AN INTRODUCTION TO NARRATOLOGY

Narratology denotes a recent concern with narrative in general. It deals especially with the identification of structural elements and their diverse modes of combination, with recurrent narrative devices and with the analysis of the kinds of discourse by which a narrative gets told. A narration is a story, whether in prose or verse, involving events, characters and what the characters say and do. This theory picks up and elaborates upon many topics in traditional treatments of fictional narratives.¹

The term "narratology" is a translation of the French term 'narratology' introduced by Tzvetan Todorov in 'Grammaire du Decameron' and the theory historically falls into the tradition of Russian Formalism and French Structuralism. Narratology exemplifies the structuralist tendency to consider texts (in the broad sense of signifying matter) as rule governed ways in which human beings fashion their universe. It also exemplifies the

structuralist ambition to isolate the necessary and optional components of textual types and to characterize the modes of their articulation. As such, it constitutes a subset of semiotics, the study of the factors operative in signifying systems and practices.\(^2\)

One important starting point in the development of narratology was the observation that narratives are found, and stories told, in a variety of media: oral and written language (in prose or in verse), of course, but also sign languages, still or moving pictures (as in narrative paintings, stained-glass windows, or films), gestures (programmatic) music, or a combination of vehicles (as in comic strips). Furthermore, a folktale can be transposed into a ballet, a comic strip turned into a pantomime, a novel brought to the screen, and vice versa. This arguably means that narrative, or more specifically, the narrative component of a narrative text.\(^3\)

Narratology is an important aspect in the literary studies, and also played a significant role in affecting the shape of literary studies. Through its investigation of the factors operating in all possible narratives (and not just great, fictional, or extant ones), it has helped to put in to question the very nature of the canon by showing that many non canonical narratives are just as sophisticated, narratively speaking, as canonical ones.

More generally, narratological tools and arguments have been used in domains exceeding the bounds of 'literary studies proper': in cultural analysis, for example, to trace the ways various forms of knowledge legitimate themselves through narrative; in philosophy, to analyze the structure of action; in psychology, to study memory and comprehension, in folktales, to involve the retelling of old stories in a new way. Indeed, narratology has important implications for our understanding of human beings.  

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Why narratives are important

Narratives pervade our lives. When we are young children, our mothers and fathers (and others) sing us lullabies and other songs and teach us to recite nursery rhymes, and as we get older we read fairy tales and other stories, and eventually we learn to read stories ourselves. These stories play important roles in our lives. For instance, Bruno Bettelheim has suggested that 'fairy tales actually help children to deal with psychological issues. He asserts that fairy tales can generate messages to an individual's conscious, preconscious, and unconscious mind depending upon which level the person is functioning on at a given time'.

Fairy tales deal with problems that are universal, issues that tend to preoccupy a child's mind. They have meaning for the child's ego and encourage its development; at the same time, they relieve preconscious and unconscious pressures the child may be experiencing. In addition, they acknowledge psych pressures a

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child may feel and show the child ways to satisfy these pressures that are acceptable to his or her ego and superego.

Bettelheim uses Freud’s typology (‘structural hypothesis’), in which he suggests that the human psyche has three components: the id, which roughly approximate drives and impulses; the superego, which can be equated with guilt, conscious and moral sensibilities; and the ego, which tries to mediate between the id and superego and which concerns itself with monitoring the world and surviving.

Bettelheim says that, among other things, we learn from fairy tales, we can extend his argument and say that we learn from narratives. In fact, some scholars suggest that one of the most important ways we learn about the world, and ourselves as well, is through narratives. As Laurel Richardson writes—‘narrative is the primary way through which humans organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes’.  

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7 Ibid., p.24.
Narrative is both a mode of reasoning and a mode of representation. People can 'apprehend' the world narratively and people can 'tell' about the world narratively. According to Jerome Bruner narrative reasoning is one of the two basic and universal human cognition modes. The other mode is the logic-scientific'. This mode looks for universal truth conditions, whereas the narrative mode looks for particular connections between events. Explanation in the narrative mode is contextually embedded, whereas the logic and scientific explanation is extracted from spatial and temporal events. Both modes are 'rational' ways of making meaning.

Clearly, narratives are very important to us; they furnish us with both methods for learning, about the world and a way to tell others. Narrative is not external to the logic and scientific mode; scientists must use narratives in recounting their experiments in linear and sequential dimensions.8

8 Jacob Lothe, Narrative Theory in Fiction and film an Introduction, Oxford University Press, 1st Ed, 2000, p.VII.
Narrative as a hot subject

Narratives, for one reason or another, have recently become a topic of considerable interest in contemporary literary and cultural studies. Narratives provide a powerful way of teaching people lessons and transmitting ideas. Furthermore our attitudes towards narratives, some commentators claim, have played a role in shaping contemporary American culture and society. For example, Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Post Modern Condition* includes numerous discussions of narratives (not always fictional ones), and Lyotard even suggests that narratives are at the heart of postmodernism. He writes, 'simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodernism as incredulity towards meta narratives'. By this he means that the grand social and political theories that have organized our lives (which he calls meta narratives) are no longer dominants, and this leads to all kinds of interesting and chaotic results one of which is our postmodern society.
Structure of the traditional Indian narrative

