CONCLUSION

Myths and Societies
CONCLUSION

From my study of Chinese and Tibetan folk literature, certain ideas come to the foreground concerning the probable origin, evolution and function of folk literature in society. Chinese folktales coming down from the remote corners of the past suggest there were early man's response to natural forces and his attempts to come in terms with such forces. For example, the Yellow River, which became the source of constant sorrow for the predominantly agrarian population inhabiting the loess plains, was deified and made the chief of the waters. Even the seas were ritually inferior to it. Man was awed by the powerful thunder and lightning that showered millions of volts down on earth. The wind and rain crippled human life and damaged property, the scourge of plague took heavy toll. Man deified all these natural forces and gradually found it necessary to appease them by means of various sacrifices.

No such ancient folktales, myths or fables reflecting the prehistoric man's response to nature are available in the existing Tibetan folk literature. Tibetan folktales suggest one possible source of origination of folk literature, namely, the dominant traditions. Most of the Tibetan folktales are woven around Buddhist themes. The obvious examples are the stories "The Meditator and the Thief", "The Origin of a Popular Saying", "How a Dog saved the Khampas", "Fisherman's Luck", "The Mute Girl", "Why the Hot Springs Dried Up", and "The Dumb Cripple". All these stories mirror the role of karma, the significance of offering honest prayers, the concern for preserving lives of sentient beings.


2. In the pre-Buddhist Tibetan culture as in the Bon rituals, some of the animals were sacrificed. Since the introduction of Buddhism and due to its gradual but effective influence, effigies of the animals of sacrifice are used in rituals nowadays. In China we get a glimpse of the sacrificial rites in _Liji_ (The Book of Rites), _Zhouli_ (The Zhou Rites), _Zhuangzi_ , _Shiji_ (Historical Memoirs) etc. Cf. Maspero, n.1, pp.127-131, 144-145.
the concept of sin and reincarnation.

In analysing the sets of values of the Chinese and the Tibetans under the broad subject of folk ethics, we would get a glimpse of some essential aspects in the process of evolution of folk literature and popular culture. The Chinese and Tibetan moral codes, embedded in the vast body of folk literature, are integral parts of their respective cultures. The distinctive features of the Chinese and Tibetan moral codes reflect the ways of thinking of two different peoples embedded in two different environment, and influenced by the dominant traditions prevalent in their respective societies.

Moral codes, however, have two stages of development. Firstly, values and ideas percolate deep down into the social psychology of the people. This can be termed as internalization of moral codes. Such internalization takes place in terms of moral values and behaviour. In other words, internalisation is the making of typical psychology of the people or their collective conscience which influences their ways of thinking and behaviour pattern. In the next stage of development, the moral codes find articulation in the form of various expressions. Folk beliefs, folk rituals, fables, riddles and other common oral forms of folk literature come under this second stage: articulation.

Folk literature which is an integral part of any culture, diffuses itself to recreate culture so as to give rise to folklore or Little Tradition. Folklore represents the value system and common beliefs of rural society. It seems to have greater influence among the rural people in terms of their belief and behaviour pattern more than formal religion or formal tradition. (See Figure 10 in the next page)

Functions of folk literature as presented in this study are four-fold: to inculcate basic human values and ideals considered "good" in a particular society, to entertain through oral narratives, to enhance the beauty of a language, and to create a peasant utopia.
Figure 10: The Process of Evolution of Folk Literature and Little Tradition

Environment

Ways of Thinking

Moral Codes/
Moral Consensus

internalization

Culture

Folk Literature

narrative

articulation

Folklore/
Little Tradition
In the foremost function, the inculcation of values on a social scale takes place in such a way that the behaviour of the people belonging to a particular community becomes predictable, and the social order and consensus become possible.

In folk literature, oral narratives serve the purpose of entertainment. "Adding Feet to a Snake" and "The Beetle that Stole a Cow" are examples of witty stories. "The Cicada, the Mantis, and the Oriole", "The King of Chu Beats the Drum", "The Song of the Little Dog" and "The Dumb Cripple" are examples of tales that preach moral lessons.

Another function of folk literature that can be observed in this study, is the enhancement of beauty of a language. Idioms, proverbs, metaphors, imageries, allegories, adages and riddles are constituents of folk literature which is essentially a work of art among the folk in the rural society.

