individuals from many ethnic groups who share a similar language, religion, culture, and tradition. Folklore is a term that refers to the study of such traditions and cultures. The word "folk" brings up images of uneducated and marginalized individuals. It is true that the oral tradition, on which folklore is built, is frequently employed by marginalized groups to give voice to their problems.

For whatever reason, people could not perceive the hidden meanings in the tales, proverbs, jokes, and riddles. Folklore theories try to go into the most fundamental meanings of folklore to uncover the tales' roots. Folklore studies may also be utilized to improve one's understanding of the culture from which one comes.

The use of orality to convey culture and identity is common. Throughout the decades, oral tradition has been handed down. Myths, stories, anecdotes, jokes, fairy tales, ballads, epics, proverbs, riddles, folk arts, folk costumes, and folk theatre are examples.

A folklore study is all-encompassing since it includes our society's spiritual and material aspects. Folklore has been used to recreate ancient beliefs, traditions, and rituals. Folklore studies can help us comprehend our ancestors' rich folklore and mystic heritage, for example.

Knowledge and respecting our ancestors' folklore allows us to have a better understanding of the civilization from which we arose. Another reason for studying folklore was nationalism, which bolstered ethnic identification and played a role in political independence efforts. Folk culture is a method of bringing people from different parts of the nation together. Traditional culture is seen as proof of social difference and proof that civilization may be founded on oral traditions. The Polygenesis idea, unlike the Diffusionist view, maintains that folklore has several beginnings. Since the dawn of time, people have been affected by universal emotions such as love, hate, misfortune, fear, worry, sadness, jealousy, egotism, ambition, bravery, compassion, etc. Many versions of folktales have travelled across geographical boundaries. Every country is made up of several ethnic groups, each with its own particular identity.

Despite this disparity, people from many cultures have a collective unconscious that fosters an awareness of human misery and loss. Human beings are born into comparable situations and have similar emotional patterns or structures when confronted with them.

Folklore is about human misery and pain, and it is passed down through folk narrative, material culture, social folk practices, and performing folk arts. Despite their ethnic differences, they shared at least one fundamental cultural trait, namely tradition. Folktales, folksongs, folk traditions, folk arts, and other common aspects are shared among

communities as a result of this legacy. This makes it easier for the groupings to develop a shared identity. As a consequence of the rise of digital media, television, and the internet, myths and folklore stories have been less popular and suppressed in many nations and at their best have been seen in the form of Disney movies at the theatre (Phurailatpam Jayalaxmi (2022)).

One could wonder why these old myths are still relevant today, since science has the answers to (almost) all of life's major concerns. We don't need myths to explain how the world came to be, and most people don't think the gods' anger causes a storm or earthquake. However, we may be severing a key connection to our history and missing out on a chance to learn more about the human experience if we believe folklore is no longer relevant.

- **Cultural preservation and collective identity**

The most common and sensible rationale for maintaining myths, folktales, legends, and fairytales is that they are essential to our history and culture. It hence must be preserved to appreciate our past completely. On the other hand, Myths are essential not only for grasping our past but also for comprehending our present. Myths and tales bind us to our forefathers and mothers intimately, transcending time and space. By reading or listening to these tales, we may feel how our predecessors thought, acted, and performed in daily life. We can see that they had the same concerns, ambitions, and needs that we have now.

Unrequited love tales, envious husbands, and women travelling out into the world to discover themselves show that we aren't that unlike our forebears. We develop a better knowledge of things through tales, making history more tangible. Over the previous 2000 years, humanity has grown in science, technology, and medicine, yet we are still the same at our core, with all of our human emotions and difficulties (Clara Malzer (2019)).

- **Myths reconnect us to our true selves**

These tales also remind us of our interconnectedness with the collective energy and the world's deeper soul. They bring us back to our centre, reconnecting to our hearts and truest nature. Listening to, sharing, and recalling old tales awakens a deep, primordial, and ancient part of us inside us. Facts appeal to our intellects, while stories appeal to our emotions. We

can relate to them and see that we all have a similar bond. This is more important than ever in current times of climate change and major political differences.

We need stories to keep us alive, to show that we're more than just a woman locked in a soul-crushing 9-5 job or a guy scraping by. Stories and ancient traditions give a feeling of surprise and mystery in a logical age when everything has data analysis and an algorithm. Opening our hearts to inquiry and deeper feelings forces us to reconsider our behavior systems and restrictive belief patterns.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes, author of *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Women Archetypes* states, "Stories that develop from profound suffering may supply the most powerful remedies for past, present, and even future ills." By tapping into the wisdom of these old stories, we may heal, process, and release ourselves from deep, concealed emotions and ancestral trauma.

- **The lost skill of storytelling: fostering community**

Walter Benjamin, a German-Jewish scholar, stated in 1936 that the art of storytelling was losing out. He blamed the decline of tales on a lack of storytelling expertise, a quickly changing culture, and an excess of accessible information. What was true 80 years ago is still true now. We claim to be more connected than ever owing to smart phones and Face Time, yet actual human connection has become uncommon.

The telling of a myth, folktale, or folklore fostered community in ancient times. These stories were spoken around bonfires or in ceremonial circles. Instead of foraging for food, our female Stone Age ancestors told tales around the fire.

By abandoning the dying skill of storytelling, we are also neglecting one of our most fundamental human needs: community. Storytelling fosters a feeling of belonging and personal and communal identity. As a consequence, preserving ancient myths and stories is vital. They help you honor your ancestors, learn about yourself, bring your community together, and provide you counsel when you need it (Clara Malzer (2019)).

