CHAPTER 3

Towards Defining A Narrative
The study of folklore has always been a matter of critical discussion. Analytical review is very essential to develop it into a scientific method. It is perhaps possible to isolate the structural segments and taxonomical components with the help of modern narratology.

Narratology is a scientific analysis of narrative. It is narrative-related system of rules, which can explain all kinds of narratives. Narratology bears the tradition of French structuralism, which examines narrative texts as rule-governed. It shows a tendency to isolate the necessary and optional components of specific narrative texts. These elements (necessary and optional) are articulated in narrative texts.

Narratology has three basic components:

(i) Narrated (story)

(ii) Medium through it is narrated (cinema, comic strip etc.)

(iii) How it is narrated (discourse).

The first one is fixed while the other two are variable.

What is striking is that narratives are expressed in multifarious mediums i.e. in the 'oral and written language (in
prose or verse), but also in sign languages, still or moving pictures (as in narrative paintings, stained-glass windows or film), gestures (programmatic), music or a combination of vehicles (as in comic strips). Besides this a novel can be changed into screen; a comic strip may be converted into a pantomime and a folktale may be transformed into a ballet. This signifies that narratives can be presented in terms of variable types of medium.

In *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*, Steven Cohan and Linda M. Shires try to explain that our civilization is based on various kinds of narratives and in great numbers i.e. short stories, television programmes, music videos, essays, advertisements etc. and all of them tell a story. Therefore language is responsible as the medium of story telling. Lewis Caroll’s famous work *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* enchants the people because of its brilliance of language. But the fact is that the use of language in the wonderland turns Alice’s adventures into linguistic misadventures. Phonetic errors such as “tail” and “tale”, “not” and “knot”, “fig” and “pig” blur the differences and cause disagreement. Ferdinand de Saussure asserted
that, "language is a system of signs". He pointed out "the linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image". (Saussure 1966:66). Saussure propounded that, "semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them." The study of all kinds of sign systems is called 'semiotics' having connection between speech and language. For example, on a traffic signal, the sign in the red light itself, the signifier is the colour red and signified is the order stop.

Tzvetan Todorov points out that, "An 'ideal' narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical" (Todorov 1977:111). The occurrences in a story never only 'simply happen' in a systematic process but always constructed paradigmatically. Steven Cohen and Linda M. Shires explain that "from the vantage point of a completed sequence, events function either as kernels or as satellites. Kernel events raise possibilities of succeeding or alternative events – what
we can call, taking the term rather literally, 'eventuality'. They initiate, increase or conclude an uncertainty; so they advance or outline a sequence of transformations. Satellite events, on the other hand, amplify or fill in the outline of a sequence by maintaining, retarding or prolonging the kernel events they accompany or surround. This is the cause, which allows Seymour Chatman to call kernels 'the skeleton' and satellites 'the flesh' of a story.

In 1969 Tzvetan Todorov introduced the original French term 'narratologie' which was translated as 'narratology' that predominated over synonyms like 'narratives', 'narrative semiotics' and 'structural analysis of narrative'. Todorov in his book *Grammaire du Decameron* has made three distinctions in the development of narrative: a syntactic one, a semantic one and a verbal one. Todorov sets forth in detail that "just as linguistics aims to establish the grammar of language, narratology should aim to establish the grammar of narrative."

In *Theories of the Symbol*, Tzvetan Todorov highlighted the remarkable contribution of the western scholars in the
developments in semiotics. He begins with Aristotle’s theory of language and considered the following as a key passage:

“Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images.”\(^{12}\) Within the structure of rhetoric, Aristotle dealt with the “sign” in his perception of the word and analyzed it in unmitigated logical terms; “Of signs, one kind bears the same relation to the statement it supports as the particulars bears to the universal, the other the same as the universal bears to the particular”\(^{13}\) (Rhet. I, 1357 b). In the example, “if a woman has milk it is because she has given birth”\(^{14}\) illustrates the fact she has milk and also she has given birth are two “particulars” with regard to the general law.

