

Folklore: literature, art craft and music

Dr. Charu Smita Gupta
National Museum
Janpath, Delhi

CONTENTS

[Theories of folklore](#)

[National folklore theory](#)

[Anthropological Theory](#)

[Suggested Readings](#)

India is a country where the elements of folklore exists in abundance in form of folk knowledge science and technology, folk performing art and non performing art, folk practices, folk literature. Going into the literary meaning of folklore, we identify folk and lore as two distinct aspects. The **folk** identifies with the specific community whether it is tribal or non-tribal and **lore** specifies the collective knowledge or wisdom on a particular subject. Lore is also often associated with myth. Myth is an important mode of human communication, teaching, knowledge and learning. There is clear intimacy between folklore and culture. Since folklore is intimately associated with the culture we have to first look at the culture. It has been stipulated by scholars that folklore depends mainly on oral traditions and there are little margins for their recreation or change in developing society. However, when we look at the developing societies of today, we observe that, although the basic genesis of a folklore may not change but its manifestation and interpretations may see perceptible or imperceptible changes.

In this chapter we are discussing folklore as a concept, its definition, theories and types. Although a global perspective is taken as the background but case study examples have been based on the field work conducted by me in Eastern Bihar and relating them to the situations in New Delhi, capital of India. The earliest terms, which represented folklore, were popular antiquities and popular literature.

William Thoms in 1846 was the scholar, who coined the term folklore in English to replace popular antiquities and popular literature. The manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs and so on were part of folklore as viewed by Thoms. There are 21 definitions given by different scholars of the term “Folk Lore” which explain the vastness of the debate and discussion on the word itself. (M. Islam, 1985: 2).

A. Taylor an eminent American folklorist has defined folklore as ‘the material that is handed on by traditional either by word of mouth or by custom and practice. It may be folk songs, folktales riddles, proverbs or other materials preserved in words. It may be traditional tools and physical objects like fences or knots, hot, cross, buns or Easter eggs, traditional ornamentation like the Walls of troy or traditional symbols like the Swastika. It may be traditional procedure like throwing salt over one’s shoulders or knocking on wood. It may be traditional belief like the notion that elder is good for the ailments of eye. All of these are folklore’ (A. Taylor, 1948:12). While elaborating with folklore M. Islam says that folklore is the outcome of the human mind

imbibed with creative feelings. Since ancient time two faculties of human mind have been responsible for the creation, preservation and transmission of folklore. These are creative idea and urge of aesthetic and artistic impulse. The lore or traditional learning was inspired by these two to help creation of folklore (M Islam, 1985:13). Oxford University dictionary has looked upon 'culture as the intellectual side of civilization. If culture is product of the intellectual faculty of man, folklore is the result of his creativity and impulsive love for beauty and knowledge. In one he finds his intellect and sense of refinement released; in other creative ideas are expressed and shaped and his aesthetic impulse takes a form.

These forms may be in words, a part of language (the language may be oral or written is secondary), action through gestures or movements as in performing art, lines and forms as in non performing arts and crafts. Knowledge is basically the exploration. Application of that exploration in a procedural manner becomes technical knowledge and folk science. Man thus nourishes culture through folklore. Folklore is therefore a product of culture, a component part of culture. Since folklore finds its expression through culture therefore, the study of a folklore cannot be fruitful and perfect without the study of its culture (M. Islam, 1985:14).

Since there is a very strong intimacy between folklore and culture, it is important that we also learn about culture. Edward Taylor has defined culture prior to the definition of folklore given by Archer Taylor. He says 'Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by men as member of society '(1871, 1).

Steward 1955 for the first time linked basic technologies and folk culture. Steward developed a sequence of cultural development in which he argued that same ecological environments had same sharing of technological knowledge. He gave a comparison of the civilizations in Northern America, Mesoamerica, Mesopotamia, Egypt and China. The sequence developed by Steward was 1) Pre-agricultural era, 2) Incipient Agriculture, 3) Formative era of basic technologies and folk culture, 4) era of Regional Development and Florescence, 5) Cyclical conquests of these formative era of basic technologies and folk culture saw the beginnings of the technologies of basketry, pottery, weaving, metallurgy and constructions. The craft, which initially emerged as the basic technology, had the input of aesthetics, here and there. The specializations in craft and architectural constructions were provided by strong economy. Era of regional development and florescence saw multi community states and further development of art and crafts. Folk science and knowledge base technology was first introduced with the domestication of plants and animals. In the Indian context, the first emergence of folklore appeared in Indus culture, where we have definite evidences of domestication of plants and animals (S. Channa, 1994: 29). Even after more than hundred years of its coining, Taylor's definition continues to be the most acceptable definition of culture. Just as culture presents the integrated growth and development with the change, similarly folklore entailing the practices or traditions in terms of forms and functions or inter-relations with other aspects of culture, experiences the growth and change, which may be institutionalized over a period of time. The process of diffusion, invention, acceptance or rejection and integration are as much the part of folklore as of the culture in totality. The folklore in a social society may thus be considered as dynamic in the context of its culture. The folklore basically has three important characteristics. First the body of knowledge; second the mode of thought and third mind of art which is drawn as reflections from culture.

Folklore also functions as a bridge between two cultures through its transmission from one culture to another. Geographical conditions, linguistic position and social interest based on commonality of livelihood influence the emergence and perpetuation of folklore. The elements of folklore therefore are not altered from an individual decision but they are transmitted to the next generation by a community interest of group identity. The community or the group may play an important role in perpetuation of the folklore but this commonality of sharing emerges from individual creation, which is accepted by the group as a whole. There is a continuum in knowledge and a learning process of folklore for future generations. A community or group of people in a particular setting play an important role in creation, transmission and sometime transformation of some of the elements of folklore. All the elements of folklore are/were created by the individual genius but when individual creativity is largely shared with a community or group of people and is accepted by that group as its own asset by identification and recognition it becomes folklore. Various folk festivals, which are celebrated with full gusto in the urban metropolises is a living example of such transmission, transgression. India is land of cultural diversities. Each state, district, village in terms of territory may have its own wealth of folklore. It may not be possible to give examples from various regions of the country, the examples of the existence of the folklore its perpetuation and alteration but one case study has been cited in the text later as the extant examples. Folklore entails continuity over a great span of time through which many generations pass the experience to their future generation. Going little further from the migration of a village dweller whether tribal or non-tribal to the urban metropolises of India to the other continents of the world, we find that the present day global shrinkage and advancement of communications has given a new realm to the folklore. Perpetuation, acceptance and integration or rejection of a particular folklore in the new environment has brought out several interesting pictures. The two interesting pictures which emerge are: Situation (one) where some members of the community have moved out of the native place carrying with them the folklore to the new environment, continue to follow the practices in content and spirit. Situation (two) the members who have not moved to a new environment, bring alterations under the influence of the changing local environment. The folklores, which were taken by the early migrants to other regions, thus continued without many modifications in this altered culture situation but the same folklores see modification and change in the native situation. Basically with forethought of preserving the folkloric identity of the given culture in an alien culture, more conscious effort is made by the community to retain the effervescence of the folklore. This is done because folklore is a shared community knowledge and part of the learning process for the future generation and an essential component of the cultural identity. Continuity of folklore in an alien environment strengthens the expansion of group identity. However, the same folklore tradition many times undergoes change due to the absorption of the outside influences in local level culture, mainly because the group resistance to change is minimal. Folklore entails continuity over a great span of time, through which many generations have experienced the experience. Spontaneity in response to change or resistance to change is inbuilt community reaction to a particular situation. Many times the question, which emerges in the mind, is. Is it a mutilated bit of reality or the altered reality? What ever may be the content of mutilation or alteration of reality of in the folklore, the fact remains that folklore contributes majorly in understanding the culture and its functioning in human societies. Contextualization of folklore is an essential phenomenon but nevertheless altered context give a new meaning and lease of life to the materials associated with the folklore. M. Islam says, ' Change in society brings change in culture or vice versa. Folklore belongs to the society as an important part of its culture. When we

accept social change and the change in culture we can not remain oblivious to the changing pattern inherent in folklore as a component of the society (M.Islam, 1985:31).