In the process of translation, we tend to lose the subtlety, nuances and beauty of language which are robustly present in folk literature. This is what one experiences reading the folk literature in the original language, such as I have done in the case of Chinese folk literature presented in this study. I have made an attempt to explain some of the wits and nuances in the folk language and literature.

An idiom, as we know, is a phrase whose meaning is not obvious through knowledge of the individual meanings of the constituent words but must be learnt as a whole. Similar is the case in Chinese. The word jieguang whose constituents jie means 'to borrow' or 'to lend'; and guang means 'lustre', has a different connotation which means 'excuse me, please!'. The phrase maibuqi has mai (to buy), bu (not) and qi (to get up) as its constituents. But it has a completely different meaning--'cannot afford to buy'. Fan (to turn over) and shen (body) together would mean 'emancipation'. Such phrases, no doubt, have embellished the Chinese language to a great extent.

Proverbial tales like Yu bang xiang chi (the snipe and the clam grapple), Ba miao zhu zhang (try to help the shoots grow by pulling them upward), Wang yang bu lao (mend
the pen after a sheep is lost), Niutou bu dui mazui (horses’ jaws do not match cows’ heads) etc are all set in the agrarian background. These are part of the literary experience of the unlettered people, the aesthetic experience of the rustic folk.

Rural aesthetic expressions have adorned language--both classical and colloquial. It is the unlettered people from the rural background, namely, the itinerant musicians, singers of ballads at street corners, and folk story-tellers, who have beautified the spoken language by means of wits and deep philosophical understanding of life. We see how Qiao Gu and Cha Gu3 gave witty answers to difficult questions.

Apart from the adages and riddles that we find in womenlore, there are adages and riddles in other realms of the common people which are priceless contribution of folk literature to the linguistic treasure-house. The fisher-folk say jin la yu, man la xia—that is, pull the net fast when you catch fish, but pull the net slowly when you catch prawn. This is a piece of advice one needs in fishery. There are agricultural adages which tend to advise on the proper timing for harvest. For example, Shuangjiang bu qi cong, yue zhang xin yue kong, that is, one should harvest onion at the Frost’s Descent, otherwise after some time one would find its core hollow. Again we have Xiazhi bu qi suan, suan zai nili lan which means one should harvest garlic at the Summer Solstice, otherwise it would rot in the mud4.

Riddles, jests, satire and rhetoric enrich language which is evident in many of the folk literary forms presented in this study, especially the ones mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4. Metaphors and imageries represent yet another aesthetic experience of the common people. In the process of deification, peasants have invented various imageries to express their ideals and ambitions. Some myths represent peasant utopia which open human

3. See Chapter 3.

possibilities and potentialities, hopes and aspirations. Till today red-paper lanterns adorn the gates of houses and other places at the beginning of a lunar month. As we have pointed out earlier in Chapter 2, that the tiger, which was fed with ghosts and evil spirits by Shen Tu and Yu Lei, acted as an exorciser of evil spirits. The ghosts are supposed to stay away from the households at the sight of the red lanterns which are thought to represent the glowing eyes of the ghost-devouring tiger. The bursting of crackers on the New Year's eve, as we have already discussed, actually signifies the driving away of a harmful demon--Nian which now means 'year'.

The Yellow River in the shape of a fish, or the wind in the shape of a bird or a deer, are all imageries that can be easily understood from the point of the early man's perception of the natural forces. The entire episode of the Yellow Emperor's vanquishing of the monarchs of four cardinal points, and Chiyou might well be a reflection of the peasants' aspiration to live in an unexploitative society. They found the Yellow Emperor reliable for meting out justice to them. The thunder that is unpredictable and merciless during rainstorm was uglified and the Yellow Emperor was made to kill the Thunder Beast. The Cowherd was made to fly--draped in the magical cowhide. Chang E was made to take the elixir that took her to the Moon Palace. All these are examples of peasant utopian dreams.

In the world of Chinese imageries we find pavilions, walled cities, or fortresses, palaces, chariots, magistrates (mandarin), kings of princely states, books or scriptures, clouds, jades and pearls, dragons, seas, aquatic creatures etc. In the Tibetan landscape the imageries are quite different. They include yaks, mountains, shepherds, hunters, tsampa, lamas, nuns, witches, meditation caves, monasteries, dogs, hares etc.

