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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

INDIAN FOLK LITERATURE

M.E.G.-16

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer any five questions. Each question carries equal marks. Q. No. 10 is compulsory.

Q. 1. Discuss the various forms folklore prevalent in different parts of India.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 16, 'Indian Folklore Forms'.

Q. 2. Nature is an essential element of folklore. Elucidate.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-6, Page No. 44, Q. No. 5 and Page No. 42, 'Folklore as an Expression of Life'.

Q. 3. Attempt an essay on visual narratives tracing the journey of folk paintings in India from the pre-historic rock art to the living tradition of folk painting.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-7, Page No. 47, 'Pre-historic Cave Painting' or 'Rock Art in India'.

Q. 4. Explain how ballads, riddles and proverbs are used as expressions of protest in folk literature.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-10, Page No. 70, 'Introduction' and 'Folk Forms as Protest in History'.

Q. 5. Who was Verrier Elvin and what was his contribution to the Indian folklore?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-15, Page No. 115, Q. No. 1.

Q. 6. What do you know about the oral poetry of the Kondhs tribe of Odisha?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-19, Page No. 136, 'The Kondhs: Their Oral Poetry: Dharm Above, Dhartani: Below'.

Q. 7. Give a critical appreciation of the idea of folk in Pather Panchali.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-21, Page No. 153, 'Folk Elements in the Novel'.

Q. 8. What are the various elements of folk in the various theatre forms in India?

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-27, Page No. 183, 'Folk in Indian Theatre'.

Q. 9. Discuss Nagamandala and Hayavadana by Girish Karnad as companion plays.

Ans. *Nagamandala* is based on two folk tales from Karnataka which Karnad first heard several years ago from Prof. A.K. Ramanujan, whom he considers his friend, guru and hero and to whom he reverently dedicated the play. Persuaded by Prof. C.M. Naim he translated the play into English. Apart from the two Kannada folk tales, Karnad acknowledges the influences of Jean Anouilh on the long speech of Naga. It is a deceptively simple play whose complexity consists the elements of myth, magic, folk, belief and romance. *Nagamandala* is divided into three parts: Prologue, Act-I and Act-II. The prologue sets the tone and mood of the play. The audience is taken into a make-believe world, drama itself being such a world. The play opens in a surrealistic setting- a dilapidated temple, a broken idol that is hard to identify, the time of late night with the moonlight creeping in through the crevices on the walls and the roof. In folkloric terms, story-telling is often a dramatic representation of a myth or a legend, accompanied by song and music. In the dilapidated temple comes flames and story to share some gossip. A story cannot be bottled up but would escape at the earliest opportunity, as the story and the song do from the snoring old woman's open mouth in this play.

A “mandala” consists of a triangle and a square: a triangle with in a square. The zeitgeist of the play is the mandala. The three points of the triangle are Rani, Appanna and Naga, thus illustrating the eternal triangle of an adulterous situation presenting the wife, the husband and the lover. The four sides of the square provide the dramatic framing and stand for the flames, the tale, the Man and the audience. The structure of the play has two receptors of the story: The Man who listens to the flames and the audience before whom the entire performance unfolds. The story unravels itself and acts as the Bhagavatar in the Yakshagana style of presentation. It also acts as the chorus, commenting on the ongoing action and the characters, besides providing narrative links.

Hayavadana embodies the theme in his physical appearance of equine head and anthropic body. Devadatta and Kapila exact the theme in the transformation of their heads. Padmini, on the other hand, illustrates the psychological and philosophical lack in her through her quest for a complete man. Hayavadana is thus modeled on Yakshagana Bayalata. Yet the play betrays the influences of classical Sanskrit theatre, Western theatre and the third theatre. It is rather difficult to trace the individual influence of each theatre since they are all amalgamated. The play ends on a happy note like a classical Sanskrit play. The beginning of the first act and the end of the second act resemble the Nandi Prasthavana and the Bharatavakyam of the classical Sanskrit Drama. The anachronism of Hayavadana, the macabre nature of Kaddess like and the talking dolls, and the transpositions of heads bring about dissimilitude. The Bhagavata now and then comes and comments and there are songs here and there in the play and they constantly disturb the continuity of the play. The dissimilitude and the disturbance of the continuity through Bhagavata’s frequent intrusions spoil the identification of the audience with the characters and make them look at the play objectively and understand the significance of the theme. Karnad is thus able to provide the Indian model of Brechtian epic-

theatre and achieve that Alienation effect. Moreover, this treatment averts the danger of the plays becoming a melodrama on account of the deaths of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini. The economy and the fluidity in the play already discussed are due to the influence of the third theatre.

