Chapter Six  

Conclusion/s: Theses in the Thesis 

To begin with an acknowledgement, that the most difficult part in research writing is to write the conclusion/s of the same, is an expression of the research-anxiety that nothing important ought to be left out. In spite of a structure for the research and clearly formulated objectives, and thereby findings, it is difficult to put a succinct conclusion with a few major points. A researcher’s greed to present as much as possible in a conclusion may be misleading, but it also helps in making the conclusions considerably holistic. In this chapter, while the focus is on the objective of drawing clear conclusions, there is also an evident urge to make it holistic enough so as the sub-theses do not get marginalized. Also, there is a thrust to be futuristic about the act of drawing conclusions, as in no conclusion is conclusive, indeed, by presenting the conclusions in a theoretical frame with reference to select preexisting works. In sum, the conclusions presented here, are an invitation for hypothesizing and furthering the research objectives expressed. This again reinforces the view that writing the conclusion of a researched area is only a partial act if not totally out of place. After all, every research opens a window on the issues for future. In spite of this recognition, however, there is a possibility of distilling a few ideas from the whole of work to show the productive outcome, and contribution to the preexisting corpus of knowledge. 

Sub-theses in the Thesis 

With reference to other chapters in this thesis, I would like to recapitulate some of the insights which shed light on the worldview in the Maithili folksongs. Most important is the methodological insights that helped the thesis shape up in the way it is. Besides, these chapter-specific conclusions are also abiding principles in this research work. It leads to perceive the field, therein inhabitants and thereof resources, in a particular manner. Most importantly, the hermeneutic openness toward the worldview, which consists of folk ideas as Dundes (1995) suggested is not merely men's cosmology. It is a cosmology of the folk, across men and women, largely reaffirmed by women in their songs, while men may lipsync to the classical tradition. When it comes to practice, the classical comes in terms with the folk, on a horizontal plane rather than on a hierarchical ladder. In the folklore of Mithila, to borrow Boas' term, we find
‘people’s autobiographical ethnography’ significantly recapitulated by the folk, and staged by the women folk in main. The mythological content of the folklore, especially in Mithila, accords a synchronic character. But then it is not devoid of the diachronic value, and hence it receives the changes of outlook under the influence of the contemporary. Myth is an ongoing speech - geared to here and now. The folk worldview incorporates the here and now effect of myth, along with the centrality of what belongs to the imagined past. So the songs of women, praising Shiva as though he exists in an imagined domain very close to the singer, would use the tune of the latest Bollywood blockbuster; a child will be singing a song from the cassette, she has heard often, depicting the sexuality of a Maithil woman in comparison with the sexual orientation of a mythological icon; or a song will praise Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh (the trinity of gods from the Hindu pantheon) for protecting Bharat (vernacular-popular term for India). Of course, the folk may not be always aware of the mythological implications in these songs, like Dundes suggested ‘we do not see the lens through which we look’. The worldview of the Maithil folk, hence, presents a confusing array of variety in motif and meaning, confounding history/biography and mythology, engagement with the material world and tendency to transcend the same, etc. These are present as ‘life-expressions’, which Dilthey spoke of as stemming form ‘life-experiences’. To understand them, which may appear rational as well as irrational, this research required to go beyond Weber’s ambivalence toward the irrational germs in the actions of social actors. Thus, a perusal of the literature on hermeneutics, of Heidegger, Gadamer, and the Meta-Realism of Roy Bhaskar, with insights from the Upanishad and the Geeta (texts of the Indian tradition), shape up a methodological approach which helped the researcher to undergo a transformation of the self. To know/understand was to Be. In Heidegger’s term it was experiencing the self within Dasein- the Being there and Being in, in Gadamer’s notion it was fusion of horizon, in Bhaskar’s line it was the ontological being situated in the cosmic envelope. In other words, put together with the insights from the philosophical implications of the Upanishads, it was a process of ontologizing understanding. No epistemology is ever complete without understanding the relation with the ontological conditions. Knowledge and Being are essentially in relation and not meaningful without each other. But then, contextualizing the self of the researcher was not meant to obscure the critical view of the local. Thus, in spite of the recognized prejudices of Habermas and Ricoeur, there is a readiness in the self of the researcher to take note of the repression
and forced communication if any. This is what, for heuristic purposes, I intend to call _holistic hermeneutics_ consisting of utmost reflexivity that Giddens proposed stemming from double hermeneutics, whereby the precondition for understanding the folk and their folklore is a qualitative transformation in a researcher. No longer, thus, the researcher is ‘a guest who is a researcher’; it is rather like ‘a villager who is also a researcher’._139_