Story telling has been a very popular means of amusement and instruction from ancient times in India. Earliest Sanskrit tales in the form of ākhyānas and fables were written in simple and unadorned style and were very popular among common folk. The word ākhyāna is derived from the root khyā meaning to tell and emphasises the chief feature of this type as narration of stories.⁹

The oldest word for 'narrative' in Sanskrit is 'ākhyāna' meaning 'an act of making something well known through oral transmission'. The latter day Sanskrit literary critics defined two classes of narrative, one is called ākhyāyika, which is based on a plot well known from epics or historical records, and the other, kathā, which is based on a plot imagined by the writer. And the critics gave two standard examples: the Harṣacarita of Bāṇa is an ākhyāyika and Kādambari by the same author is a kathā. The

⁹ S.B Raghunathacharya, Modern Sanskrit Literature Tradition and Innovations, Sahitya Academy, New Delhi, p.140.
narratives, which were composed in verse form and were usually sung by Caranas were called gāthas, a term frequently translated by 'ballad', though not in one to one correspondence with the European literary form called by that name.\textsuperscript{10}

Narrative was a part of the ancient Indian sacrificial or household ritual. Whenever a sacrifice was performed a particular step would be explained through a legend, and the exegetic Brāhmaṇa literature abounds in legends, some of them methodological and others symbolic, allegorical or metaphorical. In course of time these legends were enlarged and developed in to the later Purāṇas. At the time of the playing respects to the dead ceremony (Śrāddha), naraśamsi gāthas were recited or the heroic deeds of the bygone days were sung. Every fast or festivity has its own string of narratives, the recitation of which is an integral part of the fast or festivity. These narratives have undergone change in terms of linguistic development but have faithfully retained an archetypal content.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{10} K. P. Appan, Akhyānakala, Kerala Bhaṣa Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1\textsuperscript{st} Ed., 1998, p.16.
The narrative form has thus a significant role in the traditional every day life of India, even today, though print and other visual as well as audio-visual media have done much erosion to its original oral mode. The primary role of this latter is seen in integrating 'all life', in universalizing the basic emotions and consequently in generating an aesthetic vibration. The secondary role is educative. The oral narratives introduce the listener to a rich world of metaphor and imagery, train the ear in rhythmic patterns and in assonance of both word and meaning. They also kindle the imaginative faculty of the child besides inculcating a perfected art of communication while doing all this they get embedded in our life instead of presenting themselves as a thing of the past. They become a part of our developing psyche. They are no doubt collective recollections, but they are a live force.

There are four typical instances in the structure of these narratives. One from the Vedic, one from the ritual folktale, a third
one from the epic and a fourth one from the ocean of stories, the
Brhatkathā.

The first type of narrative structure is provided by the vedic legend. Three progenies of the creator (Prajāpati) lived in perfect abstinence by the side of their father, the gods, the human beings and the demons (The Asuras). After having undergone the course of abstinence (brahmacharya) the gods entreated the father, 'speak out the course of action for us'. He spoke out the syllable 'da' and asked, 'have you comprehended the purport of this?' 'yes, we have. You have ordained us to restrain from over enjoyment'. 'good, you have rightly understood my purport'. Then the Humans entreated, 'speak out to us our course of action'. To them as well he gave out the syllable 'da' and asked: 'what did you make out of it?' They replied, 'we are ordained to give, to make gifts of what we acquire, this is what we have made out of 'da'. 'good, you have rightly understood my purport'.

Then followed the Demons, 'speak out to us our course of action'. To them as well he gave out the syllable 'da' and asked,
'what did you make out of it?'. They replied, 'we are ordained to be merciful, this is what we have made out of 'Da'. 'good, you have rightly understood my purport'. So the Thundering voice of the Heaven repeats that syllable 'Da Da Da'. These three commands of the creator, 'Damyata Datta Dayadhvam' 'Restraint, gift and Mercy' are to be learned from that voice.

The above paraphrase can not do justice to the brevity and precision of the original, yet one can see three characteristics of the structure of the story.

1. The story though relating an event in the past is lived in the eternal present as is echoed by the voice of the thunder.

2. The precision of the story is ensured by repetition of the verbal forms meaning 'entreated' (ucuh), 'understood' (vyajnasista), 'speak out' (bravitu) and by maintaining the same string of words.

3. The story is stripped of frills such as the name of the narrator or the occasion of the narration or any explanatory
note. The point to which it leads is that one syllable is interpreted to be of three different mental attitudes in three different ways and the totality of these meanings is the message. The context of the passage is that if one mediates on the full significance of one word or even one syllable, one can relate it to the total cosmic phenomena and through one word can go into the realm of fullness. Such is the mystic power of the word.

The Ritual folktale or the second type is of the narrative proper appears in the orally transmitted folksongs and the Vedas. The Vedic hymns are mainly lyrical in form and devotional in character. Though they are invocations of Gods the contents are largely mythological. Several myths are told about Aśvins, Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and Apsaras. There are many hymns that contain small narratives which can be elaborated into great stories. And in many civilizations it was short stories that originated first. These mini stories present only a frame, which provoke the listener to expand them into bigger and bigger stories. Many
hymns deal with the myth of the origin of Gods, their powers, description of their valorous deeds and exploits and victory over enemies. Myths and mini stories are created around almost all gods of the \textit{Rgveda}.