Q. 10. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Oral Epics—Alha and Dhola

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-18, Page No. 131, ‘Alha and Dhola’.

(b) Sita’s Truth and Lakshmina’s Laugh

Ans. ‘Sita’s Power’, translated from Kannada, has been derived from the folk stories of “Ramkatha” which focuses on the aspects of Sita’s experiences. It talks about tests she went through to prove her purity. After she was brought back from Lanka, her husband Lord Ramachandra ordered her to take up some impossible tasks to prove her chastity. She successfully proved her purity. The song belongs to the vast repertoire of women’s expressive traditions that build and imagine the detail of everyday life of women, detail that is often missing from the Sanskrit epic narrative, ringing of experience and wisdom, such folksongs are mostly sung by older women. The song begins with the searing words of Lord Rama and reaches its climax when she is ordered to take the fire test. At the end, Sita takes ultimate refuge in her natal home. The song shows Sita undergoing a series of trials before the fire test with each trial demonstrating her quintessential purity. Rama is not ready to accept Sita’s “truth” and it becomes ironic.

This is about Lakshmana’s laugh when he was serving Rama in the court hall after their return from Lanka. Everybody thinks Lakshmana laughed at him. Siva thinks that Lakshmana laughed at him because he brought the low caste fisher woman (Ganga) and put her on his head. Sesa, the ancient snake, assumes that Lakshmana laughed at him because he served Vishnu for a long time and now he is serving Vishnu’s enemy, Siva. Angada thinks that Lakshmana laughed at him

Sample Preview of The Chapter

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INDIAN FOLK LITERATURE

BLOCK I: FOLK LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE : RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGY



An Introduction to Folklore

INTRODUCTION

Modern folklore studies started in the 19th century Europe, especially Germany, when scholars started taking serious interests in the collection and study of the folklore materials in various forms like folk tales, folk songs and traditional customs. The interests in folklore resources were created by diverse motivations that arose out of diverse social, political and historical contexts. The growth and development of folklore studies as an academic discipline had to pass through considerable differences and confusions over the meaning of the term 'folklore'. The term 'folklore' was used to mean both the study and the materials of the subject. Besides, different practices were adopted by different countries to label a diverse set of cultural resources as folklore materials. In some parts of Europe and South America, 'folklore' implies the so-called unsophisticated peasant culture, the community performances of music, dance and festival.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

INTRODUCTION AND DEFINITION OF FOLKLORE

Folklore is associated with the rural peasant folk. Folk is any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor which could be a common occupation, language, or religion.

In the 19th century, folklore was considered as a dead culture, but it is alive and vibrant. Folk tales and stories are sometimes considered as based on incorrect facts and myths. All forms of folk culture have the notions of falsehood inherent in it. Folk culture comprises learned habits, beliefs, rituals, institutions and expressions of a people. However, this is not strictly limited to oral habits and could include material culture

as well. This is closely associated with the notions of a folk society that is a group of individuals who are organized around some common interest.

Definition of Folklore

Klintberg defines folklore as "Traditional cultural forms that are communicated between individuals through words and actions and tend to exist in variation". Scholars believe that folklore is communicated orally through informal methods or means. However, both print and visual media communicate folk ideas.

Folklore has been defined in the following ways:

- (i) It is deeply connected to the nation.
- (ii) It belongs to the lower levels of the social hierarchy.
- (iii) It is old fashioned compared to the complexities of modern civilization.
- (iv) It belongs to large societies with a large population.
- (v) Folk is a social group connected through a common tradition and a particular feeling of communication.