Placing the researcher in this fashion leads to make sense of the polysamy inherent in the history of the cultural region Mithila. The history of Mithila is bewildering due to its seamless interaction with mythology. The hermeneutic preparation does make a rational mind comfortable with the fact that the term _Mithila_, often projected in the common sense as an eternal category, is a historically evolved one in tandem with fragmented mythological tales. While historians dwell upon the kingship and scholarships in Mithila for historiographic convenience, they often slip into the domain of folklore without recognizing it more often than not. Thus, as a corrective measure, this thesis affirms a sense of validity in the multiple meanings of the categories _Mithila_, _Maithili_ and _Maithil_, so that the hierarchy between the classical texts and the folklore, historiography and mythology, and kingship plus scholarship and the folk ideas replete in folklore, could be transcended. In this background it appears meaningful to find a universe in a village, in southern part of Mithila, often looked down upon by the Maithil of the northern Mithila, where the folk is not yoked by the cultural standards of the elite Brahmans even though there are Brahmans in strength of ownership of movable and immovable property. Secondly, it also helps in invalidating the notions of purity attached to the Maithil way of living and thinking, by showing influences of Buddhism through Tantra, of Kabirpanth, and the preoccupation of the Maithil with philosophy and poetry. Even in the domain of religious practices and belief we get a glimpse of enmeshed elements from Shaivism, Vaishnavism and Shakti, despite the Maithil inclination toward _Gosauni_ (the mother...

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139 This is my humble contribution to the whole of treatises pertaining to the method of _Participant Observation_ in qualitative research. There has been a simplistic understanding of Participant Observation, post-Malinowski and post-Srinivas, which suggested a researcher to spend a year or so in the _Field_ and conduct longitudinal interactions with the respondents/informants. It did not deliberate the complexity of the process implicit in this method. Nobody asked as to why the Nuer were hesitant to answer the questions of E E Evans-Pritchard (1974). The typical refusal of Viramma to give clear meanings of her songs to Racine had to do with the fact that the researchers could not feel, they were however equipped to understand (2005). It is, arguably, due to the researcher’s preoccupation with his/her intellectual self that disables him/her to be the _Being_ of the _Field_. _Participant Observation_ must thus consist of the paradigmatic faith in the felt-knowledge along side the rationally attained knowledge.
goddess) and Shiva (the Nachari songs in praise of Shiva outweighs any other category of devotional songs, as a respondent informed in rough estimation).

With the evident posterity of the folk openness toward the influences of time and structural changes, it is unreflective if Maithili folklore is perceived as pristine and unchanging. Little wonder then, there are number of songs sung by young girls and new brides, also some elderly women, belonging to the cassettes and compact disc, popularized in the age of the mechanical reproduction of art work. The impact of the art-industry, notwithstanding, there is a typical phenomenon in the folk context. It is that all these songs borrowed from the cassettes and compact discs acquire sanctity when they are rendered by the women folk; the borrowed songs also become vehicle of the folk motifs. In other words the aura pertaining to tradition, in particular to mythology, is attached to these songs by the act of regular singing. When a woman sings a song, be it the one she heard on TV, radio, or cassette player, she tends to add a hum of locality and a rhythm of her own context. The folk worldview refashions every song coming from the non-folk sources. At this point it appears so very necessary to correct Dorson who distinguished folk lore from fakelore. It is not far fetched in the context of Maithili folklore, where we find innumerable songs younger singers sing adding sacred aura to fakelore. It is much akin to the folk absorption of the classical and the much known example of it is Vidyapati’s poetry, belonging to the tradition of literate, which are sung by women folk. But then, no absorption is passive in the folk context. Hence, a refashioning of the classical as well as fakelore vis-à-vis the artwork in the age of mechanical reproduction is evident in the songs.