5. The magical cowhide reminds us of the Flying Carpet in the Arabian Nights.
It is unique how various forms of folk literature came to represent the dichotomy of the peasant world and the mandarin world. Zhong Kui, one of the many door-gods, is best known as a ghost-eater. In a two-part allegorical saying we find "Zhong Kui standing at the crossroads--capturing evil from four sides." This in fact draws an analogy with persons who dare encourage healthy trends and combat unhealthy ones. In another such saying we see "Zhong Kui starts a food-shop--ghosts do not eat." This means none dare take initiative to go close to a place. We have seen such allegories in the case of the Thunder God in Chapter 2. These sayings portray the popular folk beliefs of the peasants.

History has time and again fallen prey to various régimes and has subsequently undergone tremendous distortion at various levels. In order to suit the purpose of a ruler, heroes were branded as villians, and evil characters were glorified. Such corruption of history however could not influence folklore which has remained more or less unadulterated till today. Of course, uses and abuses of some folktales by different régimes for political ends have occurred at different points of time. However, the essential components of the original tales were preserved. The socio-cultural aspects of the primitive man remained more or less a matter of guess-work because history drew a line of demarcation between itself and prehistory as well as non-history. It also relegated the prehistoric past of man into the world of myth and legend. History could neither record nor preserve the earliest realities of man. It reflects political vicissitudes. It is only

6. The phrases that cropped up in the mandarin world have also occupied a prominent place in folk literature. These phrases have gradually seeped down to the common folk through ages. The proverbs like yi qu bu fu fan (gone for ever), wo xin chang dan (sleep on brushwood and taste gall), chulei-bacui (stand out from one's fellows), zhi lu wei ma (call a stag a horse) etc., are part of the recorded history that were initially stories of kings and dukes. Such stories have penetrated the realm of folk literature since long.

folklore that came to be known as the genesis of civilizations, especially reflecting worldview, ethos, and social structure. Unlike historical facts, folk literature has remained relatively safe from manipulation. And its everlasting themes remain authentic, reflecting social reality. It is actually the backbone of social history.

Folklore has no prejudice against man's world of fantasy. It rather found the missing links of the early man's ways of thinking and unravelled the mysteries of man's social behaviour from the seemingly unrealistic tales. In other words, folklore came to accommodate the entire culture under its magnificent umbrella.

It is undeniable that the Chinese and the Tibetans are living in different geographical locations as well as in two different cultural universe. There is no doubt that both Chinese and Tibetans share several common human values. But these human values do not constitute what is characteristically Chinese or Tibetan. Hence it is necessary to stress on what is typically Chinese or Tibetan character, their moral values and behaviour, and their ways of thinking. In this study, the origin of Chinese and Tibetan folklore has to be seen as the origin of Chinese and Tibetan cultures. Elementary ideas and values of Chinese and Tibetan civilizations have figured earlier in most of the myths, legends and folktales presented in this study.

During my field work in China, I observed the moral elements that constitute Confucian culture. It is evident from various sources that myths, legends and also a

8. I lived in China between 1986 and 1988, and studied under the guidance of the Chinese folklorists--Zhong Jingwen and Zhang Zichen--both professors at Beijing Normal University.

great number of folktales predated the Confucian classics. This means folk literature initially existed independent of Confucian texts. However, at a later stage the Confucian scholars made allusions to folk literature with the purpose of propagating the teachings of Confucius. And thus, by the medium of folktales the Great Tradition or the Confucian doctrine percolated through the grassroots level. Here it should be noted that by referring to Confucian ideas we are not merely referring to Confucius. But it refers to Confucius and the contemporary schools of thoughts that contended with equal vigour during the Spring and Autumn, and the Warring States Period (770-221 BC). It also refers to the thoughts and ideas of the Confucian scholars who propagated the doctrine after modifying it at a much later period. In fact, in my study the tales narrated by the legalists, naturalists and Taoists find more prominence than those by the Confucianists.

In analyzing the major themes in Chinese folk literature, quite a few characteristics of the Chinese mind surface before our eyes. Confucianism, with its largely rationalistic structural principles and ethical value system\textsuperscript{10}, holds a dominant position in Chinese social institutions. As discussed earlier, this rationalistic trend undoubtedly contributed towards relative non-development of mythical fantasy and the thought of the supernatural. The undependable efficacy of magic and the promise of an unverifiable other-world which appear to be unfavourable and uninspiring for the development of stable and strong organizations, were gradually rejected by the populace under the influence of Confucianism because religion in China was organizationally weak. The non-biblical teachings of Confucius, legalism propounded by Han Fei and rationalism taught by Wang Chong, Fan Zhen and others consolidated the basis of pragmatism, empiricism and rationalism in China.