Of them, the dialogue hymns of the Veda like Pururavas and Urvasi, Yama and Yami, Agastya and Lopamudra are noteworthy. The love of Mortal Pururavas with celestial Nymph Urvasi who is about to abundant him is perhaps the earliest potential story in a nut shell. The absence of details is an assurance for those who want to expand these stories in to larger narrative. The Vedas thus represent one of the main sources of Indian narrative.

The third type of narrative structure is provided by the epic legend coming to the oral-cum-written tradition of narration one finds two main types of structure, the epical and the legendary. The \textit{Mahabharata}, the \textit{Ramayana} and the \textit{Puranas} follow the former pattern, the great string of stories called \textit{Brihatkatha} and the like follow the latter. The epical pattern in turn is of two kinds:
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(1) Itihāsa, and (2) Purāṇa. Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa are called 'Itihāsa', not exactly meaning history as they relate to the past but do not cling to it through continuous retelling they become an eternal present. They are different from the Purāṇas, stories of myths, in that they concentrate, in spite of overlapping of the material related to moral percepts and the description of ruling dynasties, on one full life-story rather than on stories of entire creation and so are more of a unitary poetic character than the Purāṇas. The Purāṇas, on the other hand, deal with creation, dissolution, genealogies, cycles of Manus and the depiction of important personages as defined in the Varāha Purāṇa-

\[ \text{and deal with more according to the Śrimadbhāgavata Purāṇa covering the sustenance of creation and the descent of divinity (avatāras). As such the Purāṇas are a conglomeration of loosely inter-linked legends and the popular expositions of what dharma comprises. The Purāṇic narration is marked by a series of} \]
questions asked by the sages of the Śaunaka family to Suta Ugrasravas or his son, the disciple chosen by Vyāsa to play the role of the narrator of Purānic lore, and in course of reply to the questions put to him the narrator tells stories and sub stories to illustrate his point. The fabric of Purānic structure is interwoven with a popular presentation of philosophy, devotional practices and the way of dharma and with the sole exception of Srimadbhāgavata Purāṇa the language is mostly discursive and rarely poetic.\(^\text{12}\)

The epic structure on the other hand, is very compact and poetic. The message of dharma is more implicit than explicit and the little legends interwoven into the main story are vital to the full relish of the dominant rasa. The unique feature of the structure of the two great epics Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata is that the author in each case is a participant in the course of events depicted by him and has to maintain a distance between

\(^{12}\) Amiya Dev, Narrative A Seminar, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi, 1\(^{st}\) Ed. 1994, pp.100-103.
the creator and the character. The author makes a third person of himself and is yet deeply involved in the action. These two epics, as the legend goes, are composed at the behest of the Great Creator Brahma and are blessed by Him to be the fountain spring of the poets and dramatists to come. Both these epics are deeply concerned with the human situation- gods and demons, if at all they play a role, are not doers, they are only accessories. Both epics deal with the total man, not an abstraction. So one finds the intense heat of human passion on one side and composure and restraint on the other, anguish and joy, anger and forgiveness, revenge and the capacity to subsume it in one's large heartedness. There is a totality of life as it is lived here and now and yet there is a firm human will to transcend it and enter into the realm of eternity. Similarly there is a divine will to descend into the world here and now and enter into the realm of evanescence.

The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki opens with an outburst of course on the fowler killing the male mate while it was at the peak of the
mating enjoyment. This outburst is considered by the Creator as the indication of the power of the poet to create a poem of deep human compassion for the fullness of life.¹³ *Mahābhārata* opens with the story of the serpent-sacrifice performed by king Janamejaya, the great grandson of the Pāṇḍavas to avenge the death of his father by serpent bite. The sacrifice comes abruptly to an end with the intervention of a young ascetic literally the existent (*Āstika*) and its completion is achieved by the recital of the poem *Mahābhārata* by Vaiśampāyana, a disciple of Vyāsa, the composer initiated into the poem for the specific purpose of the first narration. The first occasion chosen for this is the most apt one. *Mahābhārata* quells revenge rather than kindle it. It is a great epic of quietude and peace. The great war is a prelude to that.¹⁴

Both poems end in the ascent of their heroes to heaven as embodiments of truth and forbearance. These epics have to some extent been wrongly interpreted as poems about good

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winning over evil. Good and evil are not two mutually independent
categories as both are intertwined as life and death within man. It
is the supreme effort of man to rise above this interplay of good
and evil and be the whole man, which is the highest goal of man.
This effort is made possible through truth and compassion,
‘Satya’ and ‘Karunā’. There is no doubt a conflict both within and
outside, but it is only a means to achieve this goal. Big or small all
characters are both week and strong. On the right occasion all
make their best contribution to the achievement of the desired
goal. All have their insufficiency, but then the insufficiency serve
to extenuate the desire to overcome them. The hero in each epic
is chosen not so much for his outstanding record of asceticism,
as for his sheer adherence to truth and for his depth of
compassion for all life.