140 See Walter Benjamin (1999) for the details of this notion, which suggests, in short, that when reproduced in mechanically an art work is devoid of aura - the sacred effect of it belonging to tradition. Rituals of tradition are replaced by politics as far as mechanically reproduced art work is concerned. This stance however does not help recognize the re-mythicisation and folklorisation of apparently modern and politically motivated propagations. The singing, and of course feeling of the same thereby, of such songs from cassette and compact discs, rechristens them in the framework of the folk.

141 See the first chapter where the notion of folklore is discussed in the historical context and Dorson would warn against the popular belief that anything sung in the vernacular is folklore. True, everything in vernacular is not folklore. But then there is a higher chance that the folk may reprocess the fakelore and over time it may become folklore, in consonance with folk tradition.

142 Though it can be contested with an argument such as this- all the songs of Vidyapati are not sung by the women of entire Mithila with the same ease and zeal. It is restricted to the bevy of women from Brahman caste, especially of the northern side, where Shrotriya Brahman women also have knowledge of literature. Secondly, all the songs with Vidyapati’s name inserted in the last line of the song are not necessarily written by the poet Vidyapati. Some of these songs were composed anonymously and for authenticity the name of Vidyapati is inserted by the community of singers, or some unknown singer at some time.
can be perceived as a process of **folklorisation** and **re-mythicisation** of the songs and musical notes which were thus far restricted to the factory of popular culture. These songs also appeal to the emotional content of the social structure of the folk, as the singers and listeners revel in their tune indiscriminately.

In spite of these features of Maithili folklore, there is an explicit thread of mythology running through the songs and making them nearly eternal. Loaded with mythological motifs and references to sacred icons these songs convince the folk of the immortal nature of the folk ideas present in them. As though they were the words descending upon them from some higher domain, these songs hence assume religious significance. Religio-social structure consists of these songs revealing the conscious and unconscious of the Maithil society, in which relationship with the divine appears as yet another form of relationship, facilitating dialogues and forging intimate cosmic connections. It is important to note in this regard that the folk do not distinguish between malevolent and benevolent mother goddess as two opposite principles, and worship both the forms of the goddess as though they were the manifestation of the same entity.143 Not only this, the visualization of Shiva is also a rebuttal to the classical notion attached to the lord of destruction. In these songs Shiva is a romantic lover, a naughty child, a generous father and so on. He is despised and He is adored at once; He is feared and He is beseeched at once.

In the middle of these songs, the folk comprehend life and death, with a view that presents a blending of religious sacred and social mundane. In this context, under the socio-cultural ambience filled with songs and singers, evolves the practice of **art of dying** anchored by **emotional truthfulness**, shaping **folk philosophy**, which have been already discussed in the preceding chapter. To move to the next section, it is imperative to pay attention to the category of tradition emerging from the folk context, and which warrants a reflection on the similar category present in other works.