EARLY PHILOLOGY AND THE GRIMM BROTHERS

Philology is the study of the historical development of languages. Jacob Grimm (1785-1863) extensively collected German folklore materials for the purpose of his study of the roots of German language. He studied a great deal of German words, folk narratives such as myths and tales. He brought out the monumental German dictionary and compiled, with his brother Wilhelm Grimm (1786-1859), some very important books, such as: *Deutsche Mythologie* (a seminal collection of German myths) and *Kinder-und Hausmärchen* (Children's and Household Tales, popularly known as Grimm's Fairy Tale).

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They took interest in folkloric resources as the means to trace the root of German language. Earlier German scholars like Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) had also tried to trace the origin of German language.

W. J. THOMAS AND THE WORD 'FOLKLORE'

British antiquarian William John Thomas used the term 'folklore' in 1846. Before that, 'popular antiquities' or 'popular literature' were used for folklore materials. W. J. Thomas wrote a letter to a journal, *The Athenaeum*, suggesting that 'folklore' should be used to refer to the "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs" and other materials "of the olden time."

His said the word 'folklore', composed of 'folk' (people) and 'lore' (knowledge), would be a good Anglo-Saxon compound instead of other cumbersome terms. He linked folklore with a nationalistic sentiment which was the primary motivation behind his approach to the issue.

FOLKLORE AND IDEOLOGY

Folklore has been used as a kind of collective pride and national glory. They have been the purer assets of humanity, and closer-to-the-nature. Folklore materials enjoyed conscious care during the period of romanticism. In Germany, during Hitler's regime, folklore was used with extreme Nazi racialist propaganda. In Soviet Russia, folklore was used "As a powerful tool to advance communism". In India, the massive body of folklore materials was studied and published in nationalistic spirit in early twentieth century. Folklore was effectively used by the Indians during the freedom struggle.

DIFFERENT ACADEMIC APPROACHES

Mythological School

Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900) gave the first theoretical perspective in study of folklore. Max Müller took the linguistic view-point and defined myths and explained the process of myth-creation. He strengthened the comparative methodology and diachronic approach of Jacob Grimm to prepare the mythological school of folklore studies. He used the phrase "Malady of language" to imply this change in language. Max Müller says Myths are created according to as the explanatory narratives of such words and expressions by the later generations.

Diffusion/Migration Theory

Theodor Benfey (1809-1881) made novel contribution to the theoretical and intellectual

development of folklore studies through his translation of Indian anthology – *the Panchatantra* —into German language. Benfey found similarities between ancient Sanskrit tales of India and the tales of Europe. Such similarities were not necessarily because of genetic relationship of people as thought by Max Müller. Rather, Benfey put forward the idea that folktales can and do travel across territories. His said that ancient India produced the folktales which later 'migrated' to Europe and other parts of the world.

Anthropological Perspectives

The rise in anthropological scholarship in England and America in the 19th and 20th centuries brought out a strong anthropological perspective in the folklore study. Anthropologists study the material and non-material aspects of culture from functionalist viewpoints and see the cultural norms and values as predictable and theorizable patterns of human behaviour. E. B. Taylor (1832-1917) and Andrew Lang (1844-1912) in England, Franz Boas (1858-1942), Ruth Benedict (1887-1948), M. J. Herskovits (1895-1963) in the United States are some of the foremost scholars of classical anthropology drew heavily upon the folkloric resources which they collected through exhaustive fieldworks.

Historical-Geographical School

Finnish Method or Historical-Geographical Method is based on Theodor Benfey's hypothesis in Finland. It studied the origin and migration of folklore items. Initially experimented in the study of the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*, this method was based on the notion that as folk forms travel from place to place and undergo changes in form and content but retain the basic recognizable features. The original forms of folklore items could be reconstructed and the exact route of migration of those items also could be traced through comparative exercise. The exponents of this method are Kaarle Krohn, C.W. Von Sydow, Archer Taylor, Stith Thompson and Axel Olrik. Besides the precision techniques of comparative analysis of folklore data, the scientific way of breaking down folklore forms, such as folktales, into identifiable traits for cross comparative analysis is another major approach.

