CHAPTER: II

DEFINITION AND IDENTITY OF FOLKLORE AND FOLK LITERATURE
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2.1 Introduction

From the inception of civilization, man has been continuously combating against nature. Thousands of years ago, the only school that the simple, primitive man had before him was nature. In the relentless zeal to survive and sustain his identity, man had to battle consciously and continuously against the barriers put forward by nature. The first reaction of man towards the sound of thunder, violence of storms and cyclones, extremities of solar energy, eclipses, attacks of various dangerous animals of prey, was acute fear. This fear led to submission to and worship of the unknown. Primitive man identified all natural turbulences as divine or evil. This fear and obeisance gave birth to the concept of totem. Aborigines of different parts of the world including Australia took to worshipping various birds, animals, insects, plants or trees, as their origins or forefathers, commonly referred to as ancestor worship, which later on came to be recognized as their totems.

Gradually there developed various restrictions and prohibitions, taboos centering on these totems. In this way fear, worship, rituals, ceremonies led to the creation and expansion of gods, incantations, rhetoric, conventions and religions.

Along with these restrictions, man discovered certain bonds of ‘cause and consequence’ of various natural phenomena. For example, primitive man realized that thunderous clouds bring rain, rainfall cause
seedlings to grow into plants, which is the source of all vegetation. These crops or vegetation again satisfy hunger. In other words, man is deeply influenced by the intriguing relationship between clouds, rain and vegetation. This paved the way for more and more discoveries. Thus man has gradually gained wisdom over thousands of years by persistently trying to fathom the laws and puzzles of nature and the means to overcome them.

That is, on the one hand, man began to believe in the existence of soul, that everything has life, and has taken the help of magic and rituals to overpower the super-naturals. On the other hand, he endeavoured to invent the techniques of lighting a fire, cropping and cultivation, making wheels, building boats. And, man has made all these discoveries an inherent part of his livelihood.

Primitive man drew the pictures of wild animals and danced around them as part of a hunting ritual and ultimately shot down the pictured animal. He even prayed for obtaining magical powers for being successful in hunting. On the other hand, he learnt to manufacture weapons of stone and other materials, to make hunting easier and sure. He discovered the technique of roasting meat after the experience of collective hunting.

In this way, the appeasement of spiritual existence led to the creation of a large volume of rustic elements. Therefore, as a consequence of the combined effect of belief and perseverance, primitive man drew the pictures of animals he desired to hunt, and danced around them, or sprinkled water physically and artificially to welcome rain, formulated hymns and incantations to appease the mystical powers. Again, satisfaction of their desires also led primitive man to express their enjoyment or entertainment through dance, music, play-acting, drawing pictures. These
events of daily life developed the cultural complex of primitive man the centre of which was ancient beliefs, first-hand knowledge about nature, experiences of collective living. All those cultural beliefs, conventional rituals, traditional norms, dance-music, creativity, story-telling, etc. flowed over time, from one country to another, continuously, obtaining the present form through various changes and corrections. Thus, with the passage of time, natural and cultural transfiguration of the primitive cave man into the modern man, has somehow, transformed him into an integral part of collective humanity. The term ‘Folk’ implies this collective human clan and ‘lore’ implies this collective man’s wisdom of life, gained through thousands of years’ experience, knowledge and changes. Collective faith, traditions, cultural norms and rituals, music, dance, riddles, puzzles, proverbs, rhymes, rhetoric, ballads, games, jests, vehicles, medicines and medication, foods, and all such things are considered to be elements of folklore in modern times.

2.2 Characterization of Folklore

The discovery and restoration of these events of common life and their application in research, forms the basis of modern Folklore studies. Study about folklore emerged in Europe in the nineteenth century. But there is ample proof that in India and other countries, various folk practices exist in the everyday life of the common people from much earlier times. In our country the term ‘folk culture’ was readily used to imply an idea opposite of ‘scriptural culture’. Very often, the term ‘Popular Antiquities’ in English and Volkuskunda in German was used to express folk life. This highlights the fact that folk culture or popular culture was simultaneously
existent with elite aristocratic culture. The initiation of this popular culture as a separate subject of study was expressed by the use of the term 'Folklore'. John Thomas of England first used the term Folklore, on 22\textsuperscript{nd} August, 1846, in a letter published in 'The Atheneum'.