The folk, thus, locate themselves at the interjection of the contemporary and the orally continued past, through their songs/lore. It is important to understand the meanings

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143 It is a counter argument to Wadley (1988) and Gatewood (1985) who would propose the distinction between the malevolent and benevolent goddess as an absolute. Gatewood suggested to the extent that the malevolent goddess has stronghold amongst the lower caste group while the upper caste worships the benevolent-consort goddesses.
emerging from the folk tradition beyond the conceptual categories bifurcating
tradition, as well as the broader categories of tradition and modernity. In the following
sections there is a debate on the current categories in the light of the folk wisdom and
an attempt at understanding as to how they delimit the understanding of the tradition.
Also, it would take a little radical departure from the conventional standpoint, in
suggesting that the folk knowledge/ideas belonging to folk philosophy warrants a
readiness to go beyond the binaries. As the following sections would help us
understand, that the utility of binaries is for the analytical convenience of modern
thinkers. This indeed helped in understanding social reality, though also caused
certain misleading tendencies. In the framework of modernity, the early sociology
engaged with the issue of social order, while echoing the fear of disorder. The grand
narrative based classifications have to be amended in the light of the folk philosophy.

**Folk tradition: neither Little nor Great**

Tradition acquires a meaning beyond the categories of the Little and the Great
traditions of India. While the folk religiosity consists of the cognitive categories of the
Sanskritik-textual Hinduism, it is imperative to note the distinction of the folk religion
without resorting to the binary oppositions. For, as Singer (1975) himself suggested
that structure of tradition, the meaning of civilization, is a process as well as product.
If it is process, it has a possibility of becoming, and in the context of the folk
‘tradition’ becomes an entity too large to be configured through the categories of
Little and great tradition. In other words, the folk is not a replica of the classical, the
little tradition is not a mere receiver of the norms, rituals, edicts trickling down from
the great tradition. This is why Rajbali Pandey argues, “...the Samskar (sacraments),
mostly being domestic rites and ceremonies, were based more on precedent and
popular traditional usages than on any definite written code” (1969: 1). So, even those
approaches in which sacramental rites are central ‘ought to be’ comprehended without
letting the coded rules of the texts become determinant. Mostly sacraments are folksy
in prime. Little wonder then that the texts do not offer help in enacting sacraments in
totality. The ancient classical texts of the Hindus describe ‘what to do’ and ‘why to
do’ in order to remain within Dharma and perform karma. It is however due to the
folk philosophy, that we get to know ‘how to do’, and because means entails ends the
whole array of issues is refashioned. Thus ‘how to do’ determines ‘what to do’ and
‘why to do’. For example, a priest would send a message by speaking aloud toward
women of the household that now we need to do *Kanyadaan*, and women of the household would be ready with the wherewithal for the rituals, along with the necessary songs. The folk philosophy determines the enactment and implementation of the textual inscriptions. It nevertheless does not rule out the authority of the textual-classical-Brahmanic authority. Thus, inhere emerges a novel face of the most confusing religion that is Hinduism\(^{144}\). Acknowledging this very paradoxical relation, beyond the binaries, Veena Das notes, “it was Srinivas who insisted that the religion of the peasant was as integral a part of Hinduism as the scriptures. His distinction between Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic Hinduism stressed the fact that Hinduism also existed outside the Sanskrit texts. However posing this dichotomy Srinivas failed to see that both worked with common structural categories so that the religion of the illiterate peasant might constitute the structural transformation of the religion of the sophisticated literati” (1987: 5).

Yes, the non-Sanskritic Hinduism of the peasant, or enlarging the category of the peasant into the folk, is very much in interaction with the Sanskritic Hinduism. But many of these scholars, contributing into the aspired ethno-sociology failed to underline the autonomy and dominance of the non-Sanskritic in the folk conscience. In other words, it is inability to notice the predominance of everyday life, thereof logic and practice, and the resonance of the same in the spectacular ritual events. Hence, for Das rites and rituals, elaborating the cognitive categories in the structure of Hindu society, come from the *Purana*, and thereby an ominous classification of domestic rituals and public rituals appear\(^{145}\). But we have noticed that the extreme form of separation in the form of death or otherwise has women singing or sobbing (or ritual weeping/mourning). Beyond rituals, if we ponder upon the folk philosophy we notice the engagement with the idea of death intricately related to the events of life. On all those relatively benign occasions in life when an individual receives the sense of death, by narrowly escaping the occurrence of death, seldom marked by any ritual, the feeling of everydayness of death becomes tangible. Or as in the context of Maithil folk, every morning when the men and women sing the songs of devotional kind, they have an imagination of ending beyond the metaphors and idioms of a gala

\(^{144}\) See, for details on Hinduism, Srinivas and Shah (1968).