However, it would be improper to term Chinese folk literature as being devoid of beliefs in the supernatural. Gods and goddesses are present in Chinese folk beliefs to this day. Longwang or the Dragon King is worshipped in some parts of the arid north especially during drought. Menshen or the door-gods are venerated throughout China especially during the commencement of a lunar year. Zaoshen (Hearth-God), Yuexia Laoen (God of Marriage), Chuanggong and Chuangmu (the deities of the bed) are venerated till today by the rural folk living in the remote corners of the land. Belief in Pan Gu and Nüwa as creators of the universe is still found among many unlettered people in China. Thus we notice that such non-rational, mystical, and metaphysical aspects are not absent in Chinese folk literature as chapters on cosmogonic myths and popular folk deities indicate.

But what we want to say is that the dominant Chinese characteristic is pragmatic, empirical, rational and this-worldly much more than any other Asian case. These peculiarities influence their psyché, ethos and national character. The frequency of themes on rationalism, pragmatism and empiricism predominate Chinese folk narratives. Examples include the stories "Fast Grew the Crops", "The Portrait on the Wanted Poster", "Who Stole the Axe?", "Adding Feet to a Snake", "Can He Ever Reach Chu?", "The Taboo of Zhu Yuanzhang", "A Grand Tower Base", "Which is the Original One?" and "Father for Son".

The spirituality of the Chinese is confined to this-worldliness as exemplified by their practice of ancestor-worship and their choice of deities. The Chinese deities mentioned in this study reflect the utilitarian outlook of the Chinese. The Chinese mind demands immediate benefit from the pantheon in all human activities from birth till the old-age. There is no Chinese god of death, nor there is any god of the other-world. Being pragmatic they are not interested in the other-worldly concerns. The Chinese folk
beliefs have nothing much transcendental\textsuperscript{11} in terms of cognition. Almost all the themes, under discussion, stress the importance of practicality. In other words, the Chinese world view, as illustrated by various folktales, emphasize the matter-of-factness rather than metaphysics, fantasies, illusions and so on.

In the present-day Chinese society, we observe that the Chinese always prefer to make on-the-spot investigation before entering into any major commitment. Cautious steps are taken in order to avoid blunder later at an advanced stage. Caution is the keyword to any planning or action. Hence the Chinese phrase: guixing-jubu—behave correctly and cautiously, as exemplified by the stories—"A Grand Tower Base" and "Free Game".

Another factor which is of utmost importance in Chinese society is the concept of 'bao' (報) or reciprocity which forms the basis for social relations and finds its wide application in social institutions in China. The Confucian classic Liji (The Book of Rites) has some common sayings—ni jing wo yi chi, wo jing ni yi zhang, that is, you honour me with one foot, I should in return honour you ten feet. In another passage we find—de ren yi niu, huan ren yi ma, yi hezi lai, bixu yi hezi qu—that is, give a horse in return for an ox, and a case of presents received must be acknowledged by a case of presents in return.\textsuperscript{12} All these sayings and many other in the form of poems reflect how the Chinese attach importance to proper maintaining of human relationship on the basis of reciprocity.

\textsuperscript{11} During the Zhou Dynasty the practice of recalling the soul of the individual was in vogue as reflected in ancient Chinese literature of the 5th and 4th centuries BC. Here we find the mention of the soul or hunpo which is said to survive at death. See Wing-tsit Chan, 'The Individual in Chinese Religion', in Charles A. Moore (Ed.), The Chinese Mind : Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1967, p.288.

\textsuperscript{12} Lien-Sheng Yang, 'The Concept of Pao as a Basis for Social Relations in China', in Fairbank (Ed.), n.10, p.291.
They believe in man's interdependence as a social being. The proper code of conduct is *yi de bao de*—requisite kindness with gratitude, as exemplified by the story "The Prawns Guide the Jellyfish." On the other hand, the stories "The Crab and the Earthworm" or "The Earthworm and the Prawn" are cases devoid of *renqing* (human feelings) which apart from sentiment includes a high degree of reciprocity besides many other social expressions.