These epics provide an archetype for all human creative
endeavour in India and have been recreated again and again in
various literary genres and various art forms.\(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\) K. Ayyappa Panikkar, *Indian Sahitya Siddhāntam- Prasaktiyum Sādhyatayum*, Kerala Bhaṣa Institute,
1999, p.22.
The fourth type of narrative structure is provided by the *Bṛhatkathā* which is traditionally ascribed to Guṇādhya, a divine being fallen from divinity by a curse and released from it by reciting the tale to birds and animals and trees. The story of the curse is indeed very poetic. Śiva told his consort Pārvati a new tale as yet unheard. It is a long tale and there is a complete bar on entry in to the inner chamber where Śiva is reciting the tale. One of the confident counselors of Śiva gets curious and making himself invisible enters the chamber and hears the entire tale. He recites it to Jaya his consort, who is the chief chambermaid of Pārvati and who out of sheer joy of a new-found treasure recites the tale to her mistress. Pārvati gets furious with Śiva for deceiving her by telling her an old tale. Consequently the stealthy listener is cursed to be born as man. The end of the curse would come when he would recite the tale to another accursed being of Śiva's court. So this tale or rather string of tales is an outcome of the course of curiosity and one gets entrapped into the curse again and again and obtains release only after one has shared it
with a listener. The string of tales relates to love and adventure, the most potent excitants of human energy. They are born out of curiosity leading to love and adventure.

The great tale is spread out petal by petal, one episode leading into another, the heroes and heroines assuming one form after another and the relationship continuing through different existences. Perhaps the opening word there used to be (asti) in every tale is symbolic of the continuous chain of existence, ever changing and ever longing for half-realized half-fulfilled human relationship.

The above four main prototypes of the traditional narrative aim at

1. Looking at life as asset of correspondences in both content and form and thus visualizing the totality of life.

2. Reintegrating parts into a whole through a unified mental, vocal and physical endeavour.
3. resolving human problems not on an individual level but on the level of a whole community's effort and perseverance, and sharing the anguish of great creative minds for a fuller and more meaningful living, and

4. involving oneself and getting entrapped in the mesh of human desires and aspirations out of sheer curiosity and seeking release by capturing the minds of the new generation into this network of human relationships.

All these four have together formed the collective memory of the people and eventually their collective identity as a unique tradition, yearning for the future and recollecting the past and yet cherishing the sorrows and joys of even now.

**The theory and practice of the narrative in Indian tradition**

India has produced one of the richest treasures of narratives and has developed the narrative art without any parallel in many other countries, it has apparently neglected the critical discussion and evaluation of those magnificent examples of
narration themselves. This lacuna in the Indian tradition is probably the result of excessive concentration on other aspects of literature like poetry and drama: there is even the aphoristic justification of 'nātakāntam kavitvam', for this exclusion of the narrative art. This neglect of the poetics of the narrative may be found in several of the classics of critical explosion. Our study of meaning even at the micro-level has enabled us to establish the theory of dhvani; we have explored the nature of aesthetic experience until we have reached the pinnacle of rasavāda. In our study of alankāra, no stone is left unturned until we have classified and categorized every minute example of the figurative use of language. But on the subject of the narrative art, this ingenuity has not been extended beyond scattered and casual remarks and the use of terms like akhyāna or kathā or parikathā. Poetry, drama, music, painting, sculpture and architecture have been studied in depth at the expense of the art of story telling-and this in spite of our producing texts like Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata, Bhāgavatā, Raghuvamśa, Kathāsaritsāgara, Pañcatantra, etc. in medieval and modern literature too, we find
this neglect of the narrative has continued without regret or complaint.

Earliest form of Sanskrit fiction, however rudimentary it may be, can be traced to the ākhyānas and the fables. Sanskritist's attach great importance to the ākhyānas as the four Vedas with the ākhyāna as the fifth is a common expression. The Mahābhārata says that the ākhyāna is an important accessory of the Vedas.

Earliest Sanskrit tales in the form of ākhyānas and fables were written in simple and unadorned style and were very popular among common folk.

But from the beginning of the Christian era, there emerged in Sanskrit a new type of fiction, if we may use this term for such literature, otherwise known as Gadyakāvya which in sharp contrast to popular tales composed in an embellished and flamboyant style and catered to the taste of highly educated and
cultured gentry and was beyond the comprehension of common people.

Thus, in the Vedic and classical Sanskrit literature there flowed two parallel streams of fiction: one simple in style and the other ornamented. Simple fiction, originated from the Vedic ākhyānas, is preserved in popular tales in a number of works the earliest among them being the Brhatkathā ascribed to Guṇādhya the original of which is lost but which is now known from the comparatively late adaptations. Many successive popular tales known as the Vetālapaṅcavimśati, Simhāsanavatrisīkā, Śukasaptati etc.

The other form of fiction, romantic in content and decorated in style, is represented by prose romances called Gadyakāvyas written by Daṇḍin, Subandhu and Bāṇabhatta. These prose romances share the chief features of the Mahākāvyas and evince the technical details and form.

By the time of Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin (7th century A.D) there might have existed a good number of ornate Sanskrit fiction as
both the critics have expressed heated arguments of the existing fiction literature.

The old names for fiction in Sanskrit are ākhyāyika and kathā. The Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhatta is known as ākhyāyika and the Vāsavadatta of Subandhu and the Kādambari of Bāṇabhatta, are called Kathās. Later critics like Rudrata, Ānandavardhana, Hemachandra, Bhojarāja and others in other treatises on Sanskrit poetics mention varieties of fiction as Kathā, Khandakathā, Parikathā, Kathānika, etc. The Agnipurāṇa specifically mentions five varieties of fictions.