The word 'folklore' is actually a combination of two Saxon words, 'folk' and 'lore', previously joined by a hyphen. Formerly, the word 'folklore' was used to imply a race which was later changed to imply people in general. The origin of the word 'lore' was embedded in the ancient Tutonic language, which means 'knowledge' or 'acquisition of knowledge'. In ancient English it was used as 
\textit{Lare} and \textit{Lehre} in German or \textit{Lur} in Dutch, which meant 'wisdom'. Metamorphosis of the words over time gave it a new connotation and it ultimately was used to indicate 'Wisdom of Folk' or 'Learning of the People' or common knowledge. With the gradual development of epistemology, Folklore emerged as a separate but interdisciplinary subject. In this connection mention may be made of the following words: "Folklore is the material that is handed on by tradition, either by word of mouth or by custom or practice."\textsuperscript{12} It means, folk culture constitutes those components which are imbibed through heredity, through words or tales, rituals or conventions, or adapted through conscious practice and endeavour. However, the subjective difference of folklore, inter-literary culture and knowledge-based variety of opinions, has raised severe contradictions in determining the area of Folklore. Regarding definitions, George Boswell and Jerever have mentioned that, "Definition of Folklore are more than fingerprints."\textsuperscript{3}

In defining folklore and demarcating its area, there is observed a categorical diversity of opinions, in Maria Leach edited Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, and International
Dictionary of Regional European Ethnology and Folklore. In the SDFML twenty-three such definitions have been identified. However, in order to satisfy functional purpose, we can cite the definition forwarded by Dr. Tushar Chattopadhyay in the All India Science Congress, held in Chandigarh in 1973, “Folklore is the total creation of life practice and the ideational pursuit of mainly collective, spontaneous and synonymous effort of an integral society.”

Regarding the diversified discourse about folk culture in the international sphere and the variegated definitions of folklore, it can be said that folklore is the creation of different human communities who either live in the same geographical areas, or whose livelihood, language, profession and historical basis are at least tied up by a common chain. Folklore is most often the creation of the common, illiterate man, which are usually oral expressions, and in most cases by individuals, although sometimes they are also created by group activity. For example, some songs or ballads, puzzles, short stories, etc. may have been created by an individual but recreated by the community. However, when the individualistic or group creation becomes the possession of a wider community over time, it is identified as folklore. These are most often created verbally and also passed on orally, down the generations, where they are nurtured and kept alive. Similarly, they travel from one country to another, from one society to another, through verbal orations.

As the word ‘folklore’ gained prominence in different countries all over the world, different countries felt the need of denoting the term in different synonymous words. However, folklore researchers in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh subcontinent did not assign any single synonymous term for folklore. Rather each of them derived different
synonyms for ‘folklore’ according to their analyses. Some Bengali synonyms of ‘folklore’ can be listed below:

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<tr>
<th>Scholar</th>
<th>Synonym</th>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay</td>
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<td>Dr. Ashutosh Bhattarcharya</td>
<td>Lokashruti</td>
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<td>Dr. Basudev Saran Agarwalla</td>
<td>Lokavarta</td>
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<td>Dr. Ramnaresh Tripathi</td>
<td>Gramyasahitya</td>
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<td>Kesharinarayan Sukla</td>
<td>Lokabangmoy</td>
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<td>Dr. Majharul Islam</td>
<td>Loklore</td>
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<td>Dr. Nirmalendu Bhowmick</td>
<td>Lokacharana</td>
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<td>Dr. Mohammad Shahidullah</td>
<td>Lokavigyan</td>
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<td>Dr. Sukumar Sen</td>
<td>Lokacharjya</td>
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<td>Dr. Krishnadev Upadhyay</td>
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<td>Dr. Prafulla Datta Goswami</td>
<td>Janasahitya</td>
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<td>Dr. Anwarul Karim</td>
<td>Lokoitijhya</td>
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<td>Dr. Asraf Siddiqui</td>
<td>Lokatatva</td>
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<td>Dr. Tushar Chattopadhyay</td>
<td>Lokakirti</td>
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<td>Arun Roy</td>
<td>Lokayan</td>
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<td>Ramaprasad Chanda</td>
<td>Lokavidya</td>
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<td>Sankar Sengupta</td>
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It is observed that while determining synonymous terminologies of folklore, different scholars have opposed each other. Regarding the debate about Bengali synonym of folklore, it can be said that the Indian scholars have not reached any point of agreement. Any synonymous word attains
maturity through general acceptability. As such, until all the scholars can unanimously accept a single synonymous terminology for folklore, there is no necessity to attribute any special honour to any single term. Rather, in this research paper we consider it judicious to apply the word 'Lokasanskriti' which is commonly used to denote 'folklore'.