In such a case Confucianists would have censured the crab and the prawn for recompensing kindness with injury (*yi yuan bao de*). The legalists would have dealt the ungrateful ones in accordance with law. But Mozi, who advocated the doctrine of universal love, would have pardoned them. In the story "Mister Dongguo and the Wolf", the scholar saved a wolf from danger even after knowing its evil character. This story ridicules the Mohists because at one point Confucius in *Liji* did say *yi yuan bao yuan*—recompense injury with injury.

China, with her ancient civilization, came to realize the significance behind a balance between likes and dislikes, differences in behaviour with friends and with enemies. A country sans idealism, viewed the complexity of life in a very down-to-earth manner. A vengeful, tit for tat, non-Gandhian approach in dealing with enemies is part of the Chinese way of thinking. Hence, the Chinese saying *tongda luoshuigou*—flog the cur that's fallen into water—be merciless with bad people even if they are down.

The legalists would certainly approve such a treatment because the wolf lacked sense of gratitude. Under the legalist system of present-day China, it is the Reign of Law that is thought to deter law-breakers by force. The fear psychosis is believed to inject sense of deterrence. The stories "The Whale and the Cuttlefish" and "The Final Judgement" carry much weight in terms of legalistic justice, and also to teach everyone to possess righteous courage to shoulder responsibility for all possible consequences arising from one's negligence or wrongdoings. Social stability is sought to be maintained through legalistic method.

13. Yang, n.12, p.293.
In the second story just mentioned above, the obeying of laws was the sole factor that decided the fate of the petty official. This story is a very good example for the legalists presently ruling China. In China the concept of deterrence is mainly governed by the notion of punishing one as a warning to others. Hence the proverb—sha ji xia hou—kill the chicken to frighten the monkey. That is why perhaps penal code or criminal law, corporal punishment or torture are all represented by one single word xingfa 例法. In this context the ultimate fate of Ah Q\(^{14}\) is certainly a reminder of the system of legalistic justice that prevailed in China since long\(^{15}\).

In order to explicate our hypothesis on the process of evolution of folk literature, we have tried to demonstrate through various examples the ways in which Chinese pragmatic and dominant traditions have influenced the folk behaviour, folk thinking, folk action and also the vocabulary of the common folk. That is the way in which some of the themes in classical Chinese texts are reflected in various Chinese folktales. On the other hand we might also say that some of the folktale themes which are anonymous, immemorial and sometimes immortal, so far as the evaluation of the common folk is concerned, are reflected in the Chinese classical texts. However, there is one ground to believe that. as

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14. Ah Q is the main character in Lu Xun's Ah Q Zhengzhuan (The True Story of Ah Q) who was executed after being falsely implicated in a case of theft, and then exhibited as a criminal before a large crowd. See Lu Xun Quanji (Complete Works of Lu Xun). Vol.1. Beijing : People's Literature Press, 1981, p.487.

15. Take for example the executions that took place at street corners during the Qing era or during the Kuomintang rule in order to deter others from following the same path as that of the reformists and revolutionaries.
many scholars have pointed out, what Confucius did was not purely an invention of a new tradition or a new religion. But he in many cases collected the existing resources in terms of folk literature, folk beliefs and social history. In fact, Confucian classics, as we know them today, were not purely invented, by Confucius. Although they have been ascribed by tradition to the authorship of Confucius, he merely codified the material available in the preexisting texts and the oral tradition such as poems, songs, fables and tales. We believe that there are some evidence of this codification of the Confucian orthodox texts in the folktales we have presented. Such folktales in many cases might predate the Chinese classical orthodox texts which have been reigning China for over 2000 years.

In the case of the Tibetans, we see the paramount importance of the Great Tradition in the formation of folk literature. Folk literature, that antedated Buddhism in Tibet and did retain certain peculiar aspects of the indigenous culture, was literally swept away by the tide of the latter to the extent that it sank into silence for quite a long time. In fact, Buddhism assimilated different emotive elements of the Tibetan mind, and later brought about a drastic change in the ways of thinking of the Tibetans. In this process an entirely new system of folk beliefs, values, rituals and literature sprang up in Tibet under the influence of Buddhism. That is why folk literature is seen as a medium of propagation of Buddhism in Inner Asia. Here we might refer to some of the folktales that carry Buddhist messages. For example, "The Meditator and the Thief", "The Origin of a Popular Saying", "Fisherman's Luck", "The Mute Girl", "The Dumb Cripple", "Cleft-lipped Hare" etc.