आक्ष्यायिका कथा खण्डकथा परिकथा तथा।
कथानिकेति मन्यते गद्यकाव्यं च पञ्चथा ॥

From the treatment of the varieties of fiction by Sanskrit poeticians it is evident that Sanskrit fiction began to develop as early as the advent of the Christian era and from its inception fiction writing has been continuing and is current even in the last decade of the 20th century.
Compared to the extensive analysis and theorization about fictional narration in the west in recent times, critical discourse on fiction was somewhat still born in the Indian tradition. And when at last Indian critics, mostly brought up on western education, awoke to this problem, they had already been alienated from their own culture, and could not pick up the old threads and set up either the theory or the practice of fictional criticism.\textsuperscript{16}

The art of the narrative was cultivated assiduously in ancient and medieval India is amply attested by the existence of written and oral texts in Sanskrit, Prāṃjkṛt, Pāli, Paiśāci and Tamil in the ancient period and in most of the modern Indian languages in the medieval period. The multiplicity of languages made the speakers of one language ignorant of the developments in other languages, and an obsession with regional loyalties also created darkness in the minds of the speakers of different languages. It is in time that Indian critics retrieved what was lost to them due to

\textsuperscript{16} Amiya Dev, \textit{Narrative A Seminar}, Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts, New Delhi, 1\textsuperscript{st} Ed., 1994, pp.108-113.
socio-political changes and recognized the value and worth of the extensive creative output of Indian narrators, even when they remain largely anonymous even today on account of reasons obvious enough. The search for the roots of Indian narrative art is perhaps parallel to the archeological excavation of the sites of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, perhaps only less hypothetical and more reassuring. For the sake of clarity and conciseness, the main distinctive features of Indian narratology may be listed under 10 heads.

1. Interiorisation
2. Serialization
3. Fantasisation
4. Cyclicalisation
5. Allegorisation
6. Anonymisation
7. Elasticisation of time
8. Spatialisation
9. Stylization
10. Improvisation
All these devices are employed in all Indian narratives. But any of these devices either singly or in combination with any of the others may be resorted to by Indian narrators. These may be found in classical narratives or folk/tribal narratives. Some of these devices are used by mural painters or mono-actors on the stage. Some of these are a regular feature of postmodern fiction in the west.\textsuperscript{17}

Interiorisation is the process by which a distinction, a contrast or even a contradiction is effected between the surface features of a text and its internal essence. In some texts the inner and outer structures may be parallel or contrastive; the outer frame may even be used to seduce the reader away from the inner core. The unwary reader is beguiled by the attractiveness of the external features, and may thus fail to see the real significance of the work. A text is often a multiplicity of layer upon layer of signification, and it may even be that the simpler a text looks the chances of the inner text being contradictory to it are

\textsuperscript{17} K. Ayyappa Panikkar, \textit{Indian Narratology}, Indira Gandhi national Centre for Arts, New Delhi, 1\textsuperscript{st} Ed., 2003, pp.3-4.
much greater. This kind of sophistication may be found even in so-called children's fiction. Folktales are a good example of successful interiorisation of a deeper intent. The inset tale is related to the outer tale in a variety of ways. The cleverer the narrator, the more complex the inner fabric and the more simple the outer frame. This kind of dialectical relationship between different strands of narration is a characteristic feature of the Indian narrative. One of the most tell-tale examples of this kind of interiorisation is *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*. The poet says that no one reads it as a single layered text of Rāma, the prince of Ayodhya, sent into exile, where his wife Sīta is abducted by Rāvaṇa, from whom he recovers her through a fierce battle with the help of Sugrīva and Hanumān, and returns home to assume the role of the king. Even in this highly streamlined version, the symbolic relation between Rāma of the solar dynasty and Rāvaṇa, the night 'walker demon, complicates our understanding of the story. Within the story of Rāma is the story of the composition of *Rāmāyaṇa* by Vālmīki, and within that is the story of Vālmīki himself as a hunter, and so on and so forth, an apparently
endless process of interiorisation. Similar processes of interiorisation may be found in all kinds of stories, including ballads and folktales.

Serialization implies the structure of the typical Indian narrative, which seems to prefer an apparently never ending series of episodes to a unified, single-strand, streamlined course of events, centering around a single hero or heroine and whatever happens to the central character. Homer could highlight the wrath of Achilles in *Iliad*, Virgil could sing of arms and the man: the structure of so tight as to keep off every thing that is not particularly relevant. The Indian epic, on the other hand, is made up of episodes, some of which are detachable without any detriment to the total frame. In *Mahābhārata*, for instance, there are the episodes or upākhyaṇa relating to Nala or Śakuntala, these provide a sort of expensiveness to the central story, but are not integral to it. In the Dravidian epic *Cilappatikāram*, there are episodes, which are like effusions inspired on the spur of the moment, and they seem to go very well with the total structure.
The episodic structure of the Indian narrative texts made this possible and feasible.

Fantasy is a way of adjusting and accommodating even the unpleasant reality of the outside world to the heart's content of the other or reader. The author fantasizes, so does the reader, so that fantasy becomes an interface that the reader's imagination shares with that of the author. Fantasization is thus a privileged enterprise in the Indian narrative: the Vedas, the Purāṇas, the epics, the fairy tale and folk tale: all these are primarily perceptions of the imagination and only secondarily those of the rational mind.