2.3 Classification of Folklore

The study of folklore involves three important stages, namely, collection, classification and analysis. Classification of collected folk elements is essential for their proper analysis. There are two systems of classification of elements of folklore. The first type of folk elements is classified according to their characteristics. Richard M. Dorson has divided folklore into four divisions, such as oral folklore, social folk custom, material culture and performing folk arts. The second type of classification is done on the basis of Library Cataloguing System by R. S. Boggs. However, the main problem of this sort of classification is that the researcher implements this classification from outside on the basis of his own ideas, which may not comply with the ideas of the folk society within which these folk elements are created and sustained. As such no universal classification of folk elements on any particular basis is possible as yet. That is why researchers often have to resort to formulating their own classification according to their specific requirements. Considering folklore as a performance, Roger Abraham has classified folklore on the basis of audience. Accordingly we have prepared the following classification of folk elements to suit our research purpose.
FOLKLORE

ORAL

GESTURAL

RITUAL

MATERIAL

WRITTEN

FOLK DANCE DRAMA FOLK CIRCUS FOLK GAMES BIRDS ANIMALS' FIGHT

FUNCTIONAL ARTISTIC

EARTHEN WOODEN METALIC

FOLK PAINTING FOLK SCULPTURE

FOLK BELIEF FOLK CUSTOM FOLK WORSHIP FOLK FESTIVAL TREATMENT,

RHYME PROVERB RIDDLE FOLKTALE FOLKSONG BALLAD

MYTH FABLE LEGEND FAIRY TALE

FLOOR PAINTING WALL PAINTING ARTIFACT PAINTING

LATRINALÍA EPITAPH STICH WORK
Folk literature is an integral part of formalized folklore. Moreover, since all the elements of folk literature are verbal or speech-oriented, it can be said that “Folk literature is simple literature transmitted orally.”

Certain components created by special physical forms such as folk dance, folk drama, folk circus, folk games, fights between birds and animals, etc. are gestural folk culture. These components, however, not the depiction of verbal tradition, rather they are retained through imitations and conscious practice.

Some of the elements of folklore have originated from ritualistic behavior, which include folk conventions, rituals, functions, worships and festivals. Despite man’s evolution from primitive, uncivilized stage to the modern era of globalization, he is still dependent on certain beliefs. Such beliefs being either cultural or superstitious, give rise to various activities like worships, rituals, folk entertainment, rites, folk-medicine, etc. It is for such reasons that even today a man suffering from small-pocks is administered Sitala Mata’s Prasad rather than proper medication. These kinds of folk elements survive through generations being nurtured by verbal exposition or by conventional practice of rites and rituals.

Factors inherent to Materialistic folklore generally lie outside textual boundaries. In many cases materials created by illiterate craftsmen gradually get adhered to the entire society through preaching and propaganda and finally get endorsed as a nation’s cultural wealth.

Usually the components of materialistic folklore originate outside the boundaries of bookish education. Very often an illiterate creates such unusual objects which receive enough fame to be recognized as a national wealth. Components of materialistic folklore are divided into two parts —;
functional and artistic. Necessities of everyday life have induced man to create earthen wares, metal wares, wooden houses and furniture and such other things. Although such objects are the outcome of mere regular requisites, yet when an artisan crafts various earthen pots, wooden or cane objects representing an exclusive art form, they are entirely an expression of his own creativity. This is how artistic objects pertaining to folk art, folk sculpture, etc. are created. Idols created for particular forms of worship or ritualistic activities, decorated pots and scrolls or traditional designs on the walls or floor, etc. may fulfill everyday functional necessities, yet they all represent the artist's earnest desire. For that reason, the special artistic object, though essential to functional life, cannot lose its artistic importance. These entire components combine together to create materialistic folklore.

Although the elements of folklore are essentially oral, yet many other materials of folklore exist in written heritage. The significant elements which survive in written tradition are latrinalia epitaph or kantha or poems written on handkerchiefs.

2.4 Identification of Folk Literature

As in the case of different branches of folklore, so also the identification of folk literature is a controversial issue among various scholars. A famous western critic defined folk literature as an integral part of folklore. He says, “Folklore includes folk art, folk crafts, folk tools, folk costumes, folk custom, folk belief, folk medicine, folk recipes, folk music, folk games, folk gesture, and folk speech, as well as those verbal forms of expression which are better described as verbal art. Verbal art, which
includes such forms as folk tales, legends, myth, proverbs, riddles, and poetry has been the primary concern of folklorist from both the humanities and social sciences since the beginnings of folklore as a field study. That is, folk literature is that literature which spreads through the verbal expositions of its creator and in the course adheres to the transition of time and imbibes human experience for its survival. Some think that folk literature is unsophisticated literature or literary creations of the rustic, uneducated, rural population. However, being illiterate or not, being formally educated or not, does not pose a hindrance to the creation of ‘folk literature’, provided the person is endowed with the quality of literal creativity. On the other hand, all rural literary creations are not ‘folk literature’, because such literary expositions do not reveal the entire character of folk literature. This is because folk literature is the reflection of an integrated society. Though primarily folk literature is the creation of a particular person, yet over time, the process of evolution and changing social discourse transforms it into collective property. So it becomes almost impossible to discover the identity of an author of folk literature. This specialty distinguishes folk literature from written literature. Regarding this certain characteristics of folk literature needs to be mentioned.

