CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Jean L. Mercier in his book, *Being Human* (1998), writes that the human person is a conscious being in the world. Our humanity is never a finished product for we are sojourners in this world. We have an aim to pursue in freedom, which never ends in this world. We are free persons not for nothing but for a purpose (1998, 62-63).

Abrams’ understanding of the term “folklore” implies the sayings, verbal compositions, and social rituals that are handed down mostly orally and not necessarily in written form. Therefore, folklore includes legends, superstitions, songs, tales, proverbs, riddles, spells, and the like. Morrison, on the other hand, said that all societies have a history and all history begins as oral. Presently it offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history. With complete reliance on the written document, the paradigm of history becomes inevitably a prisoner of the idiosyncratic written testimony that has been created to survive.

Historians claim that history is an ongoing process which involves a dialogue between the present and the past in order
to understand the future. Hence, when one of the elements is presented falsely, it automatically affects all. Folk narratives include many other categories of oral lore which has its own manifold distinctions like myth, fairy tale or *marchen*, romantic tale or novella, religious tale, folktale, legend, animal tale, anecdote, joke, numskull tale etc. Besides, proverbs and riddles are also important parts of oral literature.

The religious aspect of social folk customs in India is multidimensional and highly complex. Many tribal groups do not maintain close contacts with the firmly established mainstream religious practices but the maintenance of indigenous modes of worship have been preserved carefully. The *human* element in narrative is important. We can say here that narrative must have a *human* agent who must do something, or something must be done to him or her. The *human* factor can be regarded as a *paradigmatic core feature* of the narrative.

Klaus Roth summarized that narratives play a role in and for intercultural communication by (i) the representation of a culture, (ii) revelation of the image of other cultures, (iii) playing a role in the actual communicative acts between people from different cultures, (iv) using it for the communication of cultural contacts and conflicts, and (v) playing a role in the teaching of intercultural competence (Klaus Roth, 118).
One of the basic purposes of narrative is to entertain, to gain and hold a readers' interest. As far as development or modernization is concerned, the A·chik society has largely remained traditional rather than 'modern'. The common A·chik folk have retained the century old intimacy with their tribal life-world.

The A·chiks are very religious and god-fearing people. They believe that all physical ailments, accidents and unnatural deaths are due to the wrath of one or the other malevolent spirits. Therefore, sacrifices of animals and birds must be offered to the deities to appease them as well as to invoke their blessings (Milton Sangma, 1981, 233). It is noteworthy that the indispensable function which myths fulfill in primitive cultures is to express, enhance and codify belief, to safeguard and enforce morality to vouch for the efficiency of the ritual and to contain practical rules for the guidance of man. Thus myth is a force that helps to maintain society itself; therefore, myth and religion as a whole continue to play an important part in social life.

The etymology of the word “mythology” comes from the Greek word mythologia, meaning "a story-telling, a legendary lore". Myths are often foundational. They are key narratives associated with religions as well. A myth is a narrative of events. It has a sacred quality and the sacred communication is made in symbolic form. The myth of concern comprises everything that a
society is most concerned to know. Frye is of the opinion that a myth of concern has its roots in religion and only later branches out into politics, law and literature. It is inherently traditional and conservative, placing a strong emphasis on values of coherence and continuity. Schorer opined that myths were the instruments by which we continually struggle to make our experience intelligible to ourselves. Wheelwright explains how myth is the expression of a profound sense of togetherness of feeling and of action and of wholeness of living. In other words, myths never remain static, as they are continually retold and re-written; and in this process they are constantly modulated and transformed.

Malinowski explains how myth is a vital ingredient of human civilization; it is not an ideal tale, but an active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom (1976, 785).

Campbell, however, in *The Power of Myth*, (1991) identifies four functions of myth. For according to him the first is the mythical function which makes one to realize the great mysteries of the universe. The second is a cosmological dimension, the dimension with which science is concerned – shows the shape of the universe. The third function is the sociological one – supporting and validating a certain social order and the fourth function is pedagogical that is how to live a human lifetime under any
circumstances (Campbell, et al., 1991). Myths are not the same as fables, legends, folktales, fairy tales, anecdotes or fiction, but the concepts may overlap. Notably, during Romanticism, famously said by the Brothers Grimm and Elias Lönnrot, folktales and fairy tales were perceived as eroded fragments of earlier mythology. Mythological themes are also very often consciously employed in literature, beginning with Homer.

The word "myth" may mean "sacred story", "traditional story", or "story involving gods", but it does not mean "false story". Therefore, many scholars refer to a religion's stories as "myths" without intending to offend members of that religion. Religion begins with a sense of wonder and awe and the attempt to tell stories that will connect us to God. Then it becomes a set of theological works in which everything is reduced to a code, to a creed. Religion turns poetry to prose (Campbell, et al., 1991, 173-74). Nevertheless; this scholarly use of the word "myth" may cause misunderstanding and offend people who cherish those myths. This is because word "myth" is popularly used to mean "falsehood". Many myths, such as ritual myths, are clearly part of religion. However, unless we simply define myths as "sacred stories", not all myths are necessarily religious.