Whereas anti-magical inclinations marked the Chinese characteristics, it was quite a different story with the Tibetans. Under the influence of the Bon, or Vajrayâna tradition, the Tibetans had been having a passion for magic. And this very passion, which was absorbed by

Buddhism in the process of propagation in Tibet, gave rise to stories like "How the Springs Dried Up", "A Naljorpa Wizard's Story" etc. Hypnotism, witchcraft, occult sciences and other esoteric practices, usually seen in Tibetan folktales and womenlore or in the tales of the great Tibetan religious masters, had many things in common with Taoism in China. Whereas under the influence of Confucianism China more or less managed to erase the vestiges of shamanism, it was not so in the case of Tibet. In order to conquer the soul of the Tibetans, Buddhism assimilated quite a lot of folk beliefs and rituals which were extant in pre-Buddhist Tibet. Folktales were systematically used to propagate the Buddhist doctrine among the rural folk such as nomads, peasants and merchants in Tibetan society. These religious beliefs are exemplified by most of the Tibetan tales mentioned in this study.

Secondly, we notice the immense significance of the notion of karma as the moral mechanism by which human lives or social life is governed. Karma is seen as a source of justice or a source of morality by which the Tibetans try to justify their ways of thinking. In other words, it is a cultural mode of reasoning by which certain people rationalize their lives, their world views, actions and behaviour. Examples include stories like "Cleft-lipped Hare", "The Song of the Little Dog", "The Dog Skin King", "The Stone Lion that Opened its Mouth", etc. These stories and many other tales including those of the Tibetan culture heroes reflect what we call in modern terms the law of causality. That is why Khache Phalu taught "What you have said is echoed back by the hills, a kindly deed is repaid with a kindly deed....This is how the cycle of life goes on".

If the essential characteristic features of the Chinese moral system either at the élite level or at the grassroots level are pragmatic, careful, semi-rational, semi-empirical consideration of matters, in the Tibetan context we see quite a different story. The Tibetan moral system is firmly rooted in the Buddhist philosophy and religion with a stress on

harmony, compassion, morality etc. These themes are reflected in a large number of stories. We have called them stories of justice.

Given the wide geographic space and viewing from the topographic features of Inner Asia, we find that the rule of centralized control over the population was always problematic. Therefore tales from the Buddhist moral system narrated by lamas were found appropriate in accomplishing the task of regulating the behaviour of the people either in terms of justice or social relations. Several folktales, presented in this study, reflect a sense of justice that must be worked out either in the relation between the ruler and the ruled or between equals. Animal fables act as effective means to teach how justice must be done in order to ensure not just morality but also social harmony. These are reflected in the stories we have told.

In China, there was a centralized administration of bureaucracy which exercised social control over the population mainly concentrated in the basins of the Yellow River and the Yangzi. But this was not the case in Tibet where there is not only a difficult terrain but huge space with thin population. And here the control by the Dalai Lama's régime was rather weak. The function to exercise control and certain amount of harmony within the Tibetan society was left largely to the lamas who propagated morality, self-restraint and self-discipline. This is in sharp contrast with politically-imposed structures which regulate people's behaviour. So we see in several folktales how justice is not purely done by the code of law, but it is done at the individual level. The people are motivated to think in certain ways and have a strong sense of justice. Such sense of justice was believed of having the potential to challenge and defeat anything unjust and immoral on the way to ensure certain degree of harmony. This can be exemplified by the story "How a Dog saved the Khampas."

Of course, this does not mean that the Tibetan society before 1959 was all based on justice. There were exploitation and social disorder. Whatever we might say, sense of justice is after all relative. We do not consider a universal basis for justice like the Roman law. That is not the sense of justice in the Asian context. What we do see is a kind of either social, political or economic system by which the few rule over the many. We also notice that this
injustice is made to appear just by moral, social and religious thinking. This means certain Buddhist ideas and popular Tibetan beliefs are deliberately presented in fables with a vision to their wide acceptability. In the story "The Mute Girl", we see how the poor man Topgyal was made to accept the decision of his rich friends in becoming a slave if proved unsuccessful in wooing the mute girl. Wealth and power, which have an indissoluble bond, are the major factors that legitimized the unjust proposal of making a slave out of one's friend. Moreover, Topgyal did not find it necessary to oppose his friends' decision because he had accepted it from a socio-religious standpoint--"If you are not content with what fate has decided, then you are looking for suffering." 