Vladimir Propp, a famous Russian folklorist says that, ' problems of folklore are acquiring more and more importance nowadays. None of the humanities be it ethnographic, historic, linguistic, or the history of literature, can do without folklore. Little by little we are becoming aware that the solution to many diverse phenomena of spiritual culture is hidden in folklore. Nevertheless, folklore has not yet defined its objectives, its material, or its own specific character as an area of knowledge. We have some works pertaining to general theory, but life proceeds at such a rapid pace that the propositions put forward in these works no longer conform to the extremely complex picture that emerges from current research. To define the subject and essence of our discipline, to determine its place among related disciplines, and to define the specific character of its material has become a vital matter. Correctness of methods and, consequently, of conclusion depends on the correct understanding of the essence and objective of research. The way problems of general theory are formulated has a cognitive and philosophical meaning and affects their concrete solution' (V. Propp, 1984:3).

There is varied variation of folk materials, practices, contributions, patterns etc. in different cultures. Folklore may be a system of knowledge; a mode of thought; a kind of art. The media of transmission of these may be largely the oral instructions. There may also be large possibilities and considerable significance for emergence of the various interpretations of the same folklore. As far as the collection and documentation of folklores are concerned, practitioners just preserve it through a regular functional approach of performance in the society and do not pay much attention or so much concern to document the changes. The folklore thus is an interesting and effective means of communication.

Folklore encompasses the customs, knowledge systems, games, beliefs, practices, literature, performing and nonperforming arts, which include dance music, theatre, drama. painting, sculpture, making of crafts with several materials, festivals etc. The process of transmission of knowledge contained in all the aspects of folklore mentioned above through sustenance, reshaping, renewal, creation of variants has been a continuous phenomenon since the human civilization appeared on this earth. Since the transmission of folklore is a time sustained process we have to look into several theories of folklore given by various scholars. Modern scholars have embraced methodologies such as aesthetics and literary, comparative, nationalistic, anthropological, psychoanalytical and structural. (M.Islam, 1985:35)

There are different thoughts and identities of the folklore in Indian, European and American psyche. Indian folklore identity is different from American and European folklore. Therefore, the American or Euro paradigm may not fit into the Indian thought and concept. India as part of East was earlier banking upon European or American conceptual thought. This Euro or American centric approach not only diminished the conceptual construction with Indo or Indic Centric approach but also directed the thinkers and scholars to work with the given mode of thought. India is a vast country and part of the great eastern culture, where folklore does not need a decided form, instead should have an independent school of thought. Although after careful examination, it is observed that the scientific approach to define folklore by American scholars well fit into studying the vast Indian folklore. But there is vast magnitude of emerging

trends of folklore in Indian continent, their merging and blending into the urban metropolises and maintaining a distinct identity of functional perpetuation. We as Indian scholars are on the threshold of identifying the new models of folklore studies, which highlight the scientific interpretation and put emphasis upon deeper and wider analysis.

Theories of folklore

There are several theories propounded by several scholars for the origin of folklore. Theories of folklore study given by earlier scholars include Semantic theory, Formalist Theory, Moral and Social Theories, Expression Theory, Theory of cognitive emotion, Aesthetic-literary theory, Comparative theory of folklore, , Theory of polygenesis, Theory of diffusionism. We are not discussing the theories given by the all the scholar. They may be referred to in (M.Islam, 1985:35-74). However National Folklore theory, Anthropological theory, Psychoanalytical theory, and Structural theory are discussed in following paragraphs in slight detail. It is important to mention here that folklore is a discipline, where the archaeological records lend only a restricted support to the reconstruction of theories of folklore. The theories mentioned above may not either be rejected totally or accepted totally. Some traces of these theories may be applicable in all types of folklore, while few others may be applicable only in selective types of folklores. The functions of folklore are important aspects, which drew the serious attention of the anthropologists more than that of folklorists. (M.Islam, 1985 :125).

National folklore theory

This theory restricts itself to a particular Nation. Each Nation has its own vastness of folklore. Folklores of some of the Nations like Russia, Germany, France Spain Hungary, Japan, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, United States of America, Persia, African countries, India have found world recognition. Sometimes the National Folklore is used as a national theme for the progress or as a weapon for aggression. Dorson in this regard says, ' With powerful aggressive nations, folklore has proved to be a formidable and diabolic weapon of propaganda and hence in our consideration of theory, we must recognize the existence and persuasiveness of evil theory'. We may say that in the National Folklore Theory, each countries ideologies are reflected (M. Islam. 1985)

Anthropological Theory

Anthropological view on folklore is different. Since anthropologist's attention is more on culture and folklore is a part of the total cultural magnum. Several Anthropologists such as Boas, Malinowaski, Ruth Benedict, Parsons, Jacobs, Herskovits, Bascom, Katherine Luomala, LeviStrauss, Messenger and many others have forwarded anthropological approaches and trends, which have been accepted as anthropological theory. We mention here the Diffusion concept by Boas; Benedict's concept of the release of suppressed desires of the society as manifest in oral literature. Malinowski's concept of psychological reflection in the myths and Bascom's concept of Functionalism are important contributions to emergence and explanation of folklore. Boas as the leading anthropologists has contributed majority to Anthropological theory of folklore. Myths and tales have always helped in building up the background for ethnographic research of any community. Diffusion of tales from one community to another in same or slightly altered

form, contributes to dispersal of folklore in a wider area. Tales generally constitute a part fantasy around the cultural realities. Ruth Benedict has talked about this in her work on Zuni culture (Benedict 1935). The oral forms are considered to be part of the folklore. But folk beliefs, magic, demonology, which are considered by the folklorists as the important parts of folklore, are regarded by the anthropologists as parts of the vital belief and system of the culture, these have been put in the category of Verbal Art. Context, content, function and style are four aspects along with structural analysis of the content, which form the main domain of any folklore. Anthropologists also emphasized on psychological frame mostly directing their attention towards the attitudes of people about their own folklore. The application of anthropological theory on folklore of the Indian subcontinent is very much desirable. Some anthropologists as well as folklorists have already achieved wonderful results by successfully applying this method to the study of Indian folklore (M.Islam, 1985:124-128).

After having discussed the theory of folklore we now discuss the types of folklore. To make the discussion more appropriate, I have chosen to supplement my discussion with actual example of case study of folklore of Bihar in particular. The example from eastern Bihar has been chosen for two reasons, firstly because Bihar has a rich content of folklore. Secondly because the madhubani painting, the important content of the folklore of Bihar is now globally recognized folk art form.

Folklore constitutes a major part of culture, specifically of a folk culture, culture cannot be divided on the basis of specified or unspecified. Scholars who have signified folklore as folk literature have termed it as verbal art (Bascom, 1953: 283-90). Expression of verbal art is reflected in songs or literature but folk painting, craft or dance are not verbal in that sense of accuracy but are very much elements of folklore. Marginally judging upon folk medicine, folk science and folk games or folk technology, we may say that they are folk lore in spite of not being part of verbal visual art. Folklore does not therefore remain in the domain of the village dwellers and has moved to the cities as well.

Traditional folk science and knowledge-base technology is the first aspect of folklore. The other aspects are folk literature, folk practices and folk arts (M. Islam, 1985: 7-11).

Folk science and technology is prominent domain of folklore. There are many myths and practices that are knowledge based. Practices associated with such myths prevent diseases, illness, natural calamities. These knowledge based myths also give clear indications of the management of the nature, including water management, nurturing of the nature etc. Folk science also contains the knowledge for treating through use of herbal plants and minerals, arithmetic, using body parts in different postures and adopting breathing regulations and variations to cure the organ ailments. Yogic science and acupressure are important folk sciences which have sustained them selves for centuries. Technologies devised for use of natural materials for producing dyes, fertilizers, insecticides bridge building, furniture accessories etc are the part of the folk technology.