Cyclicalisation is a regular feature of many narratives. The Jātaka, the Pāli text of the stories of the Buddha's former births, is perhaps the crucial exemplary text of cyclical narration. The storytellers of India have assumed that all tales are recycled, even as living organisms are themselves recycled perpetually in the natural world. They noticed that birth and growth and death are the order of life, and hence the story of god's incarnations, the
reoccurrence of demonic forces and certainly the prevail public
lives of human beings.

In allegories there may be a blessing or a curse to man, but it seems he has always shown an inclination to substitute an abstraction for something concrete in order to achieve a broader effect or relevance. It is perhaps a universal trait, not just Indian only, for we have specific varieties of Chinese and European allegories too. It is this universality that led to the popularity of the Indian text *Pañcatantra* across the wide world.

Certain anonymity was maintained by most storytellers, even when they lived in historical times, and their names were known or could be identified. The objective was to merge the subjective self of the narrator in the collective readership so that ideally the narrator and the audience are one. Not only *Mahābhārata*, but the 18 long *Purāṇas*, *Adhyātmarāmāyaṇa*, and several other works, perhaps even the Vedas, are supposed to have been composed by Vedavyāsa, who is oftentimes an
internalized character in the stories as well. This may be seen merely as a metaphor of anonymity.

In the Indian narrative, time is measured in cosmic terms: day and night, the different phases of the moon, the cycle of seasons, the ages or aeons measured out by the stars, as it were. The telescoping of time is often resorted to even in the realistic novel of nineteenth century Europe; not every moment in the hero's life is accounted for in any narrative. Narration, by definition, implies selection, elaboration, condensation, and this process is most manifest in the treatment of time.

The spatial reference is far more specific and more detailed. The Indian narrative can therefore said to be a spatial one. This makes for a more free handling of the time factor. Discontinuities in action are tolerated because of a less rigid notion of time and progress in the course of events along a rigid straight line. Since the narrator is not worried too much by the constraints on time, he can concentrate on spatial movements as an indicator of shifts in location. The scene becomes more crucial in the unfolding of
the plot than time. The temporal dimension is often underplayed, while the space factor gets added importance. The downgrading of the time factor is in keeping with the features of narration mentioned earlier like interiorisation, fantatisation, allegorisation and impersonalisation. Even the order in the ten incarnations of Visṇu as narrated in some of the Purāṇas is not strictly confined or subjected to chronology.

The last two features of the Indian narrative are stylization and improvisation. Stylization is a factor that imposes limitations on the writer or storyteller, while improvisation is a liberating factor. All narration follows certain pre-established codes, raising certain kinds of expectations in the reader or spectator, conditioning him to move on expected lines. The narrator cultivates the special skills required for satisfying those very expectations, otherwise he will be found wanting. The contrary device of improvisation is a means of going beyond the limitation imposed by the code of stylization. It helps to provide elements of surprise. Stylization is discipline, improvisation is freedom. These
twin features of the Indian narrative art are to be found in Indian classical theatre too. Total stylization is stifling and uncreative, while total improvisation means chaos and is unproductive. The Indian narrative seems to maintain an even balance between these two opposing pulls. Any stylized version of Rāmāyaṇa, for instance, will present the essential details, but the extensions of meanings and the insertion of additional episodes are evidence of improvisation. The freedom for improvisation may be the contribution of folk culture, which by interiorizing preserves the aesthetic content intact.

The stylized narrative is a minimal text, but improvisation helps to make it suit different contexts and situations. Since India represents not a monolithic culture, but a mosaic of cultures, a rich and variegated civilization, and this popularity of the cultural matrix requires an elastic, adjustable text, the Indian narrative has infinite variants in each regional language and each cultural unit. This is yet another reason for the fluidity of the narrative in India.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 5-6.
Comparison between Eastern and Western Narratology

Traditional Indian techniques have surfaced in experimental western theatre during the past century, and more or less in the same way, narrative devices common in traditional Indian texts have materialized in modern and postmodern European fiction. The Vedas, Purāṇas, Itihāsas, Mahākāvyas, Jātakas, Campus, the chain narratives, anyapadeśas, the south Indian narratives, and the folk and tribal tales. It would appear that few other countries in the world have displayed such wide variety and diversity. Most of the ancient civilizations have disappeared, leaving behind very little by way of literary texts. The Mesopotamian, Sumerian, Egyptian, Aztec, Mayan, Inca, American Indian narratives have not come down to us in a substantial manner. The Sumerian epic Gilgamesh as in exception worth mentioning, although no more than a fragment. Even in modern times, the tendency is to limit the narrative to prose fiction, often called the novel (because in the 18th century it was a new form in Europe). Of course, the Homeric epics of
ancient Greece, the *Aeneid* of Virgil in Latin and various fragments in the old languages of Europe are close parallels, which can be studied in comparison with these Indian models. The court epics and romances of medieval Europe as well as the fables and folk tales show resemblance to Indian fables and folk tales as well as the court epics in Indian languages. The spread of texts like *Pañcatantra* in European countries has been researched in detail and discussed in recent translations of such texts into English. The presence or absence of these in western fiction may be taken as indicative of the extent of Indian influence on the fictional imagination of the west.\(^\text{19}\)

The placement of a single story in a chain of stories is a very natural form of narrative art in India: even today, in postmodernist novels and short stories too, one may find the effort of the narrator to locate each story in the story of story-telling. It is a feature of sophistication rather than the absence of it. The opening device of a children’s fable is subtly used to

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sound innocuous; it also perhaps suggests that this is only one way of telling the tale so well known to everybody that somebody else will recycle the same in a very different way. Robert Graves very wisely said 'there is one story and one story only'. All others are instances of recycling. He probably derived this idea from his experience of retelling the myth of the Greeks. Chain stories like Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury tales* also have their original models in the Indian folklore. The novel in the west has a very narrow definition and critics like E.M. Forster have defined its features in a very mechanical way. Milan Kundera has claimed that the novel is a characteristically European genre and that its origin coincides with the rise of individualism. The narrative is a broader term and is not tied down to the evolution of a capitalist economy or individualism as in modern Europe.  