\(^{145}\) Das argues that there is a distinction between the domestic rituals and public rituals. Rituals on the occasion of birth, initiation, marriage and for propitiation of the ancestors are domestic rituals involving women. Rituals for death are not part of domestic ritual and the domestic groups are kept at bay in the performance of them.
ritual event. These details of everyday experiences are conspicuous by absence when sociologists classify the tradition into great or little. Then there is certainly an assumed hierarchy that determines the scholars of ethno-sociology, to be corrected and reformulated.

No wonder then, following Redfield and Singer, McKim Marriott uses the notions of Little and Great Tradition to propound the process of Universalization and Parochialisation. It is in the hierarchical scheme that movement of festivals and deities, upward as well as downward, occurs in a village society. Thus, Parochialisation is “a process of localization, of limitation upon the scope of intelligibility, of deprivation of literary form, of reduction to less systematic and less reflective dimensions. The process of Parochialisation constitutes the characteristic creative work of little communities within India's indigenous civilization” (1967: 200).

The creativity, the transformational feature in the little community, notwithstanding, there are problems pertaining to the implicit hierarchy of the traditional components. It disables to perceive the processes happening at a rather horizontal plane, where the folk worldview, the non-Sanskritic Hinduism in amicable relation with the Sanskrit one, dominates the practices and articulation of the folk. With reference to the songs presented in this research it is not far from comprehension that literary elements vis-à-vis metaphors, meanings muddled with feelings and systematization of thought without compromising on the complex ambiguities, are present in the folk categories.

Hence the whole approach of the proposed ethno-sociology, that emulates the methods of positivistic science, has to be understood afresh and refashioned. In principle, as Marriott writes, ethno-social science requires, “building from the culture’s natural categories a general system of concepts that can be formally defined in relation to each other; it requires developing words and measures that can be used rigorously for description, analysis and explanation within that culture; and it especially requires developing deductive strategies that can generate hypothesis for empirical tests in order that the science may criticize itself and grow. It requires doing all this in terms that will be analytically powerful enough to define all the major parameters of living in that culture without violating the culture’s ontology, its
presuppositions, or its epistemology” (1990: 4)\textsuperscript{146}. But it is evident in the list of the conceptual categories as well as the formulation of the processes Universalisation and Parochialisation, pertaining to Indian tradition, Marriott has compromised on ontological structure of traditional society of India, while delving into only textual- Sanskritic epistemology. For the ontological aspect of Indian society has to reckon with the totality of epistemology. In other words, the indigenous knowledge system belongs to the domain of living, praxis and doing rather than what is inscribed in the texts. The articulation in the everyday life as well as on the occasion of rites and rituals are more expressive of the\textit{ ontologised epistemology}. To put it simply, nobody would turn to the text in the emotionally moving situations whereby one has to just be spontaneous and respond: nobody knows the scriptures for crying. It is inhere that the opposition between meaning and feeling, rational and emotional, as well as great tradition and little tradition is resolved. In the folk philosophy of Mithila, as culled out from the songs, we notice that meaning and feeling are enmeshed. To understand it one has to become what the folk are, unless a simplistic reliance on the textual tradition is the goal. They sing the folk feelings \textit{vis-à-vis} aspirations, constraints and possibilities. Their songs contain the subtlest metaphorical-literary contents as well as the bluntest usages. They are systematic without compromising on the felt ambivalence and ambiguities. Then, perhaps, Marriott is wrong along with Redfield and Singer, that it is the handiwork of the ‘unreflective many’ in the little tradition. The folk are rather ‘reflective many’ in an oral/folk tradition.