Many scientific knowledge systems that were originally of folk genre have effective systems of scientific knowledge pertaining to the use of materials and energy source available in the local environment. Folk technology is totality of the knowledge-base system, which is used for

making of tools and application of these tools and devices for production of the art, craft, painting, etc. or a totality of folk arts. It may not be out of bounds to say that many of the folk arts and crafts have actually emerged from the knowledge of folk science and technology. Therefore, when we look at the folklore in contemporary Indian perspective, traditional folk science and knowledge-based technology is first aspect of folklore. All this defines only one aspect of matter, namely, the social nature of folklore, and is insufficient for singling out folklore as a form of verbal art and the science of folklore as a branch of knowledge.

Folklore literature is generally a constituent of folk tales, which include myths, legends, fairy tales, animal tales, riddles, proverbs, ballads, chants songs etc. This dimension of folklore exist in literate as well as non-literate society. Therefore, restricting parameter of folklore to literature alone does not define arena. There are oral systems of learning, which are transmitted by word of mouth i.e. by speaking, and hearing, which came prior to the written literature.

Folklore is product of a special form of verbal art. Literature is also a verbal art, and for this reason the closest connection exists between folklore and literature, between the science of folklore and literary criticism. Literature and folklore overlap partially in their poetic genres. There are genres specific to literature (for example, the novel) and to folklore (for example, the charm), but both folklore and literature can be classified by genres, and this is a fact of poetics. Hence there is a certain similarity in some of their tasks and methods.

One of the literary tasks of folklore is to single out and study the category of genre and each particular genre, especially important and difficult is to study the inner structure of verbal products, their composition and makeup. The laws pertaining to the structure of the folktale, epic poetry, riddles, songs, charms etc., are little known. In epic genres consider, for example, the opening of the poem, the plot and the conclusion. It has been shown that works of folklore and literature have different morphologies and that folklore has specific structures. This difference cannot be explained, but it can be discovered by means of literary analysis. Stylistic and poetical devices belong here too. Again we will see that folklore has devices specific to it (parallelisms, repetition, etc.) and that the usual devices of poetical language (similes, metaphors, epithets) have a different content in folklore and literature. This too can be determined by literary analysis. In brief, folk literature possesses a most distinctive poetics, peculiar to it and different from the poetics of literary works. Study of this poetics will reveal the incomparable artistic beauty of folk literature. Thus, not only is there a close tie between folklore and literature, but folklore is a literary phenomenon. Like literature, it is a verbal art, which is many times written.

In its descriptive elements study of folklore is the study of literature. The connection between these disciplines is so close that folklore and literature are often equated; methods of literature are extended to folklore, and here the matter is allowed to rest. However, as just pointed out, literary analysis can only discover the phenomenon and the law of folklore poetics, but it is unable to explain them. To avoid the error of equating folklore with literature, we must ascertain not only how literature and folklore are alike, related and to a certain extent identical in nature, but also how they differ. Indeed, folk literature possesses a number features so sharply differentiating it from literature that methods of literary research are insufficient for solving all its problems.

One of the most important differences is that literary works invariably have an author. Folk literature, on the contrary, never has an author, and this is one of their specific features. The situation is quite clear; either we acknowledge the presence of folk literature as a phenomenon in the social and cultural history of peoples or we do not acknowledge it and claim that it is a poetical or scientific fiction that only individuals and groups can create poetry. [V. Propp, 1984 :5-6,].

If we go into the history of Indian classical literature, Vedas were also into the category of folk literature because they were the knowledge transmitted from one generation to another through speaking and hearing. It was much later in history that Vedas were written down. All the elements of learning that are passed through speaking and hearing are part of the oral tradition belonging to folk literature from generation to generation in a society. These oral traditions may be documented in writing as in the case of the Vedas or may continue to be passed on orally through narratives, without a written record. There is closely integrated relationship between the oral and the written literature. When we look at the Indian folk literature, we find that serious efforts are now made to pen down oral literature. Simultaneously, in course of time elements of written literature particularly the puranic literature were transmitted into the oral literature. The point of discussion here is that classical literature like Ramayana and Mahabharata were traditionally written in the classical language Sanskrit. However, to make them understandable to the masses of the Indian population, local language and dialects were used as the spoken elements to explain the classical literature to the large populations. Enactment of folk dances based on themes of Mahabharata and Ramayana and other Puranic stories is a case example. The folk literature may or may not be the realistic literature, some times it may be an amalgamation of reality and the myth. Local knowledge, systems, beliefs get merged into mainstream literature to evolve to a folkloric version, which is depicted through oral narration combined with folk art and folk practices.

The literature always has a content of theme or a purpose or a motive. Some of the popular themes of folktales center around love not culminating in marriage or couple dying untimely death before marriage or consummation of marriage. Other themes revolve around motherhood, birth of a child. Male child is also many times center of folktales. Valor and strength of men are other depictions in folktales. Treachery, successful mission etc. make interesting narrations in folktales.

It has long been known that literature is transmitted through writing and folklore by word of mouth. Until now this distinction has been considered to be purely technical. However, it captures the innermost difference between the functioning of literature and folklore. The written words provide boundaries to the spoken words. Oral narration may undergo few unrecorded changes over a period of time without much notice, but a literary work, once it has arisen, no longer changes. It exists only when two agents are present: the author (the creator of the work) and the reader. The mediating link between them is a book, manuscript, or performance. A literary work is immutable, but the reader always changes. Aristotle was read by the ancient Greeks, the Arabs, and the Humanists, and we read him too, but all read and understand him differently. True readers always read creatively. A work of literature can bring them joy, inspire them, or fill them with indignation. They may wish to interfere in the heroes' fortune, reward or

punish them, change their tragic fate to a happy one, put a triumphant villain to death. But the readers, no matter how deeply they are aroused by a work of literature, are unable and are not allowed to introduce any changes to suit their own personal tastes or the views of their age.

Literature, which is born of folklore, soon abandons the mother that reared it. Literature is the product of another form of consciousness. This does not mean that literature is realized through individuals isolated from their environment; it means, rather, that the individual represents this environment and their people but do it in their own individual unique, personal way. In the lower social strata. Creative art continues to exist on the old basis, sometimes in interaction with the art of the ruling class. It is transmitted from mouth to mouth and we have already discussed its distinctive features.

Characters in narrative folklore and literature are completely different. In literature they are unique individuals; they typify a period or social milieu, generalize the features of many people and reflect a great number of prototypes, but remain individuals. They have their own names and possess their own personalities.

(V. Propp., 1984:27).

Animal tales are almost entirely about tricks that clever animals, especially the fox, play on other animals. The victory of the weak over the strong must have very ancient roots. Among hunting peoples, women and children told stories of the fox's tricks when the men were hunting. Success of the weak and their victory over the strong in the story were intended to promote success in reality. At this stage animal tales were not yet folktales: they became folktales when faith in their effectiveness had been lost (V. Propp, 1984:28-29). Folklore circulates, changing all the time and this circulation and changeability are among its specific characteristics (V. Propp, 1984:8).

Folk Practices are day-to-day or occasionally practices of customs, beliefs, superstitions, rites and rituals, festivals, religious practices etc. Folk games / sports also form the part of such practices. The realm of folk practices is very wide. Many times the folk practices get frozen in time if the practitioner takes them to a distant land, their basic content may remain the same but the situational changes may be incorporated. There are several examples of the folk practices. We will discuss here only two important practices viz Durga Puja festival of W. Bengal. Chhat Puja of Bihar. The communities of these regions celebrate these two festivals collectively. The celebrative practices, which emerged with certain change in the ecological environment, become part and parcel of the emerging environment.