Augustine never intended to be an accomplished semiotician. He was interested in various problems of semiotics. The following definition is given by Augustine in On Dialectics,
“A sign is something which is itself sensed and which indicates to the mind something beyond the sign itself. To speak is to give a sign by means of an articulate utterance.”\textsuperscript{15} In the opening of the fifth chapter of \textit{On Dialectics} he further adds: “A word is a sign of any sort of thing. It is spoken by a speaker and can be understood by a hearer.”\textsuperscript{16}

Augustine antagonizes natural signs to international signs (data) and writes in his favour: “Among signs, some are natural and others are conventional. Those are natural which, without any desire or intension of signifying, makes us aware of something beyond themselves.”\textsuperscript{17} Again he states: “conventional signs are those which living creatures show to one another for the purpose of conveying, in so far as they are able, the motion of their sprits or something which they have sensed or understood.”\textsuperscript{18} As much as letters are related, Augustine never tried to surpass the Aristotelian proverb, which conforms that, ‘letters are the signs of sounds’\textsuperscript{19} He further explains: “Every word is a sound, for when it is written it is not the word but the sign of a word. When we read, the letters we see suggest to the mind the sounds of the utterance. For written
letters indicate to the eyes something other than themselves and indicate to the mind utterances beyond themselves." 20 Likewise in Concerning the Teacher he writes, "What do we find about written words? Are they not better understood as signs of words than as words?" 21 Again in On Christian Doctrine, he says that "words are shown to the eyes, not in themselves but through certain signs which stand for them." 22 And also in On the Trinity, "Letters... are signs of words, as words themselves are signs in our conversation of those things which we think." 23

Vladimir Propp’s book The Morphology of the Folktale contributed much to the development of modern narratology. Propp made a systematic analysis of narrative. According to him, ‘discourse’ should be considered in terms of the ‘narrated’. Action in a fairy tale must be considered in terms of the role. Propp calculated the functions needed to account for the narrated structure of all and any Russian fairy tales and he described it as follows:
"1. One of the members of a family absents himself from home (absentation).

2. An interdiction is addressed to the hero (interdiction).

3. The interdiction is violated (violation).

4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance (reconnaissance).

5. The villain receives information about his victim (delivery).

6. The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or his belongings (trickery).

7. The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy (complicity).

8. The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family (villainy).

8A. One member of a family either lacks something or desires to have something (lack).

9. Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched (mediation, the connective incident).
10. The seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction (beginning counteraction).

11. The hero leaves home (departure).

12. The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or a helper (the first function of the donor).

13. The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor (the hero’s reaction).

14. The hero acquires the use of a magical agent (provision or receipt of a magical agent).

15. The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search (spatial transference between the two kingdoms, guidance).

16. The hero and the villain join in direct combat (struggle).

17. The hero is branded (branding, marking).

18. The villain is defeated (victory).

19. The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated (liquidation of misfortune or lack).

20. The hero returns (return).
21. The hero is pursued (pursuit, chase).

22. Rescue of the hero from pursuit (rescue).

23. The hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country (unrecognized arrival).

24. A false hero presents unfounded claims (unfounded claims).

25. A difficult task is proposed to the hero (difficult task).

26. The task is resolved (solution).

27. The hero is recognized (recognition).

28. The false hero or villain is exposed (exposure).

29. The hero is given a new appearance (transfiguration).

30. The villain is punished (punishment).

31. The hero is married and ascends the throne (wedding).“

While analyzing the wondertales historically, Vladimir Propp offered the following ten points for consideration:

“(1) Wondertales forms a specific group within folktales. They can be isolated and studied independently.

(2) All wondertale motifs should be studied with reference to one another.
(3) All wondertale motifs should be studied in their relations to the whole.

(4) We must find in history the mode of production that gave rise to the wondertale.

(5) The wondertale must be compared with the historical reality of the past, and its roots should be sought there.

(6) The roots of wodertale must be sought in the social institutions of the past. The wondertale preserves traces of vanished forms of social life.

(7) The wondertale should be compared with ritual and custom.

(8) The wondertale should be compared with the myths of ancient civilizations as well as with those of primitive, preclass societies.

(9) In study of the genesis of the wondertale, forms of primitive thought should be taken into consideration.