Psychoanalytical School

Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) extensively studied folklore materials and brought out the books like *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905) and *Totem and Taboo* (1913). He used to see

the myths, dreams, jokes and tales as the symbolic expressions of the unconscious mind. In his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud differentiated between dreams and myths and suggested that dreams are the disguised reflection of the repressed desires of an individual in his or her subconscious mind, whereas, the myths are the symbolic expressions of the collective unconsciousness of a race or culture. C. G. Jung noted symbols of sexual drive in myths and other folk narratives. The influence of Freudian and post-Freudian psychoanalysis was enormous, both in academics and common public values of 20th century.

Oral-Formulaic Theory

In 1930, American literary scholar Milman Parry studied the formulaic features of the classical epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. He widened his study to the Yugoslav oral poetry and aimed to delineate the form of oral poetry and to compare it with the form of written verses. Later Albert B. Lord published his book *The Singer of Tales* in 1935. He made an observation that oral poetry is performed or sung without reading and writing. He noted that the "Epic singers memorize a set of formulas which enable them to carry on the traditional themes with reasonable accuracy and at the same time give them freedom to improvise new elements depending on the occasion without altering the form drastically". Parry and Lord influenced succeeding folklore scholarships. In the 1930s, the Russian formalist V. J. Propp was also working on similar lines, though Propp's work was on folktales and not oral poetry.

Structural School

In structuralism, a popular perspective in several academic fields of twentieth century, a field or an object of study is treated as a system of interrelated parts. In folklore studies, Vladimir J. Propp (1895-1970) introduced the seed of structural analysis. The Russian formalist published his book *Morfologia Skazki* in Russian in 1928, which was translated into English in 1958 as *Morphology of the Folk Tale*. Propp adopted a new synchronic approach to the study of Russian folktales. Instead of the meanings of folktale, Propp analyzed their structural forms. He had the view that the vital components of a folktale are not its characters but certain actions of the characters, which are found to be constant in folktales of different places. The presence of such constant actions, which he called functions, are responsible for the similarities between different folktales.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-30 October, 2009), an extraordinarily versatile French anthropologist, led another structuralist approach for the study of folklore forms. He explained myth, kinship and visual arts. Lévi-Strauss did not separate the form and content of folklore. He considered myth as a higher and complex level of communication. He said mythic messages are logical formulations. According Lévi-Strauss, a universal structural scheme could be possible to explain the myths.

Contextual Theory

In the late 20th century, some American scholars took folklore items within multi-dimensional frameworks along with the radical changes in the academic fields. Roger Abrahams, Dan Ben-Amos, Alan Dundes, Kenneth Goldstein and Robert Gorges were the prominent.

Scholars considered the items of folklore not only as texts but also as events, where the contexts of folk performances such as story-telling, singing, rituals and festivals and conversations were regarded as important as the texts. The root of such approach is found in the works of Parry and Lord.

GROWTH OF FOLKLORE STUDIES IN INDIA

India has a special place in the international folklore scholarship. The works of Max Müller and Theodore Benfey on Indian myths and folktales show how Indian folklore resources contributed to the theoretical development of folklore studies. The *Vedas*, great epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the *Upanishads* and *Puranas*, and bulky anthologies of folktales like – *Hitopadesa*, *Brihatkatha*, *Kathasarit-sagara*, *Betal-Pancavimsatika*, Jataka Tales are examples of oral and written traditional creativity in India since ancient times. However, the study of folklore in India started only after the coming of the British. Jawaharlal Handoo, one of the foremost scholars of folklore studies from India, divides the growth of folklore studies in India into three periods: the Missionary Period, the Nationalistic Period and the Academic Period.

The Missionary Period

The Christian missionaries were the first batch of collectors and publishers of the first-hand resources of Indian traditional cultural lives in various regions. They came in contact with the hitherto unexplored rural traditional settings of the diverse Indian communities when they reached the interiors of the country. J. Handoo noted that these missionaries recorded habits, manners, customs, oral traditions, rituals, etc. about the

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people. They used some of this information to successfully deliver their main message. The writings they published form a part of the great treasures of folklore.