It may be concluded therefore that the formation of myth is subject to certain laws and not due to an arbitrary exercise
of the imagination. When history is telescoped into myth, the myth-maker always has the objective of bringing out certain features deeply characteristic of human behaviour. The myth-maker feels free to select his facts from a wide sphere; he is not concerned with the literal truth of his story; but with linking facts chosen from a vast field of events into a significant whole, a concrete universal story.

It is a concrete story about certain people with definite names and about certain events in definite places. But it is a universal story in that it portrays the most universal patterns of human life, such as motherhood, fatherhood, elemental envy or devotion.

Although there is no specific universal myth, there are many themes and motifs that recur in the myths of various cultures and ages. Some cultures have myths of the creation of the world; these range from a god fashioning the earth from abstract chaos to a specific animal creating it from a handful of mud. Certain other cultures were concerned with longer periods of vegetative death through prolonged drought. Myths treating the origin of fire, or its retrieval from some being who has stolen it or refused to share it; the millennium to come; and the dead or the relation between the living and the dead, are common.

Archetypes, on the other hand, are elementary ideas, what could be called “ground” ideas. Jung spoke of these ideas as
archetype of the unconscious which implies that it comes from below and is biologically grounded (see Campbell, et al., 1991, 60-61).

Archetypes form a dynamic substratum common to all humanity, upon the foundation of which each individual builds his own experience of life, developing a unique array of psychological characteristics. Archetype has its sources in anthropology and in Jungian theory. An archetype is the first real example or prototype of something. In this sense an archetype can be considered the ideal model, the supreme type or the perfect image of something.

Archetypes determine the form of imagery, rather than content. They are inferred from the vast range of concrete images and symbols found in mythologies, religions, dreams and art across history and space. An archetype appears in myths, but can also be seen its thematic or figurative dimension in literature, involving exile, rebirth, earth, goddess etc.

All the most powerful ideas in history go back to archetypes. This is particularly true of religious ideas, but the central concepts of science, philosophy, and ethics are no exception to this rule. In their present form they are variants of archetypal ideas created by consciously applying and adapting these ideas to reality. For it is the function of consciousness not only to recognize
and assimilate the external world through the gateway of the senses, but also to translate the world within us into visible reality.

There are so many elements and patterns which form the narrative of the folk literature of the A·chiks. Most of these narratives are in oral form and they continue to survive down the generations being alive only through oral renditions and community memories. Interestingly, these narratives have significantly shaped and governed the cultural consciousness of the A·chiks. The A·chiks, being a community with intimate proximity to nature and its mystical manifestations, invented a rich heritage of folklore and narratives by aligning the mystical as well as the innocent and the experiential comprehension of their immediate reality into the folk narratives that matured with time into abiding community beliefs.

Various aspects of the A·chik tradition that have rich and diverse cultural heritage are reflected in the folk narratives of “Krita–amua”, “Dani”, “Ajea”, “Grapmangtata”, “Kabe”, “Grapmikchi”, “Doroa”, “Do·sia”, “Katta Agana”, Salling or Katta Salling etc.

For the A·chiks Folk Songs like Nanggore are intrinsic and inseparable parts of culture. Marked with diversity and versatility in composition and melody, songs remain ingrained in the day to day life of the A·chiks.
Myths and archetypes, in fact, form an essential part of the folklore of the A·chiks. The A·chiks have developed a rich storehouse of folklore. A·chik myths and archetypes are those connected with rivers and the physical features of the lands they settled in. Archetypes occur in different times and places in myth, literature, folklore and rituals. They have woven myths and archetypes around mystic and mysterious physical phenomena like that of the rivers, clouds, the thunder, lightning, the sun and stars, the hills and other natural formations to give plausible and imaginative explanations of their origin and existence, adding more mystery to them in the process. An element of reverence and fear can be traced in those myths. Myths make a large part of the thematic content of their oral narratives and poetry. Myths serve to explain the intentions and actions of supernatural beings. Most myths are concerned with religion, which involve rituals and prescribed forms of sacred ceremonies. Some of the recurring myths that have a strong presence in the cultural narratives of the A·chiks are associated with places like Balpakram, with rivers like Songdu (Brahmaputra) like Dura A·bri, Rangira, with spirits, with mountains, with ideas of reincarnations, the whirlpools as in Tematchi Wari (in River Ildek), Mrik Wari (in River Simsang), Dombe Wari and many more.

Psychoanalyst Carl Jung, in Archetypes and the Collective Unconsciousness (1968), illustrates the four types of
archetypes. They are (i) mother archetypes, (ii) forms relating to rebirth, (iii) spirits and (iv) trickster figures. These archetypes of Jung can be traced in *A·chik* folk narratives.

It is found that the mother archetype appears under an almost infinite variety of aspects. Mythology offers many variations of the mother archetype. Besides, the river forms a major theme in *A·chik* folk narrative mostly symbolizing fertility as well as motherhood. The Rivers are also shown as enduring symbols of the passage of time. It also highlights the conception of a river as the source of the origin, evolution and growth of human civilization.