(10) An investigation can begin even if the data have not been exhausted.”

In the Theory and History of Folklore, Propp writes that Folk poetry was totally ignored in the Russian Universities before the
Revolution. He was interested in wondertales and in the tales of aggrieved stepdaughter he noted some important points. In the story Morozko (Frost) the stepdaughter was sent by her stepmother to Morozko in the forest. There he wanted to freeze her to death but the little girl’s polite bahaviour changed his mind and he allowed her to return home with gifts. But the old woman’s own daughter was unsuccessful in the test and died. The stepdaughter, in another story combats with lesij (a wood goblin) and also in another with a bear. In every tale we find the gentle stepdaughter becomes victorious and rewarded in different ways, but the plot remains unchanged. According to Afanas’ev the tales differ because of character variants. However Propp does not agree with this view and says: “It turned out that the other plots were also based on the recurrence of functions and that all wondertale plots consisted of identical functions and had identical structure.” 26 In another tale, a stranger who comes to win the hands of a princess performed difficult tasks like killing dragon, bathing in the boiling water, fetching a golden hair from the sea king etc. An
inexperienced listener will find difference in these variants but to a
learned scholar this unity is definitely ascertained.

Propp states, “The same composition can lie at the bottom of
many plots and conversely, many plots are based on the
composition. Composition is a constant factor; the plot, a variable
one.” 27 In comparing myth with the wondertales Propp says that
the word ‘tale’ is a synonym for ‘lie’ or ‘falsehood’ which is found
in most of the languages. “The tale is over; I can’t lie any more” 28
– this is how the stories are concluded by the Russian narrators. On
the other hand, myth is a holy narrative: not only it is considered to
be real but also the belief of the people is reflected through it.
Levi-Strauss says: “myth and the wondertale exploit a common
substance.” 29 This is adequately true if substances signify the
‘advance in the narrative or the plot.’ 30 Propp has therefore
suggested: “It is very possible that the method of analyzing
narratives according to the functions of characters will prove
useful both for the narrative forms of literature and folklore.” 31

view in *Morphology of the Folktale*. Levi – Strauss tried to elucidate various opinions as cited by Propp. He writes: "The wonder-tale is a narrative containing a limited number of functions whose order is constant. The formal differences between several tales result from the choice made by each among the thirty-one functions and the possible repetition of some of them." Although Propp agreed to undertake the formula "tale with seven protagonists" but from the historical point of view, the term "mythical tales" would be more appropriate.

As a scholar of mythology professor Levi – Strauss explains: "In present times myths and folktales exist side by side. One genre cannot then be held to be a survival of the other, unless it is postulated that tales preserve the memory of ancient myths, themselves fallen into oblivion." Again he says: "Language and metalanguage, which, united, constitute folktales and myths, can have certain levels in common, though these levels are shifted in them. While remaining elements of the narrative, the words of myth function as bundles of distinctive features."
Unlike Vladimir Propp, Claude Levi-Strauss practiced paradigmatic analysis of narrative. These semantic elements may be considered in terms of syntactic chains. Then these semantic elements may be considered as paradigms and they can be grouped in terms of their similarities and differences. He makes a detailed analysis of the Oedipus myth in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cadmos seeks his sister Europa ravished by Zeus</td>
<td>The spartoi kill one another</td>
<td>Cadmos kills the dragon</td>
<td>Labdacos (Laios’s father) = lame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oedipus marries his mother, Jocasta</td>
<td>Oedipus kills his father, Laios</td>
<td>Oedipus kills the Sphinx</td>
<td>Laios (Oedipus’ father) = left sided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antigone buries her brother, Polynices, despite prohibition</td>
<td>Eteocles kills his brother, Polynices</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oedipus = swollen foot³⁷</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Levi-Strauss makes it clear that “the myth deals with the difficulty for the culture in which it appears to reconcile the belief that human springs ‘from the land itself’ and the knowledge that they are born from man and woman.”³⁸
In his book *The Semiotic Challenge*, Roland Barthes writes that the world’s narratives are innumerable. The presence of which is found in legend, myth, fable, epic, comedy, tragedy, pantomime, news item, conversation and many others. Narrative was initiated with the early history of humanity and it appears in every place, every period and every society. Narrative is a part and parcel of human life; they all have their narratives and the existence of people is unthinkable without it. Men of different and even opposing cultures very often enjoy these narratives.