The works are valuable because of their highly informative contents. Some of such publications were Mary Frere's *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends Current in Southern India* (1886), A. J. Duboi's *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies* (1897), J. Hinton Knowels' *Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings Explained and Illustrated from the Rich and Interesting Folk-Lore of the Valley* (1885) and *Folk-Tales of Kashmir* (1893), Aurel Stein's *Hatim's Tales* (1937), Charles E. Grover's *The Folk Songs of Southern India* (1894), John Lazarus' *A Dictionary of Tamil Proverbs* (1894).

Some western philologists and orientalist also took significant steps of establishing academic societies and starting important periodicals that contributed immensely in driving the focusing on the Indian cultural resources during this time. The Asiatic Society was founded by William Jones in 1784; and journals like the *Indian Antiquary* and the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay* gave spaces for "Brief articles on oral narratives and other genres of folklore".

The civil servants of the British administration in India were also engaged in collection and study of Indian folklore materials. Flora Annie Steel's *Wide Awake Stories* (Tales from Punjab Told by the People) (1894); William C. Crooke's *Introduction to the Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India* (1894) and *Natives of Northern India* (1907); S. Mahalinga Natesa Shastri's *Folklore in Southern India* (1884) and *Indian Folk-Tales* (1900); Robinson Edward Jewitt's *Tales and Poems of South India* (1885); George A. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1903-1907); John F. A. McNair and Thomas Lambert Barlow's *Oral Traditions from Indus: Comprised to Tales to Which are Added Explanatory Notes* (1908); E. M. Gordon's *Indian Folk-Tales Being Side-light on the Village Life of Bilaspur, Central Provinces* (1908); Cecil Henry Bompa's *Folklore of the Santhal Parganas* (1909); James Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* (1920) are examples of such works by the civil servants.

The Nationalist Period

Towards the late 19th century, Indian scholars and intellectuals began to search and establish their cultural roots by exploring their own culture and tradition. The western education and the nationalistic consciousness

among the Indian intellectuals to achieve independence from the British were main factors. Lakshminath Bezbaruah's *Burhi Ait Sashu* (1911); Dinesh Chandra Sen's *Sati* (1917) and *The Folk Literature of Bengal* (1920); Zeverchand Meghani's *Halardan* (1928), *Dadajini Vato* (1933), *Lok Sahitya and Kankavati* (1947); Suryakaran Parik and Narottam Swamy's *Dhola Maru ra Doha* (1947), Ramnaresh Tripathi's *Hamara Gram Sahitya* (1940); Devendra Satyarthi's *Bela Phule Adhi Rat* (1948), *Dhart Gatt Hai* (1948), *Dhire Baho Ganga* (1948) are some of the major works of this time.

Few western scholars also contributed significantly in the collection and study of Indian folklore during this time. The work of Verrier Elwin whose important books were *Songs of the Forest: The Folk Poetry of the Gonds* (1935), *Folktales of Mahakosal* (1944), *Folksongs of Maikal Hills* (1944), *Folksongs of Chattisgarh* (1946), *Myths of Middle India* (1949), *Tribal Myths of Odisha* (1954) and *Myths of the Tribal Frontier Agency* (1958) are notables.

During this time, an Indian perspective started to work on the study of Indian folklore. Secondly folkloric resources were linked with national unity and identity. The discourse of the khadi costumes and Mahatma Gandhi's spinning wheel are the most visible examples of it. Folklore played the crucial role of the medium of spreading Indian national unity.

The Academic Period

The academic period of Indian folklore studies started after the independence in 1947. The academic period saw scientific analysis and preservation of Indian folklore by the Indians. The study of folklore in Indian educational institutions remained/initially annexed with the departments like anthropology, history and literary studies. In 1955, Gauhati University started a Folklore Archive which was later changed to the Department of Tribal Culture and Folklore Research – the first department of folklore in an Indian university. Later many other Indian universities opened their departments for offering M.A., M. Phil. and Ph. D. courses in folklore studies. IGNOU started academic programmes and courses on folklore studies. Besides governmental colleges and universities, non-governmental centres, like the National Folklore Support Centre, were also setup for promotion and dissemination of folklore scholarship in India. The folklore studies in India of this period were marked by inter-disciplinary approach, international collaborations and applications of contemporary theories and perspectives in the field of humanities and social sciences mark. Birinchi Kumar