Garo Hills is blessed with rivers, lakes and streams making the land fertile the naturally available items of food are found in abundance. In the early days people never went hungry because they knew how to use nature and live with it. Abundant flora and fauna adorned the entire hills and mountains of Garo Hills and the people living therein (Julius Marak, 2004, 154). Earlier *A·chik* villages were located near some stream or waterfalls.

The present study shows as to how the concept of rebirth forms the second category of archetype in *A·chik* tradition and that it has various aspects, which is not always used in the same sense. Jung enumerates mainly the following different forms of rebirth namely: Metempsychosis or transmigration of souls; Reincarnations; Rebirth (Renovatio) and Transformation.
In *Balpakram: The Land of the Spirits*, Julius R. Marak affirms that the *A∙chiks* have a strong belief in the Kingdom of God. The *A∙chiks* believed that in *Chitmang* Hill lived a god almighty who was the giver of human lives. Metempsychosis or transmigration of souls indicates that one’s life is prolonged in time by passing through different bodily existences or from another point of view, it is a life-sequence interrupted by different reincarnations. Similarly, the *A∙chiks* too believe in the transmigration of souls. Reincarnation as a concept of rebirth necessarily implies the continuity of a personality. Here the human personality is regarded as continuous and accessible to memory so that when one is re-incarnated or born, one is able, at least potentially; to remember that one has lived through previous existences and these existences were one’s own i.e. they had the same ego-form as the present life. The phenomenology of the spirit in fairytales involves the third category of Jungian archetype, that is, transformation.

The *A∙chiks* believe in the existence of a Supreme Deity who is sometimes identified as *Tatara Rabuga*. He is the greatest of all the deities and spirits of the *A∙chik* pantheon. It is also interesting to note that the trickster plays an important role in *A∙chik* tradition. The trickster is an object of study in mythology, religion, anthropology, psychology, and recently in film as well. The trickster is a divinity or semi-divine creature that pops up in almost every mythology or folklore of the world. It is the god of the
crossroads, or of trade, of mischief, the physical representation of randomness, and an agent of chaos.

II

However, the traditional *A·chik* culture is in the process of constant transformation. The rise and spread of the T.V. phenomenon in India has been very fast. It has made a strong impact on Indian society and mass culture. The T.V. advertising is another area in which folklore metaphors, symbols, designs, motifs, and ideas are transformed to popularize or boost the modern industrial products, and as such become an important part of mass culture. The impact of popular media in *A·chik* society provides a potential area of further research engagement.

Indian folklorists have traditionally been searching for folk elements in modern cultural expressions like literature, painting, and art for instance. But they have not yet tried their tools on other kind of contemporary expressions such as films, advertisement, mass media, folk speech, particularly slang, commercial products and other forms of Indian mass culture (Handoo, 2000, 216).

Technological innovations have radically changed our lives and it could be looked upon as a gift to mankind from god or at least as divine. Folk narratives show that new technology has very
often been understood as an extension of pre-technological culture. Modernization, new technology and innovations gave rise to new folklore and new traditions. Mass Media, for example, was at first seen as destroying the “purity” of folklore and oral tradition, but it was soon realized that mass media in fact was becoming a new carrier of folklore and oral tradition. The mass entertainment industry did not become a one way communication, but broadened the horizons of folklore and oral tradition in the modern times.

The study of folklore in contemporary society ought to include the relations of folklore and mass media on different levels and in various ways. Folklore is a dynamic component of culture which functions adaptively in situations of rapid cultural change.

Folklore and tradition have always implied change and continuity. According to Gary Alan Fine, “Folklorists should treasure the proverb that ‘The more things change, the more things remain the same’” (Fine, Gary Alan, 1985, 41: 7). The “modernization” of the societies led many scholars to believe that “folklore was dying or would die out very soon. And in fact some genres did disappear from oral tradition due to the impact of the modernization, but they continued to live on in the other forms of modern media” (Handoo, et al, 1999, 1-7). “Television”, writes Gary Alan Fine, “has apparently changed the temporal boundaries of
entertainment, possibly more than it has altered the content of the stories” (Fine, Gary Alan, 1985:8).

Folklore as a discipline at the end of the millennium faces new challenges. All disciplines are challenged from time to time to accommodate new knowledge, new ideas and new theories for new needs and even new functions of the discipline and to discard what had become obsolete and irrelevant. These challenges in fact revitalize disciplines and there are no permanent frameworks or permanent theories or methods in any dynamic discipline. J.G. Frazer as early as 1935 explained this phenomenon very appropriately:

A superstructure theory is always transitory, being constantly superseded by fresh theories which make nearer and nearer approaches to the truth without ever reaching it. On the shore of the great ocean of reality men are perpetually building theoretical castles of sand, which are perpetually being washed away by the rising tide of knowledge... (Frazer, 1935, viii)

Works cited