Durga puja festival is celebrated with gusto and zeal in every part of India and even abroad, where Bengalis are settled. Similarly people of Bihar in other parts of the country celebrate Chhat Puja.

Folk art or Artistic Folklore is the broad category of the artistic depiction of a myth or folklore. There are two sub categories of this type. The performing folk art and the non performing folk art. When a myth is translated to a pictorial and is associated with a written /oral narrative it establishes a wider link with performing and non performing reality. Structurally this artistic depiction may be through performance or through creation of forms.

Performing arts are broadly those art forms, where human body is used to enact a written or oral literature. Folk Performing arts include music, dance, drama, rhyming, theatre etc. Volumes may be written on each of these styles of arts forms. Since we are documenting these styles and art forms, we go further with our classification. There is a very close-knit relationship between folk performing arts and non performing arts. The visual aspect of performing arts lies in the body movements of the performer; or the singing talent of the folk singer. In such performances to depict a character more authentically or loudly several other aides are incorporated. These include modification in physical ambience of the performance area; the costume and the body makeup of the performer, several accompanying musical instruments for the singer or the performer. In Chau dance of Orissa; there is a performance along with the masks and costumes, the theme of performance centers around mythological narrations such as Mahishasurmardini (killing of a demon by goddess Durga). The body movements of the performer are in conjunction with lyrics and beat of drums. Another folk performance of Gotipua dance again from Orissa, where young boys dressed as girls perform stylized dance movements based on Gita govinda, Oriya folk literature. There are specific art and craft activities associated with these performances. The human body is altered to appear as the body of the character of the folk narration with the use and support of several arts and crafts in case of Chau dance and males personify as female in Gotipua dance. Puppetry, another form of folk performance has the total replacement of the human body with the handcrafted forms termed as the puppets generally made of wood. Some times leather is also used as a material for making these puppets. These puppets are artistically painted.

The narrator or singer and the listener are interested only in the action and nothing more. The environment in which a folk artist lives and works is not reproduced in narrative art. For the folk singer or performer his house, his barnyard with its stable and cattle shed, his field, his garden his meadow, as well as the people around him including his family, do not exist as the object of art. True, small features, details that reflect the real life of the artist are interspersed here and there, but the narrator does not attempt to represent this reality (V. Propp., 1984:21). The anthropomorphic presentation of the Indian deities has brought an interesting character to the Indian performer, he imitates the character in performance as depicted in the myth. For example character of Ravana for Ramayana is depicted with ten heads. The artist generally on the stage is seen wearing mask with ten heads. Animal masks are important aid to the performers to depict the animal characters in a narration. Baul singers of West Bengal do not personify to a specific character but have their own characteristic attire, which identifies them.

Folk non-performing arts include folk painting, sculptures, making of a variety of arts and crafts for several materials, body ornamentation through painting or tailoring. The costumes, which have been devised by the communities for their specific identities, have a large constituent of the folk element. Arts and crafts have always been the activities linked to the material culture of the communities whether tribal or folk or traditional communities living in the cities, towns. In the domain of folk art there is marginal or minimal difference between the folk art and folk craft forms. Generally the two dimensional depiction of a myth is termed as the folk art form; whereas three-dimensional depiction is categorized as folk craft. Manifestation of a myth may be both through a painting or any material such as clay, metal, grass etc. to give a three-dimensional form. Some times the ritualistic practices associated with a particular myth may also be

simultaneously depicted in the painted form and a three dimensional form. Briefly we may say that folk art is generally associated with the painted forms, which may be on the floor, wall, or any other surface that may be flat and is used as a canvas. Sometimes the paintings are also done on the three dimensional surfaces such as a terracotta pitcher. The painted potsherds are available from the prehistoric period. The practice of the painted pitcher is continuing even today. Folk craft is the wider depiction of folk art in utility, decorative or ritualistic items.

Folk generally means ordinary and non-literate people like villagers, labourers, tribal people from backward communities etc. Some time ago folk also related to primitive. Today when we discuss folklore with reference to development and dynamism of society, folklore needs to be re-designated. It is true that folklore emerges by a group of people living together or belonging to a particular caste related occupation or else having a common cultural/regional identity irrespective of the fact whether they live in a city, town or a village. The social identity of each group by way of life, language tradition, livelihood is patterned in a clearly identified manner. Thus under the wake of large migrations from remote villages whether tribal or non-tribal to the urban metropolises like Delhi, Bombay, Chennai, Calcutta, Bangalore etc, small cultural pockets are created in these metropolises. These metropolises are then the constituents of people, who have migrated from a particular geographical area, who share the same language, culture, mechanism of livelihood and living conditions. Their way of life and traditional heritage are bound by a common identity. These groups even in urban metropolises, express their folklore traditions through manifested verbal art, rituals, materials etc. They exhibit their folk culture, language slightly in a more sophisticated style and bringing changes, wherever necessary in the given situation. A very common example that emerges to my mind as a scholar is the “Chhath Puja” of the migrants from eastern Bihar to other parts of the country that has been mentioned earlier in this text. Mithila is the cultural zone, which is geographically part of northern Bihar with most concentration in Madhubani and Darbhanga districts of Bihar. Traces of cultural influences are also found in borderline villages of the Saharsa District. Mithila is the birthplace of Sita, daughter of Raja Janak and wife of Rama, an incarnation of Vishnu. As a cultural region, Mithila has many popular and practiced folklore. There are several cultural traditions in this part of country, which are very localized but are the important part of the festive ritual calendar.

As the custom goes, the devotees to the Chhath Puja have to stand in the water of a pond to give offering to the Sun God. The Chhath devotees offer their prayers on the river bank or the sea-shore. In the cities like Delhi, Mumbai, where the pond is not available because of the basic climatic conditions. The other material expressions of the custom related to Chhath Puja have minimal variations. The elements of this regional folklore are so enthusiastically practiced by the city dwellers of eastern Bihar that, this emerges as major recognized folk practice, which gives them a distinct identity while living in the urban metropolises. At the time of celebration of this local festival several new contacts with the migrants from the eastern Bihar are also established.

During a field study in 1992, I had visited Village Sardiha in Saharsa district in Bihar, where living shrines of Saillesh were seen at Saurath, Jitwarpur, Ranthi in Madhubani, Allalpalli, Kedarabda in Darbhanga. Brambaba, Bhuiyan baba shrines in Allalpalli, Kedarabda Villages in Darbhanga and on the outskirts of the village Chunhati in Darbhanga. Village Shishu in

Darbhanga has two living shrines of Sanichar Dehwad and Bhuiyan than, where terracotta horses are offered as the votive offering on wish fulfillment. Than in this part of Bihar is a place of worship of local folk deities. Different communities may have different local deities which are worshipped by them, but for wish fulfillment members of other communities may also offer their prayers. Sailesh has been the deity of Dushads a community from this region. Apart from the Sailesh Shrine, there is literature and paintings on Baba Sailesh. The potter of the region make the depicted icons of Sailesh and other folk deities on their respective vehicles. Three legends of Sailesh, Brambaba and Bhuiyak are described here.

Salhesh than

Salhesh is associated with the humble Dushad community. No other community offers the worship to Salhesh than.

Legend about the worshippers

Regarding the origin of the Dushads, it is believed by them that they are originally from the kshatri caste but they were neither the warriors nor owned any fields, therefore they started tending the pigs. They were excommunicated from the Kshatri group, for this reason by and large the members of the community do not have any land holdings and have worked as the laborers in the fields owned by others. The second legend about their origin is that Dushads were the skilled thieves and since they would always cheat their masters, they could never enough money or land.