The system, by which monasteries live on the surplus generated by peasants and the nomadic population, is exploitative purely from a materialistic Western point of view. But that injustice is seen just by legitimating the fact that to serve the lamas, to serve the course of Buddha, to serve the sangha is to ensure a better life in the next existence. And that, in the eyes of the Tibetan believers, is the secret of success in maintaining social order or harmony in Tibet despite the fact that there was not so much centralized bureaucratic system like China. The tales of Nangsa Obum, Yeshe Tsogyel, Milarepa, Tsongkhapa and others reveal the success of the rule of moral law.

Throughout the study we draw contrast as well as similarities between two cultural systems as reflected in folk literature, that is, Chinese or Confucian system and Tibetan or Buddhist system. While the essential characteristic feature of the Confucian teachings is pragmatism, if such a generalization is possible, the predominant characteristic of the Tibetans would be metaphysical, spiritual, intuitive, subjective, moralistic, didactic and mystic. In other words, Chinese and Tibetan moral and cultural universe tend to reflect two extreme poles of contrast. But while making such contrast we do not rule out grey areas in the thinking. There can be Chinese who are very mystical like the Taoists or there can be Tibetans who are pragmatic. But that is not the point. On the balance we

make a generalization depending on the predominant trends of thoughts. When we say that the Tibetans tend to be governed rather by Buddhist moral law, we are not saying that the Chinese are without moral norms. But the predominance of that characteristic is distinctively a cultural or moral character of the Tibetans in contrast to the Confucian pragmatic and empirical-oriented behaviour.

In terms of cultural history, it is quite evident that pre-Buddhist beliefs in Tibet and Taoism in China, or shamanistic tradition that prevailed in greater part of Asia, might have shared in common the primitively simplistic ideas, values and world views. But the codification of the Confucian classics in China 2000 years ago have a distinctively Chinese stamp to the Chinese character. Likewise the advent of Buddhism in Tibet in the 7th-8th century completely transformed the Tibetan society, ideas and belief system. And from that turning point onwards it is possible to talk about the distinctively Tibetan Buddhist behaviour, character and way of thinking. The Buddhist impact on the Tibetan mind left an indelible mark characterized by a combination of Buddhism and typically pre-Buddhist ideas in Tibet which synthesized together over the years. And that tended to give a permanent mould to the Tibetan character.

In this study, firstly we have tried to trace the origins of folktales from the angle of primitive men's response to the awesome forces of nature and how they tried to come to terms with such forces in their imagination, in their techniques, in their ideas and values. Secondly, we have stressed that certain folktales are heavily influenced by the Great Tradition either the Confucian tradition in China or Tibetan Buddhist tradition in Tibet. These traditions tended to have impact on the entire society. At the educated elite level the tradition is written down which is more orthodox, more codified. Nevertheless it is also present in the folk realm. Numerous folktales, some of which we have presented in this study, reflect a lot of themes that are present in the Great Tradition. And in this sense the distinction between the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition is more in matter of erudition and sophistication, in matter of writing or not writing down rather than different in kinds. The moral themes and moral concerns that we see in Chinese society or Tibetan
society are more or less equally reflected. It may be written down, polishedly erudite at the mandarin level. Such moral concerns and moral emphasis are equally present in the folktales at the grassroots level. The gap between the peasant world, nomadic world, and the élite level is bridged by the connecting thread between the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition where we emphasize that the difference is not entirely two different moral worlds. It is the same fabric of morality, same fabric of aesthetics and moral concerns that connect the two.

General characteristics of folk literature made by lot of folklorists, is that the folk tradition or the Little Tradition is oral rather than written down. But in the Chinese case this is not quite true. Several myths, legends and folktales have been written down, edited and compiled by the writers belonging to the Great Tradition. The attention that folk literature has received in China is unusual in other societies in the non-Western world. Folk literature was very much written down before the pre-modern era. And this underlines the fact that in China the gap between the world of mandarins, where the major part of folk literature was written down, and the world of peasants, where folk literature was transmitted orally and underwent constant modification, was very narrow in terms of values because the gap between the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition was bridged by the Chinese much earlier than in any society in Asia. That closes the gap between the Great Tradition and the Little Tradition in China. Therefore, the Chinese cultural identity and social unity might reside in Chinese folk literature whose perennial themes are equally shared at the élite and folk levels.