- **The collective unconscious**

According to well-known psychologist Carl Jung, legends and myths are archetypes that exist in a collective human psyche.

"In fact, mythology as a whole may be seen as a projection of the collective unconscious... As a result, we have two options for studying the collective unconscious: mythology or individual investigation." *The Structure of the Psyche* (from the *Structure of the Psyche*)

According to Jung, people are natural storytellers, and the symbols and linkages found in mythology and folklore across the globe may be utilized to interpret our species' narrative. Folklore may disclose a lot about a village or town's residents, habits, and hobbies. Similarly, mythology may disclose much about the human race's collective experience with its ancient roots and tendrils.

- **The Archetypal Themes of Human Life**

All of the archetypes that Jung mentioned may be found in myth and folklore. Its stories center on the universal themes that pervade human life. We discover stories of love, death, bravery, greed, and treachery in them. Despite the fact that these stories were initially told centuries ago, they remain relevant due to the themes they explore. More significantly, if we learn to go beyond their literal meaning, they reveal a lot about how the human brain operates.

We all go through similar experiences, but we don't all do it the same way. For example, the archetypes of motherhood, infancy, fear, love, and loss are all familiar. We may have had different interactions with these archetypes of human life, and they may have evoked different emotions. Still, the essence of what we experience is the same, whether it is sorrow, pleasure, or tragedy (Hollie Sherrington (2018)).

These archetypes appeal to us because we all face them on some level in our everyday lives, which might explain why the same tales appear in so many locations (although with many cultural variances).

- **Reconnecting with the Past**

Even though many of these tales predate recorded history, they remain in our subconscious thoughts because they address the basic realities underlying all human life.

Because they speak of important moral truths that keep their importance and relevance from generation to generation, we see similarities in their themes and imagery, from opening Pandora's Box to searching for the Holy Grail.

Folklore and mythical tales, like art or music, engage with us on a basic level that transcends age, race, and religion. It's an expression of something we all share: the amazing and puzzling phenomenon we call the human experience. We are bound to our past and one another through the tales we tell and our rituals.

They stimulate our children's imaginations due to their simplicity, yet retain the ancient wisdom and knowledge of all those who have gone before us. To others, participating in historical oral traditions may appear to be a step backwards in terms of intellectual development. But perhaps it is in these stories that we will regain a genuine sense of what it is to be human and reconnect with our roots, identity, and humanity. Early childhood schooling is the most crucial era for character development. Education and recollections from this time in one's life provide a subtle window into one's personality.

It is at this time that a person learns about life, society, and his environment. Folklore and folktales can have a lot of benefits in early childhood education. Tales and moral stories already have a little role in educational curricula. However, including folklore into early school topics would be a superior way to teaching.

Human values and social conventions are eroding at a greater rate than ever before in the modern world. Folktales and folklore were formerly an element of home schooling, when old grandmothers and grandfathers would spend their spare time with their grandchildren.

Fairy tales are still told as bedtime stories, but folk tales are increasingly being seen as taboo by a certain class of people who believe they are exclusively for ignorant and antiquated country inhabitants. The next generation of kids isn't uninterested in them; it's just that no one is telling them stories.

The value of folklore in early education, as well as other topics such as science and mathematics, is becoming increasingly apparent in modern times. The following are some of the causes.

- Folklore is a portrayal of culture and custom. It represents the moral value system of culture and civilization. Folklore as a topic in early childhood education might give

effective moral teaching without religious or spiritual undertones. Folk tales carry significant ethical and value lessons due to their direct and simple explanations.

- Folklore may elicit powerful feelings and sentiments about culture and solidarity. What's more intriguing and distinctive about this sentiment is that it's free of the drawbacks and criticisms associated with patriotism and competitive nationalism. The reason for this is because folklore is about universal human ideals that represent universal human features. Rather of employing names of existing nations and places, they usually refer to geographic locations and identities such as land, river, and so forth (Jessica Schmonsky (2012)).
- Folklore has the virtue of inspiring basic and straightforward thinking. Because folk stories are about man's relationship with nature, this education will instill in pupils an awareness of the environment, which is critical in today's world.
- Folktales and folklore give us a better understanding of life and living. Folklore education at a young age would be a better life preparation for any little child. There is never a shortage of time to study difficult topics like mathematics and science. Childhood, on the other hand, is the perfect period for traditional stories. On the other hand, the difficulty with topics like mathematics and science is that they are not required of every student, with the exception of those who need them professionally (Christine Y. House 1993).
- Folklore and folk tales boost children's imagination since they are instructive and straightforward. These exercises stimulate the creative portion of the brain, which helps pupils become more productive as they become older. They will aid students in gaining vision in their mental processes and become more responsible, world-ready persons.

It is not advised, however, that topics like mathematics and science be prohibited in primary schools. However, subjects like folklore may be excellent for character development, which will be especially important in the next generation (Hollie Sherrington (2018)).

Conclusion

Folklore research is essential for understanding old beliefs, practices, and even rituals. Folklore includes spiritual as well as physical components. Folklore studies may assist us in learning about the beginnings of various groups, their histories, cultural commonalities, and, of course, our ethnic identities. Myths, folklore stories, and traditions are being more forgotten in our computerized, technologically advanced society.

However, there is a great deal of wisdom in our ancestors' ancient stories, in the telling of dark secrets, passionate adventures, and brave heroes confronting inner and outer demons. Folklore may be used for a variety of reasons. Educating the young in socially acceptable ways to act, or just as a temporary escape from reality, are two of the most popular.

However, a closer examination of folk tales reveals that many are utilized to carry on a culture's principles and values from generation to generation.

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