Legend pertaining to Salhesh has described him as a king, who was wrongly accused for a crime he did not commit. The theft for which Sailesh was accused was actually committed by another Dushad called Chuhadmal. I observed in the field, that the informants in all the villages i.e. Savrath, Jitwarpur, Ranthi in Madhubani felt a sense of pride while describing the part of legend where Chuhadmal, the servant had made an underground tunnel across the wide span of the river Ganga to carry across and hide his booty. The informant at Ranti, Shri Mahbir Chaupal told that Chuhadmal had pledged river Ganga to offer her fatenga/podi (female goat child) along with a charkha of gold. However, when Ganga allowed the path way, he offered just 101 hair of podi and forgot all about charkha. Ganga was annoyed on this breach of pledge and consequently Chuhadmal was caught for this default in pledge. The potter of village Magrauni, Madhubani said that, since Dushad, are the thieves, they pray to Salhesh and Chuhadmal before going on any such mission. Shri Mohan Pandit, one of the potters from the village also added that generally the direction in which they have to go for committing the theft is decided by child of this community, who is made to stand in front of the shrine and asked by the adults in which direction they should go for their job. Therefore, it is very necessary for any village with large population o Dushads to have a Salhesh than.

Legend of Salhesh

Salhesh is described as a king from Satyug. His father was Narpat Naresh (king) and mother was Mandodari Rani (queen). He was a handsome king and had the power to disguise himself as a parrot. So that he could wander in the forest fearlessly. He was very fond of wandering here and

there, but very pious. He could also walk on water. He lived in Mohis tha, a deeh (place) in district Sarsa, Nepal. There was a large sarovar (pond) named Manikdah about 14 miles from the palace. Raja Salhesh would every day go to this sarovar for bath and offer flowers to the goddess Bhagwati in phulwari. Salhesh had two brothers Moti Ram and Bundheshwar. Salhesh had a parrot named Heeraman, who brought him news from far and near. He traveled on an elephant with Mangal mahavat (the elephant trainer).

The phulwari where Raja Salhesh went, was also visited by four sisters from mali community namely Reshma, Kusuma, Dauna and Hiriya. Raja Salhesh sung anchara 12 varsh bandha (she remained in pledge to marry him for 12 years). During one of his hunting sprees, Salhesh killed deer, which belonged to Rajkumari Chandrawati daughter of Raja Kulheshwar of Pakaria, this place is presently in Nepal near Phulbar. The deer had eaten away the flowers from the garden which was tended by Kusuma, the malin. Raja Kulheshwar invited him to game of dice with the precondition that who so ever shall loose, shall work as a chowkidar in the other's place. Raja Salhesh lost the game, thus he had to keep his word.

Raja Kulheshwar had a devoted and sincere paherdar Chuhadmal a Dushad, who was working for him for 12 years. He was removed unceremoniously without receiving any salary payments for the services he rendered. Raja Salhesh was appointed instead. This annoyed Chuhadmal to the extent that he pledged to river Ganga to commit a theft in the palace of Raja Kulheshwar. It is said that he dug an underground tunnel about 2 miles long from his house, in Mokama across Ganges to the palace. He took away all the jewels of Chandrawati, undressed her and tied her to the bed. This was done when Salhesh was the guard and Raja Kulheshwar was away. A particular jewellery is described as hansuli, the neck ornament. Kuleshwar on his return suspected Salhesh and thus put him behind the bar. It was very important for Salhesh to prove his innocence to the Raja. At this juncture, the four malin sisters came to his rescue. Two of the malin sisters, Dona and Kusuma were also the fortune teller. They guessed from their knowledge that Chuhadmal was the actual thief. But how to catch him. The four sisters went to Chuhadmal's house as godana godani (making designs on body). They entered the inner apartment of his house and saw his wife wearing the hansuli which belonged to Chandrawati. They enticed her into giving that hansuli for the godana she had on her body. Chuhadmal's wife was not aware of the theft committed by her husband, so she innocently bartered the hansuli for the godana (the body design). Having got the proof, four sisters, went to Raja Kulshwar and thus the real thief Chuhadmal was severely punished and Salhesh was freed of his bondage. Raja Kulshwar felt much obliged to Kusuma, the malin but did not marry her. She however, continued to consider him to be her husband.

As has been mentioned earlier, it is believed that Chuhadmal was caught because he did not fulfill the promise to river Ganga of the sacrifice of 101 podi.

Regarding marriage of Salhesh, it is described that he was entrapped into marrying Phulmanti (her name has also been given as Satyawati). She had been given a word by goddess Bhagwati to have Salhesh as her husband (anchara bandhane ki kabula). Salhesh was once coming from Kapadiya garh to manisautha, Phulmanti caught him forcibly in her palace as he was in the form of the parrot Heeraman. At that time, she knew about his dual identity and since she was determined to marry him, she kept him in the palace against her father's wishes.

Goddess Durga told Moti Ram and Budeshwar about the captivity of their brother. They sent a barber (Hazzam) for release of Salhesh. Hence, they themselves went and met the same fate. Ultimately Vanaspati, the married sister of Salhesh along with her son Korikinha, came for negotiations. Korikinha is said to have powers like Bhima. There were several misunderstanding. The main hindrance to the marriage was Raja Hempati, father of Phulmanti, who did not want to give his daughter in marriage to a Dushad. The matters were resolved and Salhesh returned to Mahisautha. He is however said to have remained in brahamchara i.e. he did not consummate his marriage and never deviated from truth (satya vachan palak)

The than of Salhesh faces east and the main celebrations are held on asad poornima(this falls in the month of July). Every Monday and Friday in asad month are auspicious for worship. On asad poornima there is a performance, the performer goes into trans. Shri Gangai Paswan from Saurathi revealed that bisara (snake god) which is represented in the form of a mound is also worshipped, with in the Salhesh shrine. Bisara amurt rakhe chche (bisara does not have iconic form), simultaneously Soan Sati and Ratida (sati) are also worshipped. Aghoris after consuming lot of local wine, perform the worship. Genda, Arhul, Kaner are the three kind of flowers offered to the shrine along with milk, pan (betle leaf) supari (arceanut) as ritual offering.

Brahm Sthan

This place of worship is generally on the western kitchen. Again an equestrian deity, describes the form of a wandering soul of a Brahmin youth who died as a bachelor. Thus his soul did not get salvation. A benevolent deity Braham baba protects the villagers from any curse, femine, epidemic etc. the shrine is generally under a bo (pipal), bar (Banyan) tree. Members of several castes like Brahman, Lunia, Kumhar, Malhar, Suri, Teli, Chamar, Dhobi, Dom, Mandal, Dhanuk, Hazzam, etc. except worship the shrine. Today it is customary among the villagers to visit the than on important family celebrations like birth of a child, marriage etc. It is believed that this equestrian deity goes around the village at night to vigil on the welfare of the village.

A upper caste, Brahmin Shri Onkar Jha told that Brahman baba was a tantrik and went around as a mendicant to every village, protecting the residents. The shrine is offered khasi (male goat child) preferably of white colour or padava (pigeon). The shrine has equestrian figures with rider in pair of two, four or six. And two malin, one on either side. The annual worship is arranged through the contributions from all the members of the village on any Tuesday in Ujaria (bright) Sravan month. Similarly, installation of new images is arranged through the collection of funds. Jhanp (the cover made of pith by malin) dudh dhar (milk poured from a vessel from a height) chinnai ke laddo are the main offerings. The horse riders, painted wheel turned terracotta in smaller size are offered as manauti ka ghora in case of illness, desire to mother of for a child. In case of an emergency the shrine is worshipped on any Tuesday. These worships are apart from the worship offered before the marriage procession starts and after a bride is brought to her in laws house.

Bhuyan than

The Bhuyan than is mostly with an iconic representation. This is the deity of the protection to the cattle and is specifically worshiped when masin (buffalo) gives lesser yield. This than also known as Bageshwar than is at time represented as a rider on tiger. The community worship is held on any Tuesday in Sravan, mainly by the Gwala (the cow herders). Other communities offer worship for protection to the village. The shrine is located either under a large peepal tree or in front of a pokhar (pond). I had visited two shrines in village Shiv and Mohalla Kedarbad in Darbhanga. The former is the non iconic shrine, while later had a lion rider Bhuiya baba, with one equestrian rider on either side and a malin. Small votive offerings in the form of painted terracotta rider were also seen.