Firstly, folk literature is the product of an integrated society. It imbibes the traditional characteristics of social interactions and interdependence of the members of a particular society, while inheriting new elements of the external society, simultaneously. This process of adhering newer elements and in the process transforming them to suit the needs of the mother society, while retaining the unique and traditional elements of the original society, gives birth to folk literature. Thus, folk
literature is the output of that society which retains its individual characteristics while being enriched by various cultural elements.

Secondly, folk literature can be the creation of a single person, but once created, it is grasped by many, who recreate it in their own way. Thus, the literature that is created and recreated, continuously changed and repeated, may be the outcome of a single person’s thoughts or induction, but are essentially the creation of many, endorsed by the lives and works of the multitude. That is why folk literature is the creation of the one and the many.

Thirdly, folk literature has an elitist quality as well. It is carried on through generations. As a whole, it can be said that usually common people create literature verbally, occasionally in writing; generally passed on through verbal discourses or written passages, form folk literature. Therefore, most often, folk literature is audio and memory dependent. Folk literature is the creation of the whole society, the extraordinary characteristic of folk literature being its traditionalism. Folk literature is spontaneous creation, written in that language which forms the language spoken in general, endorsed by the characteristics of folk life. These attributes render folk literature to be simple and lucid.

Like all other streams of folklore, folk literature is also subject to changes. The reasons for changes are mainly two— the first is innovation or the urge for the new. The endeavour to create diversity with every passing moment, actually transforms folk literature over time. Secondly, various components of folk literature while shifting verbally from person to person also travels through various environments, the nuances of which adhere into the literature. This can be connoted as transformation through
external influence. However, various external influences can be attributed to time, environment, socio-economic status, extraordinary genius of the artisan, cultural purification and cultural necessities, etc. The transformation of folk literature can be better observed in the comparative researches of Finnish techniques and the geographical theories of Julius Krone and Karle Krone.

Folk literature plays both literary as well as social role which makes it quite important in the society.

First, folk literature plays an important part in enhancing peoples’ mirth and joy. It forms a unique element of spending leisure between the hardships of everyday life. As such folk literature contains various traits of emotion in its language, rhyme and music.

Secondly, at different times, folk literature has assisted in the development of social education. Folk tales, rhymes, proverbs puzzles and such like, take their turn in solving various social problems. Inquisitive puzzles and their solutions form indispensible part of folk teaching, while proverbs are summarized expression of experiences gained over long periods. Maintenance of morality, honesty and discipline in the society are aided by folk literature.

Thirdly, very often, folk literature undertakes the responsibility of folk journalism. Variegated news and knowledge related to history, geography, politics and other worldly subjects are carried on through the various aspects of folk literature, transgressing the passage of time. Folk tales, ballads, rhymes and proverbs allegorically retain all such information and data. Anthropological research tries to rebuild the past on the basis of these data.
Fourthly, on many occasions, folk literature becomes the striking weapon against social atrocities. Such weapons may be used against socially imposed oppressive norms and conditions, or political protests related to everyday life. It has been revealed by Marxist scholars that folk literature has emerged from collective labour and as such represents the social, political and economic identity of man. Further, the Marxist scholars made the pioneering effort to show that the cause of social evolution is class conflict and folk literature is the inevitable catalyst of class conflict.

Fifthly, folk literature has a ceremonial importance as well. The literary text contained in the games, rituals, rites and festivals like Bhadu, Tusu and others highlight the importance of folk literature.

Lastly, it can be said that basically folk literature is a kind of collective creation and is specifically characterized by the manifestation of the trident flow of attitude, activity and acceptance of community life. In respect of social psyche, it reflects the collective consciousness of the community; in respect of activity, it represents collective effort, and in respect of acceptance it is general acknowledgement of the entire community which develops the central premise of folk literature. Apparently, it appears that 'elite literature' and 'folk literature' are two parallel flows of literature. But there are a lot of differences in the form and character of the two. However, folk literature has been the chosen base of elite literature.
Notes and References

2. Archer Taylor, Folklore and The Student of Literature, p.216-223.
3. J. Russel Reaver & George W. Boswell, Fundamentals of Folk Literature, p.11.
4. Tushar Chattopadhyay, Lokasanskritir Tatwarup O Swarup Sandhan, p. 53.