Although Indian theoreticians have not identified or analyzed the structure of the narrative in elaborate terms, the texts themselves reveal a high degree of sophistication in the

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narrative art exemplified by them. Like the other Asian narratives in general, the Indian narrative also shows a tendency to root the text of the narrative in space rather than in time. The spatial narrative is a favorite in India too. As far as the European tradition is concerned, the emphasis is on time. The evolution of the plot is mainly through time. The spatial dimension is of little consequence and is often underplayed. In the Vedas, time is eternity- there is no eagerness to locate the events in calendar years. In the Purāṇas, time as the term implies, is often pre-historic-old, ancient, long, long-ago the time of your imagination. In Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhya, Dandakāraṇya, Kiṣkindha, Lanka, all are important locations- as the events of the story take such a trajectory- but the duration of time is not spelt out in unmistakable terms. The fourteen years of Rāma’s exile are not meticulously accounted for nor do they follow any calendar. In Mahābhārata, all parts of India are brought within the focus of the narrative, but the stretch of time from the time of composition of the text by Vyāsa to where ever the course of events takes us is left delightfully vague-almost magical. In Raghuvamśa, Kālidāsa
has a flexible frame, avoiding stereotype descriptions, he elaborates certain episodes, and epitomizes certain others, while skipping what he considers unimportant. The Jātakas are birth tales, and the serial rebirth chain provides a means of linking ever so many stories together. The form is loose in one sense, but illustrates the sequence of birth-death-birth. Pañcatantra illustrates the pattern of story within the story as in the Chinese box. The campu is an ornate narrative, combining prose and verse, often sophisticated, especially in Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam. The animal fable has the allegorical mode, action takes place in what may be called the unspecified frame of children's imagination. The Dravidian or Tamil narrative, Chilappatikāram, takes place in the three regions of South India, but the historical time of the action is not of much importance. It can happen even today. Here again the speed of the narrative is adjusted to suit the needs of the episodes.\footnote{Dr. D. Radhakrishnan Nair, Akhyānavijñānam, Kerala Bhaśa Institute, Thiruvananthapuram, 1\textsuperscript{st} Ed., 2000, p.65.}
The structure of the narrative is ideally a flow, but most narratives admit of interruptions, gaps, deviations, discontinuities and jumps. The 19th century European novel is intended to make the reader believe that it is a continuous account of all the events covered by the story. The story line is of utmost importance here, and it is meant to sustain the illusion or make-believe, that nothing is left out. The reader is made to believe that the account is reliable, complete and comprehensive. It has a linear concept of time and follows the biography of the central character or hero. There has to be a beginning and an end. But in Indian novels, for the most part, except those written in imitation of 19th century Victorian novels, avoid the linear flow of events: they seem to favour a cyclical time concept. In Pañcatantra, the end of one narrative is often the beginning of another: there is apparently no neat and clear-cut beginning or end. The pattern of the cycle of seasons supplies a model for the course of events. So events get repeated at intervals- not at strictly regular intervals- and the flow of time is not linear. The oral narrative form of Purāṇas also lends
itself to endless or never-ending recursive pattern of events. The audience of the classical or folk narrative seem to enjoy this endless continuity.\textsuperscript{22}

**Narrative literature**

For a long time, it is generally believed that India was the birth place of all tales. But with advancement of our knowledge of folklore and ethnology this theory has been completely exploded. But the fact still remains that many tales of different nations had their original home in India. Indian ornate poetry has exercised so great influence on foreign literatures and has become so much important for world literature as the narrative literature. It is most wonderful that the Indian narrative material has passed from nation to nation in such a way that we find in almost all the countries of Europe and Asia and even among those of Africa, stories and tales of which the original home was in India.

Long before the existence of bigger narrative works in Indian literature, it was possessed of all sorts of tales and stories that offered amusement to the people. Besides there were stray fables that were invented for teaching religious or worldly lessons. Tales, swangs, anecdotes and stories that were in circulation among the people for a long time and the fables that were included in different places in literary works formed partly the source and partly the model for stories contained in narrative works. Tales are different from myths, that almost always try to explain something and satisfy some urge for knowledge or a religious necessity in the same manner as from the fable, that always tries to teach and follows the pedagogical objective in one or the other way. The animal fable sprang up from animal tales, and the former added to itself short gnomic stanzas, that are instructive sentences. These gnomic stanzas are very often placed at the top of the stories, just like the titles in the narrative literature of the west. The fact that adages always constitute
essential elements of Indian fable- poetry should also point to its still earlier origin.\textsuperscript{23}

The characterization form of narrative literature, therefore is a mixture of prose and verse, in which the later are partly metrical tales and fables and partly gnomic stanzas. Narrative works that are written wholly in prose are rare, and in ornate novels too verses have been intercalated within a limited range.