Sanichar Dehwad

This shrine represented as raised clay mound is offered votive terracotta horse. The main worship is held on any Monday or Friday in Srawan. Khees, the male goat child is offered for manoti (wish fulfillment). Otherwise chini ka laddo and arhul flowers along with votive horse are offered. Two shrines, Sanichar Dehwad in village Shishu Pashchimi par and Uttari par were visited. The former was under a peepal tree and later under a banyan tree. The votive horse, wheel turned terracotta was painted white.

Apart from these painted deities and offerings, the potters in Madhubani, Darbhanga area make elephant known as Chat ka hathi. Chat parva is celebrated six days after Deepavali i.e. the sixth day of a Ujariya Kartik. This is a same day when the festival of Syama Chakaiva begins. The festival is celebrated by all the Hindus. The rising sun is worshipped on this day by standing in water for ten minutes and offering thakua (wheat and jaggery paneake), Kasar (powdered rice roasted and mixed with jaggery, dry fruits, grated coconut, banana, murai (radish), ikh, sugar cane). All these items known as prasadi are kept in a dagara (a sikki/bamboo basket) and taken to the river. There is a lamp fixed on the elephant head. The prasadi kept in dagar and lamp is lightened. After offering to rising sun, the elephant is immersed in water and prasadi is brought back.

The festival of Syama Chakaiva is another folk festival, which is celebrated in Ujariya Kartik which falls just after Diwali in October-November in this region. The celebration of this festival also includes many songs, which are sung by women, while celebrations are in progress. The festival is for the well wishing of the brothers and is celebrated by women folk of particularly Brahmin, Kayastha, Rajput communities in Madhubani and Darbhanga areas of Bihar. The festival starts with making of several clay images of Syama Chaikeva and other associated characters. These are buried in the ploughed fields at the end of the festival. However, in the Rajput village Sardiha, Saharsa district, there is a slight variation in the tradition of dispersal. Here the images are placed in the bamboo, floats, which are decorated with paper and clay decorations and floated in water. The images ultimately get immersed in water.

There are several legends and Iconography of the festival of Syama Chakaiva. these legends were collected by me during on official field work in 1992.

Legend 1: as narrated to me by Smt. Gauri Devi, 80 years old brahmin, Syama was the sister of Lord Krishna. She was imprecated by Gautam Muni, that she will not have a definite place and shall remain in the loneliness of the forest. Syama went crying to her brother Krishna to be released from the curse. Syama bhai krishana se kahal theen, je hamra munivar ke arpan se kaun mukti hoyat. (Who shall free me from the curse of Gautam Muni) “Krishana Kahal kinh, je ek sthan ehan achchi jatee janakiji ke janam bhele chchali, wo hi sthan mein puja par jaat, ohi din se unkar puja mithila mein bhali chche.

Krishana replied that, there was one place on the earth, where Janakiji was born. You shall be invited the place and worshiped. Since that day she was started to be worshiped. Syama's husband was Chakaiva and her brother was kharruchi. The character who complained to muniwar about her behaviour was a cheriya, the servant who is called Chugala because of chugal khori (one who lodges a false complaint is a chugal khor and the act is chaugal khori).

Legend 2

Smt. Jaya Mangala Devi, 78 years, said Syama was loitering in a phulwari (garden) in Devlok. Chugala accused her of being seen with a rishi muni named Sabbak in the garden. He told this to Krishan, her brother (Chugala chugal pani kiya). Shri Krishna cursed her to become a bird (panchchi kar bhraman karit raho, ghar ashram, parival to sa kauno matlat nahi rahat). If she was so fond of roaming in the garden, best would be for her to change to a bird and have no concern with the home and family. Hearing this Syama wept bitterly and pleaded to his brother, to take his words back, as Chugala had accused her wrongly. Shri Krishna relieved her of the curse and sent her to mritayu bhavan (the earth). She was to be born there and worshipped by mritayu jan (people of earth). Smt. Jaya Mangala Devi told that Chugala was a demon, who had a desire to marry Syama, but could not do so, as she was already married. Lord Krishna had also added that Chugala would be looked down upon and abused along with Syama's worship. This would encourage the affection between the brother and sister and no brother shall ever restrict his sister's movement for a false complaint. Syama was to be born on the fifth day of ijoriya (bright) Kartik and die on purnima (full moon night). Oratga ba gibu dev rujg wabu vaoas bgat ba syje teg, (The words once spoken by Dev or Rishi are neither false statements nor can these be taken back). Syama, as the daughter of Mithila was married to Chakaiva. Jaya Mangala Devi further added, that when Syama become a bird, her husband Chaikaiwa also changed to a bird to his free will.

Legend 3

Smt. Savitri Devi narrated that Syama was the daughter of Shri Krishna and was in love with son of Sambha muni. She used to go around with her lover. This was informed by a chugal khor to her father Shri Krishna, who being enraged banished her lover to change to a bird. As a result her paramour changed to bird called chakrawak. Syama also turned to a the bird chakori. The bird couple Chakrawak and Chakori after a long time come to Shri Krishna to seek pardon. He

showed his inability to take his words back but blessed them to be worshipped and praised by mritayu jan (earthy folks) in the Kartik month from 6th day to the full moon day.

Legend 4

Sita Devi the famous Madhubani painter from Jitwarpur opined that Syama and Chakaiva were the daughter and son of Lord Krishna. Syama was very fond of roaming in the garden. Once she was seen in a garden called Vrindavan, where she met Chugla, who wanted her to be his beloved. Syama refused the courtship, so Chugla misinformed her father, that she was seen with a boy in the garden. Krishna cursed her to be a bird like Khanjan Chiraiya (this bird is said to be living in the mountains and returns to the fields of the plains only in Phalgun/Chaitra (February/March) to eat the farvi (roasted wheat) in Aghan/Kartik to eat lavan (roasted rice). When Syama was changed to a bird, Chakaiva was very depressed. He observed asceticism and became a bird. Khanjan became the bird friend (sakhi) of the two. Syama and Chakaiva returned again to Shri Krishna with repentance, he blessed them that all the brothers and sisters in Mithila shall worship you. These two have been described as devgan. Because of the misinterpretation of an event they had to take bird form.

Legend 5

Legend from district Ranthi also described Syama and Chakaiva as wife and husband. Syama, the sister of Krishna ate lavan before offering it to the family deity Goswami. One of the servants reported this to Shri Krishna and she was turned to a bird and sent to live with Khanjan another bird. She was invited to Mithila in anthropomorphic form along with her husband during the time when the reaped harvest of paddy is available in plenty. She is offered the same each night for ten days until Kartik Poornima and is sent back ceremoniously.

Legend 6

Smt. Mohini Jha in her book has described the legend as below:

“Syama was Krishna’s daughter. Samb was her brother and Chakravak was her husband. They had a cheriya (servant) who was called Dihuli. Syama used to visit the garden every day, one day Dihuli/ the cheriya informed Krishna that she was sporting with rish Sabhak. Krishna cursed her to be a bird. Syama flew away as a bird and her husband out of his free will turned to a bird. Sabhak rishi had also become a bird. On this occasion Sambh, Syama’s brother was not around. When he discovered the happening, on his return, he did severe penance and prayed to Shri Krishna to relieve Syama of the curse. Shri Krishna was pleased and returned Syama Chakaiva to the anthropomorphic form. On returning to human form, they started living on the earth. Syama was deeply obliged to her brother Sambh for her return to human form, so she expressed her gratitude to him.

Syama Kahalthini – Bhaye hamar udhar kelani to hetu, e pabani mukhayatah bhaiye bahin-ik bhel.