At last, I would like to get back to the Kannad folktale, borrowed from Ramanujan, with which the introductory chapter of this thesis begins. The elderly woman looking for the key in the streetlight, though she lost it in the dark room, is a personification of the researcher who tries to understand the meaning at the cross section of the classical and the folk. The folk wisdom in it suggests, to blur the distinctions that the tradition is subjected to in the sociological analyses. Also, it has to be justified because tradition is viewed as the process as well as the product, to settle with a lesson form Milton Singer. In the same vein we need to evaluate the distinction between the categories of

\textsuperscript{146} McKim Marriott propounds the idea of ethno-social science on the pretext of the incompatibility of the theoretical-conceptual categories developed in the western context as far as understanding the Indian socio-cultural context is concerned. The dichotomies of Parsonsian theory, for example, cannot help explain the Indian phenomenon. But then, ethno-social science is nothing more than a mere replica of the positivistic science when it comes to conceptualization and comprehension of the social reality, and hence it is restricted to the categories belonging to the classical-textual tradition of India, as it appears in the enlisted categories presented by Marriott.
tradition and modernity in the light of the folk wisdom. The latter points to a state of being that is debatably beyond these conceptual distinctions. Neither tradition based approach, as discussed in the foregone section, nor the modernity approach divulges the intricacies of the folk wisdom.

**Beyond Tradition and Modernity**

The project of modernity as manifest in early Sociology bred the binaries for analytical convenience. But then, it could not see the possibility of what can be termed ‘contextual modernity’ mashed with tradition (Pathak 1998). Within the format of tradition itself there emerged critical voices, from the Lokayat, the Jatakas, to the medieval poets, to the modern Indian social thinkers. It sheds ample light on the possibilities with the tradtion. With the rise of modern social sciences, the Enlightenment agenda and engagement with values of modernity, fortified the binaries. The categories of tradition and modernity have helped the sociological analysis in understanding society in a particular manner. But then, the distinction also limits the possibility of understanding. The most debilitating is the inherent assumption of the sharp difference between the categories, as though tradition does not exist in the realm of modern or vice-versa. And if there is any evidence of tradition in the vast literature, it is only in the form of undecidable anachronism. Tradition thus appears to be a moribund system fraught with superstitions and antithetical to the idea of emancipation. Thus one view would present the idea of mistaken modernity and would criticize the remnant of past. There is no attitude to rule out the validity of multiple discourses, likt the Dalit and the feminist, questioning the traditional social structure. But then, all that belongs to tradition is not anathema, has been realised even within the fold of traditional knowledge system. Also, all the instances of violent expressions inthe garb of religiosity have been attributed to the unwanted thing called tradition. Anybody flashing religious temperament, or claiming to be religious, would be doubted for potential social hazards. Especially in a world, which aspires to be called global, and yet maintains the modern notion of nationality, would treat anything non-secular as pertaining to religion as a threat to modern notion of order. This route often seeks for more rational and thereby liberating modernity in Habermassian fashion, responding to the post-modern challenge. A similar urge is inherent in the idea of reflexive modernity, as an answer to the critique of Enlightenment agenda with which modernity emerged at the advent of nineteenth
century. Yes, these are the responses to the ambiguity of modernity, which was the focal in the works of the classical sociologists. Marx, Weber and Durkheim were all dealing with the possibilities and constraints in the modern milieu. They all expressed optimism and pessimism vis-à-vis modern industrialized society. But then, they did not realize any significance of narratives that was beyond the pale of their scientific-objective social science. Actually, it were those so-called non-scientific narratives of the people/the folk that contains the answer to the pessimism of the modernity. Interestingly, these narratives were never non-existent, neither in traditional nor in modern society. Neither in the social world which, has been perceived by the social scientists as guided by the classical texts, nor in the social world that has been established to be secular, democratic and individual-centric, that the folk have been without their rationale and logics. It was clearly evident in Srinivas' example of the bulldozer driver in Rampura, as he suggested that westernization does not cancel out the possible existence of the values and practices belonging to the past. It is in this background it makes sense when the critiques of modernity would stress on the idea of knowledge being contextual. Thus the traditional knowledge intervening the modern lives assumes significance. We may call that set of knowledge as traditional for our intellectual convenience. But, the moot question is whether traditional is unalloyed by the contemporary. If traditional were purely/merely a remnant of past, it would not have presented the forms of hybrid/kitsch. Yes, there are multiple instances of the phenomenon called cultural schizophrenia as the characters of modern times would vacillate between the modern and the traditional. But then, there are also evident comfort with the values of tradition and modernity especially when it is looked for in the realm of everyday practices. When an elderly woman sings a song of unknown origin in tune with a very well known filmi- song, we know it is not anything hybrid/kitsch. We know that a child in the village reveling in tune with a peppy song does not suffer from cultural schizophrenia tearing him/her apart. Such songs and their rendition also do not refer to resurrection of tradition in the modern times. In simple words, it only means that certain folk ideas travel across time and space, utilizing any available means for expression, irrespective of the categories of tradition and modern. Therefore, in spite of influences of the values of modernity, some from the lot of midnight's children in India, at the dawn of decolonization, advocated and practiced the philosophical tenets from the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the epic poetry of the Ramayana, the Mahabharat and the Geeta. It, therefore, makes
sense when we believe that the folk is not a category specific to time and space. Had it been so, all the music composers of the world's largest cinema industry, the Bollywood, would not have been on a look out for a folk tune. In fact, there is a need to research into the possibility of the newly emerging category of *the global folk*, in the light of the popularity that Paul the clairvoyant octopus, assumed during the FIFA World Cup - 2010 in South Africa. After all, this kind of belief has been always considered folksy. The point made here is that folk has been existent beyond the limits of the categories of tradition, modernity, global and hybrid. The ideational values of the, is not restricted to the conceptual categories that were thrashed in the delimited framework of grand narratives.