The narrative literature of India, we can divide it under the following groups:-

1. A great mass of popular tales, stories and swang's, that now know in a larger number, meant only for spiritual or worldly objective, that were originally circulating just orally. They are found in popular languages, and not only in Sanskrit.

2. Collections of stories that were gathered together for religious propaganda by some compilator or compilators.

To this class belong the Jātakas and other story-books of the Buddhists and the Jainās, that were no doubt told for the satisfaction of the people.

3. Narrative works, in Sanskrit that pursue the express objective of teaching political principles and worldly wisdom. Of this type is the Pañcatantra in its numerous recensions, and redactions.

4. Narrative works offer crude entertainment in the form of fictions with intercalated stories. To this class belong the Brhatkata with its later redaction, the Vetalapañcavimśati, Śukasaptati and others.

In the majority of Indian narrative literal works including tales, fables and stories beside one another. In the middle of a narrative, that has purely the affairs of human beings as the subject matter. The tales are relating to the world of wonder and
witchcraft of superhuman beings, and animal stories, in which human behaviors are carried over to the animal world.24

**Influence of story telling in narrative literature.**

Sanskrit literature has been one of the most abundant sources of narratives and Indians are generally considered as being the world's greatest storytellers. A narrative is a story whether it is in prose or verse involving events and characters and what the characters say and do. In modern literary criticism narratology denotes a recent concern with story telling in general. Its aim is to identify the structural elements in a story and their varied modes of combination and the narrative devices employed by the poets. It also analyses the type of discourse by which a story gets told.

Modern narratologist does not apply the conventional method of analyzing the narrative. They use the analytical method and concepts explored by Russian formalists and French structuralists. The basic idea is that any narrative has a formal

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construction. The main story of a literary work is not a mere sequence of events in time. The narrator fashions the incidents into a narrative plot/story. In short it tries to analyze narrative in terms of structures and techniques. The ultimate aim of this analysis is to bring out the tacit grammar that governs the art of story telling.²⁵

In the growth of story telling in Indian tradition there was no systematic study of these narratives. Indian literary critics from Bharata to Jagannātha did not seriously deal with the problems of narration. The search for essence of poetry or literariness by Indian rhetoricians from Bhāmaha to Jagannātha ended in the formulation of aesthetic theories and they are at the expense of story-telling and there was no proper place for story telling as such classified sometimes as Kathā or akhyāyika. Story telling in most cases subserved rasa theory or extra textual motive. Modern narratologist discovered that story telling was a common feature to all literary forms and there is a narration in every literary

form. And all literary forms were models of story telling with different devices employed for narration. The Sanskrit works broadly divided into different models. It must also be remembered that any model can be adopted to narrate a story. In Sanskrit there is a central plot in all literary forms called Vāstu and some guidelines were also given regarding the treatment of the story in the literary form. All these rhetoricians treat narration as a part of the larger scheme of sentiment and sound sense embellishments.

In a sense narrative is inherent in human beings in an interactive society. Some modern linguists argue that prediction of nominal constitute the essence of narration in its macro form. The smallest narrative thus can be found in ordinary conversations.

The Vedas represent one of the main sources of Indian narrative. Story telling was a part of Vedic civilization. This practice existed even before Vedic period and tales of all kinds were prevalent among the people. When we come to Purāṇas we find that many of the frame stories of the Vedas are expanded to
a wonderful extent with a free play of human imagination and fancy.

Although the Vedas are also of folk origin, the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakās and Upaniṣads turned the study of the Vedas into a scholarly enterprise. The Purāṇas later attempted to absorb Vedic lore in the form of narrative within the reach of the common people and they operated probably at the grass root level. The richest treasure house of Indian narratology is the Purāṇas and Upapurāṇas and the works emanating from them. Apart from containing an infinite number of tales they serve as fictional resources to the Indian mind. The two great epics, along with the Purāṇas, preserve thousands of myths, legends and floating stories that must have been in vogue since prehistoric times. On the other hand, stories of moral and spiritual character are included in the Upaniṣads.

In a subsequent age, the Pañcatantra incorporated the moral tales and beast fables, proto-types of which are revealed in the epics and the Upaniṣads while several rich cycle of popular
and romantic tales were generated as a result of the impact of the *Bṛhatkathā* in Sanskrit literature.

The long narrative of Guṇḍādhya relates magical episodes not only in the story of Udayana and Vāsavadatta, but much more in connection with *Naravāhanadatta* and *Madanamañcukā*. It is also a store house of a number of smaller stories interspersed in the major narrative. These deal with various kinds of adventure, land and sea travels to distinct places, princes and paupers, prostitutes and thieves and so forth. However, romantic love continues to be the main theme.

The tradition of the wonders tale was to some extent continued by prose *kāvya* writers in Sanskrit like Bāṇa and Daṇḍin. But the influence was more far reaching on *Prākṛt* story tellers like Kutūhala and Haribhadra. Buddhist and Jain writers assigned a place to the fictitious tale also in their religious and didactic literature.²⁶

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But the *Pañcatantra*, which has won world-wide attention in the history of fable literature leading to a number of translation in several Asian and European languages, is a collection of bird and beast fables meant to instruct princes indirectly in the art of governance and administration.