Iconography the figures associated with the Syama Chakaiva are divided in two group Parival jan (member of the family) do tal (members out of the family). There are twenty four characters related to the legend. These are depicted in different iconographic forms as detailed below:-

A. Parivar Jan

1. Siri Syama: This is the bird form of Syama and presented as a bird.
2. Syama: The anthropomorphic form of Syama, the female figure.
3. Chaikaiva: The male anthropomorphic form.

(Syama and chakiva are made in a pair).

B. Do Tal

4. Sat Bhaiyan: These are either represented as seven bird or seven anthropomorphic forms sitting on a pedestal. They are recognized as the rishis (sants), who were living in the garden, where Syama went.
5. Bantitir: The birds who had also seen Syama in the garden and testified Syama's innocence to Krishna.
6. Bhai Takini: The bird form who waits for the brother to arrive.
7. Chugala: An anthropomorphic head is shown with large ears made of grass. The head is held on a stick, devoid of any torso. While celebrating the festival of chugla are burnt each day ceremoniously.
8. Vrindavan: This is the forest or the garden, which is represented as an anthropomorphic head containing the large bunch of long strands of the grass. This character is also devoid of any torso.
9. Kharruch: Protective brother of Syama who welcomes her with an umbrella, is represented in bird as well as human form.
10. Hans: The brother of Chakaiva.
11. Dholiya/Bajania/Pipani wala: These are the musical accompanist welcoming Syama. Each character is shown with dhol (drum), bajani and pipani (kind of percussion instruments).
12. Ladu Bechani: Woman who sells Ladu (Sweet balls of Gram and wheat flour).
13. Phul Malin: Women selling flowers.
14. Jhanjhi kukkit: Dog shown with a piece of pancake in his mouth.
15. Bhamra: Black bee, who is a messenger who brings the grievances of sister to the notice of her brother.
16. Ater bater, Titir: these are birds forms, watching the Syama.
17. Bhar Bhariya: The load carrier, who carries the loads of gifts presented to Syama on her vidai (ceremonial sending off)
18. Ras: This is the clay image of Krishna and Gopis, this is generally bought from the market and is not offered to the mother earth. (Bhawaya nahin jate).
19. Poti: The earthen containers generally three each containing 1. Chura, dahi, 2. dhan, doob, 3. sindu (flaked rice, curd, paddy grass, vermilion).
20. Tihali/chaihaki: The bird form of the maid servant who perhaps attended to the needs of Syama in bird form. Also called khanjan.
21. Kajravti: The clay container containing black kohl. Every day Syama is ceremoniously decked up by applying kohl in her eyes. This icon is found in Saharsa.
22. Ganesh: The Hindu god made in Saharsa.

Iconographic characters are made from materials Mait (fieldclay), payin (water), khar (grass), kathi (wood), pithar (powdered rice), geru (red ochre), holi rang (variety of colours generally used at the time of Holi festival).

Process:

Various iconographic characters related to the legend of Syama chakaiva are prepared all over invariably by the clay from the fields which is yellowish. The first lump of clay is customarily brought by the brother or is the lump dhepa brought from the field ceremoniously the previous year. It is mixed with water and the lumps etc. are removed with hands. In Madhubani area a sirahi (the flat base) of clay is made first, another lump of clay is rolled to shape a head. The small wooden piece kathi is inserted in the head and fixed on to the base also called pidiya. The technique of making form is rolling, rounding, flattening, pinching, pressing etc. with the palms, fingers and nails. Hath se goli banenai, chutaki se dabai jayit chai (Balls are prepared with hand and pressed with index finger and thumb). However for making chugla, a long stick is inserted in the neck and bunch of khar (grass) for ears and for making Vrindavan these bunches are inserted in the head.

Smt. Ambika Devi, from Village Saradiha in Saharsa district does not use any support inside the body frame. The forms are made little by little each day from chhat (6th day) allowed to be dried in shade. On 6th day i.e. upto dev uthani gyaras the 11th day of bright Kartik month) all the iconographic forms are completed. On this day, the paste from rice powder known as pithar is prepared and sprinkled on the forms.

C. The last day, aripan (the floor drawing) is made in the open courtyard with pithar and each form is placed at a specific point, after smearing with pithar. The white body of the forms is coloured with colours bought from the market mainly blue, pink yellow. They say akhara (unpainted) Syama will not go.

It may be mentioned here, that it is obligatory to buy the painted forms from the potter also. He comes to the door step during the season to sell the items. The items to be purchased essentially are Syama Chaikeva, sat bhaiyo, Ras.

D. On the full moon day, a definite hour and direction are decided by the priest for submitting the forms to the ploughed field (kaun muhe, kaun ber bhaste). All the forms i.e. the hand made and those bought from the potter are placed in changeras the bamboo basket. Before departure, Syama is offered food and clothes. The sisters burn Vrindavan and smear the face of Chugla with the black thus collected a day before. On the poornima day, all the forms made by the sisters are picked up and broken by the brother by placing them on his right thigh. These broken forms along with the forms bought by potter are taken to the field, in changera (a bamboo basket). An oil lamp (dibiya) is also placed in changera. All the forms except Syama pair, Ras, dibiya bought from the potter, are offered to the field. Five lumps of clay (dhepa) are picked up, placed in changera. These items are brought back and placed in front of the household shrines.

Dhepa are auspicious. These are saved for the next years celebrations when Siri Syama is made preferably from this clay. The arpan is mud plastered (lep dyed chchi) next day of the full moon. The unused pithar is immersed in the pond, after offering to the household deity.

E. Village Saradiha has a different tradition of offerings. On the 11th day of Kartika Shukla Paksh, i.e. Dev Uthavni Gyaras, the aripan is drawn on the floor with peethar. Syama is taken to the devsthan, (the corner of the house, where house hold deity remains), dubi (grass) is offered to Syama and other forms. They are also smeared with pithar. The company of the friends collect in the julala khet i.e. the ploughed field, all the forms are decorated with colours (ang vastra banaye chche). Syama is decked with kajal in eyes and sindur in maagn (hair parting), from this evening uptill poornima (sir sinour, naina kajal chene re) peetar is also decorated. Sarndaun (the songs related to the festival are also sung each day). I collected nearly fifteen local folk songs from different areas pertaining to the khel, as this festival is called.

On the day of full moon, ber (a floating dome shaped structure) is made with kale thamb (bana stem) bans ki batti mandap banaye (bamboo sticks are used for making the pavilion) kajal ki chamaki se sajaye chche (it is decorated with bright paper). All the characters except for chugala and Vrindavan, are placed on the ber. The ber is floated in the pond (Pokhar), where as Chaugalas face is smeared with kajal and it is immersed in water along with Vrindavan, after the brother touches these with his thigh.

F. It is customary in the Vaisnav India, that the deified forms, if made in clay are not fired. It is common belief that the fired forms can not be worshiped. Bhagwan paka ke nahi beche chchi. Bhagwans puja pakale bina gaichche. Therefore in the Mithilanchal area, the forms made by girls, married women during the Syama Chaikewa festival were never retained, since soon after the offering to the ploughed field, they were mixed with the mother earth, or in the water of the pond, where they were floated.

The village women in Mithila are artistically oriented. Apart from the floor and the wall paintings and sikki grass items, this orientation was also expressed in the clay forms, which they made during Syama Chaikva festival. There were two out growths of continuity. One where the local potters started making the forms for the specific sale requirement. The forms in this case were deteriorated, as they were made only for the specific requirement of accompanying characters, to the main items forming part of festive offering. It is important to note here that earlier all the forms related to festival were made by the married or unmarried women collectively. But now potters of the area have started making few forms and have also started firing them. Nevertheless the forms of main characters i.e. Syama Chaikewa are made collectively. The artistic skills of women are markedly noticed if the forms, which are basically clay sculptures are aesthetically appealing. Although every women of the area makes these clay images, but there are some women in the area, whose images are more appreciated than others.