By the virtue of the preoccupation with the binaries, the sociological and social-anthropological analyses have also been fomenting debatable ideas about life and death. While there is a celebration of progress and a quest for redemption in modern world, there is also an over-arching sense of pessimism in the face of the structural constraints. As though there are no alternative ways of living and dying, there is a notion of *anomie*, an idea of *alienation*, and a catchphrase of *iron cage of rationality*. There is however no denial of the dominance of the modern-scientific-techno rational ways governing the humanity. Hence, we find the the sociological reflections on life and death offering us nothing more than pessimism about it. In the same fashion, it can be also argued that most of the discourse in the literature of social anthropology, on the practices related to death, is geared to understand the dynamics between order and disorder in society. Yes, the modern worldview considers the any such disruptive event as a crippling thing for social harmony. Let alone understanding the comfortable social imagination of living and dying in continuum, the dominance of modern values have reduced the phenomenon of dying either as an exotic event of past or painful experience of modern individuals, in the social science literatures. It is more so in the age of *homelessness* whereby relation with the cosmic is weakened. In the age of epistemologically guided secularism, it is almost impossible to fathom the negotiations with ontological issues. The existential domain is characterised by a daunting risk-profile, and anxieties pertaining to uncertainty rules the roost. No doubt, death appears only in the way our medical establishment would like us to believe. Hence, death is an anathema in public and thus squeezed in to the private domain. Hence, dying is a lonely experience for the modern. No wonder there is a flourishing
industry, with a large clientele, selling the sense of security - as if a medically insured death is a better death. Those who cannot afford to get admitted to a swanky privately run hospital, or those who have to be content with the tardy pace of treatment in the premier government medical institutions, have to die with the notions of condemnation, that they did not deserve to die in the insulated zones of the Intensive Care Unit. The latter has superseded any Benaras or any Gaya. The larger socio-economic structure fosters the medicalised notions of living and dying. The same logic that operates at the level of consumption becomes operational at the junctures of life and death. Be it the birth of the baby, sending the baby to the pre-school and then school, wedding of the grown up youth, and then dying - the range of life-events entail the force of consumerism. Every occasion of celebration is defined by consumerist abilities. Thus, only certain kinds of living and dying are standard. It is in the same vein that the godmen, spiritual-gurus, and fearful submission to diverse gods also make sense. In a desperate mode of seeking for support, individuals of our times unquestionably submit to all kinds of constructs. It is also in manner of consumption - as though seeking for a somewhat packaged salvation in the shopping mall. The most meritorious is one who can consume the best and thus the fittest to die a good death. It is indeed adequate enough to trigger a deep pessimism in the minds of analysts, especially if the analyses are restricted to the categories of tradition and modernity. Hence, the necessity is to think beyond the binaries, of little tradition and great tradition, of tradition and modernity, and look at how the folk - literate as well as not so literate - conduct themselves. For, within the same structure of economic-medical we also behold the scenes of graceful death in spite of suffering and we also hear the sound of melody in the heart- ranting mourning. In the hospital set up, when a terminally ill patient is let known the incipient ending, s/he starts chanting *Mahamrtunjaya mantra*\(^{147}\). Another sight in hospitals in those wards where the terminally ill patients await their ending is of the kith and kin surrounding the ailing person and reading out the verses from the Gāeeta, the Koran or the Bible (as per one’s religion)\(^{148}\). It instantly conveys the refutation of the medical-scientific understanding of the body and the events of life that the body is subject to. Curiously,