Smt. Ambika Devi of village Saradiha had the spontaneous skills of making Syma Chakaiva which were appreciated by all her peer, both in her mother's house at village Bharauli and at Saradiha both in district Saharsa. Her intuitive skills were not being preserved. However, when her son Shri Bijendra Singh got married, she taught her daughter-in-law to make the forms. The husband wife team was given an opportunity to participate in the Craft Demonstration programme at the National Handicrafts and Handloom Museum, New Delhi. The couple was making the unbaked female forms with voluptuous body, prominent eyes and the head veil, the characteristic features of a mother, with child in her arms or lap. Rajput couple were advised by many visitors to bake these clay forms for the purpose of giving them slightly more permanent

status. Firing the forms thus began. Smt. Ambika Devi who was already renowned for making the clay Syama chakava and other characters associated with these, extended her creativity to make Ganesh, Laxmi, Krishna, Baseh pe Shiv, Parvati, Ram, Laxman, Bharat, Shatrughan, machali dolikahar, mother and child, dhan kutane wali, chawal binane wali, chakki wali, sabji bechane wali. Her forms included Hindu Gods and Goddesses and also the characters describing the every day chores of village women. Sizes of these remained confined to around 18 cms. to 20 cms. in height and diameter. These were all fired in closed firing and taken to an exhibition at Patna, where they were purchased by the urban buyers. The prices remained between Rs.40/- to Rs.80/- since these figures were baked and sold, slight improvement in technique was observed in comparison to the earlier clay figures. The figures are now selling for Rs.250 to Rs.400 per piece.

Analysis of these festivals with reference to folklore

The myth of syama Chakevas has six legends. There are fifteen folk songs linked to these legends. These folksongs are sung at the time of celebration of this festival. Till about twenty five years ago, there was no literature available on the local folklore of Syama chaikeva and Raja Sailleish all composite of the folk literature. These are folk practice, folk art, folk knowledge. However few of the educated men and women wrote the oral literature (M. Jha: 1991).The written folk literature on Raja Sailesh describes the valour and strength of this king thief, who was himself not a thief but was wrongly trapped. The legend of Syama Chakwa is linked to unperceived social behaviour of a young girl, who is banished but later on pardoned. Both the folklores of Raja Sailesh and Syama Chaikwa are living folklores rich in context of literature, folk practices, folk art and craft. Many of the painters from Madhubani paint the these in their painted narrative.

Santhal the tribal community of Bihar, who were earlier the hunters and forest dwellers, have now adapted to the settled agriculture. Santhals are now also working as the labourers. The animistic belief of Santhals centers around the spirits (Bonga). The spirit dwells in all the areas of their activities the houses, the forest, hills, trees and racks the ancestors. Most of the Santhal festivals and ceremonies center around the propitiation of the spirits. Baha festival, the festival of flowers has several myths associated with it. Moreko Turuiko, Marang Basu, Jahavara and Sgpsainara are four main spirits deities of Santhals. The ceremony includes dancing under Sal tree wearing the garland of sal flowers in the spring. Baha festival is celebrated during the spring. The myth of Baha festival is related to a girl who is a sister of several brothers was sacrificed by her bothers. Sal tree in the myth is the embodiment of the truthfulness. The festival can be celebrated only under when Sal tree is flowering because the dancers have to wear the garland. Baha festival continues to be a social religious festival of Santhal tribe.

It is observed that the folk tales often incorporate the historical vicissitudes. Devastations through the major wars, famines earthquake form the part of the folklore. Mahabharata and Ramayana are both often-depicted in folklores, particularly in folk art.

Recent example is of Tsunami, the earthquake under the water. A Bengal Pata Chitrakar family has already included tsunami in his folk narrative and has named the narration as Mahakali.

Society plays an important role in the creation, distribution and preparation of folklore/folk and tribal paintings. It has been a long debatable issue whether folklore is static or dynamic. The example cited above clearly establish that folklore is dynamic.

When we study the tribal communities of North Eastern India, particularly of Arunachal Pradesh, we observe that several activities apart from farming or hunting require group effort. Because of the mountainous rivers, bridge building/ and house building are two important activity for the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, where the raw material like cane and bamboo of specific species have to be collected from the forests. Community members have to collectively construct the bridge or house. While carrying out such construction activities, to maintain the spirit of discipline, several social sanctions and observances emerge as the systems, which are the strength of folklore.

With regard to the problem of conceiving empirically the origin of folklore, it will suffice to note that in its beginning folklore can be an integral part of ritual. With the degeneration or decline of a ritual, folklore becomes detached from it and continues to live an independent life. [V. Propp. p.7, 1984]. Several times the folk art associated with the folklore also attain an independent market identity, which is now emerging as the tourist art. Folklore also presupposes two agents, but different agents, namely, the performer and the listener, opposing each other directly, or rather without a mediating link. As a rule, the performer's works are not created by them personally but were heard earlier, so performers can in no way be compared with poets reciting their own works. Nor are they reciters of the works of others, mere declaimers reproducing someone else's work. They are figures specific to folklore, and all of them, from the primitive chorus to the folktale narrators deserve our closest attention. Performers do not repeat their texts word for word but introduce changes into them. Even if these changes are insignificant (but they can be very great), even if the changes that take place in folklore texts are sometimes as slow as geological processes, what is important is the fact of changeability of folklore compare with the stability of literature.

If the reader of a work of literature is a powerless censor and critic devoid of authority, anyone listening to folklore is potential future performer, who, in turn, consciously or unconsciously, will introduce changes into the work. These changes are not made accidentally but in accordance to certain laws. Everything that is out of date and incongruous with new attitudes, tastes and ideology is slowly be discarded. The new tastes affect not only is to be discarded but also what may be reworked and supplemented. Marginal role is played by the narrator's personality, taste, views on life, talents, and creative abilities. A work of folklore exists in constant flux, and it cannot be studied in depth if it is recorded only once. It needs to be recorded as many times as possible. Each recording a variant, and these variants are something completely different from a version of a work of literature made by one and the same person. This is clearly seen in the legends described in the preceding paras from eastern Bihar. V. Propp. has also expressed similar opinion, he says, 'Like any genuine art, folklore possesses not only artistic perfection but also a profound message. The discovery of this message is one of the objective of the science of folklore (V. Propp., 1984:p.14).

To conclude we may say that Folklore should be studied in its continuity along with the development. The recent development of singing a song by the Bengal Pat Chatrikar for the

demonstrating Tsunami and also illustrating it through the painted pictorials in the traditional style of Bengal Pata painting, speaks of the strength of communication of the folklore, through folk art. The folk knowledge and folk science here are imbibed in the use of colours made from vegetables like leaves, red ochre, lamp black. Depiction of folk art, has been an integral part of folklore. Baul singer of Bengal is other group of folk singer, who includes all the philosophy in his singing. Modern folklorists are well aware that such problems cannot be solved descriptively, synchronically, but should be studied in their development.

Suggested Readings

1. Benedict, Ruth, 1944: Patterns of Culture, Reprinted, Boston (1961).
2. Channa, S, 1994: Understanding Society, Culture and Change, Blaze Publishers, New Delhi
3. Islam, Mazhrul, 1985: Folklore The Pulse of the people of India, Concept, New Delhi
4. Levi – Strauss Claude, 1973: Structural Anthropology, Vol.2 England, Penguin Book Ltd., Tarns from the French by Monique Layton. Trans. first published in USA in 1976, in Great Britain again in 1977
5. Propp. Vladimir, 1984: Theory and History of Folklore, translated by Ariadna Y Martin and Richard P. Martin, Ed. By Anatoly Libermann, Theory and History of Literature vol.5, Manchester.
6. Steward, Julian H., 1955: Theory of Culture Change Illinois, University of Illinois Press.
7. Taylor, Archer, 1948: Folklore and The Student of Literature. The Pacific Spectator, vol.2, 216-223.