\(^{147}\) The Mantra is known for liberating the sufferer from the limbo of uncertainty in illness and assures him/her either death or good health. The mantra reads OM TRAYAMBARAM YAJAMAHESUGANDHIH PUSHTIVARUHANAM OORWAWIK BANDHINAT MRITYOMUKSHIYAMAMRITAT.

\(^{148}\) In this regard the example of the hospice movement in the West credits attention. See for details on the success and failures of the hospice Clark (1993).
while doctors judge the state of a patient’s being by reading the test-reports, the dying
testifies his/her state more intuitively. Another common instance is that doctors too
begin to wait for the divine interventions along with the related of the patients, more
in small towns than in mega cities of course. What would be more substantiating than
the evidences of people’s quest of alternatives, to the standard ways of living, educating, celebrating, marrying, dying etc. Arguably, the reason why we search for a
systematic critique of our (dominant) ways of doing in the lectures of a yoga-guru, in
the speeches of political leadership, in the meditative reflections of a university
scholar, in the columns of newspapers - is precisely the sense that there is some amiss
somewhere. Yes, in the midst of mindless consumerism and vying soap-sellers we do
seek for an answer to the questions we have been posing to the status quo of our
practices. The intersecting worldviews do not know the boundaries of traditional and
modern. The power of self is invoked irrespective of the milieus; the means of
invocation may change however the goal remains the same. In the final analysis, the
social action is prone to the fluid ideology unlike that of science. The dynamics of
everyday life, practices and relationships disclose the folk tendencies. Yes, we seek
for amending our every day world and we resort to some of the ideas, which have
travelled across time and space. Those are our folk ideas, belonging to folk
philosophy, presenting to us the notions of emotional truthfulness and the art of
dying which happen to be of central significance in this thesis. Yes, it is that
transcendental urge innate in humanity, that invokes the Nachiketa- attributes in
every being, irrespective of the historical milieu.

In this light, it is imperative of the sociological studies to understand the worldview
of the folk in rural, urban, semi-urban or rurban contexts, in a way that can do justice
to the experience of every day reality. Also, the sociological and anthropological
researches have to be geared toward the folk that transforms everything, from textual-
classical to scientific-secular to the popular, into a congruent aspect of the folk
worldview. It would indeed require thinking beyond the binaries.

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149 See for the Nachiketa-tendency, the preface of this thesis. In short, this is to suggest that the quest
that guided the character Nachiketa in the Kathopanishad, happens to guide us in any time and space.