It is known to everyone that “Linguistics stops at the sentence, ... from the linguistic point of view, there is nothing in discourse which is not be found in the sentence.” 39 According to Andre Martinet, “the sentence is the smallest segment which is perfectly and integrally representative of discourse.” 40 The fact is that “narrative is a great sentence, just as every constative sentence is, in a way, the sketch of a little narrative.” 41

To comprehend a narrative it is not only essential to ensure the story’s process but also to acknowledge ‘in it certain “stages”, to project the horizontal concatenations of the narrative “thread”
on an implicitly vertical axis; to read (to hear) a narrative is not only to pass from one world to the next, but also to pass from one level to the next.\textsuperscript{42} If we try to perceive the differences in the narrative work, we find three levels of characteristics: the level of "functions", the level of "actions" and the level of "narration".

Nothing but functions are always composed in a narrative. From the linguistic point of view, function is evidently, "a unit of content: it is what a statement "means" which constitutes it as a functional unit, not in the way in which it is said."\textsuperscript{43} At the beginning two important classes of functions, some distributional to which we can use the name "functions" and the second important class of units of integrative type are called "indices". The sanction of the indices is "higher up"; that is why it is a paradigmatic sanction, but on the other hand the sanction of the functions is "farther on"; therefore it is a symptomatic sanction. Another major discrimination is that the "functions imply metonymic relata; the indices imply metaphoric relata; the former correspond to a functionality of doing, the latter to a functionality of being."\textsuperscript{44}
Particular narratives such as folktales are commendably functional, but on contrary narratives like psychological novels are commendably indicial. In respect to functions, the equal "importance" is not found to all of its units. Those which 'constitute veritable hinges of the narrative', are called cardinal functions or nuclei, while others merely "fill" the narrative space separating the hinge – functions are known as catalyses. The cardinal functions are consecutive as well as consequential but the catalyses are purely consecutive units.

It has been noticed that narrative by its very structure establishes a sense of confusion between 'consecution and consequentiality, time and logic." Vladimir Propp 'insists on the irreducibility of the chronological order: time in his eyes is reality, and for this reason it seems necessary to root the tale in time.' Aristotle also says that: 'tragedy (defined by the unity of action) in opposition to history (defined by the plurality of actions and the unity of time), already attributed primacy to logic over chronology." More accurately we can expect that it depends on
narrative logic to account for narrative time – the job to exhibit a structural description of the chronological illusion.

It is found in Aristotle's *Poetics* that the conception of character is secondary, completely auxiliary to the conception of action; 'there can be stories without "characters"'.\(^{49}\) Aristotle writes, "there cannot be characters without a story".\(^{50}\) But Propp in his analysis reduced characters to a 'simple typology, based not on psychology but on the unity of the actions the narrative imparted to them (Giver of a magical object, Helper, Villain etc).\(^{51}\)

In the structuralist analysis of the narrative, the character raises a problem; an essential plan of description is formed by the characters, 'outside which the trivial "actions" reported cease to be intelligible.'\(^{52}\) Therefore we can say that without "characters" or at least without "agents" there does not exist a single narrative in the world. But on the other hand these great numbers of "agents" cannot be described or classified in terms of "persons", as we regard the "person" as an unmitigated historical form restricted to particular genres. Therefore, 'we must set aside the enormous case of all narratives (folktales, contemporary texts) which involve
agents but not persons; or because we regard the "person" as nothing but a critical rationalization imposed by our period on pure narrative agents.\(^{53}\) We are aware of the particular codes of recitation such as metrical formulas, conventional protocols of presentation in oral literatures and it is also known to us that the "author" is not the person who discovers the best stories but the one who utilizes the codes in a skillful manner. In oral literatures, "the narrational level is so distinct, its rules so constraining, that is difficult to conceive of a "tale" without coded signs of narrative ("once upon a time", etc).\(^{54}\)

Barthes writes, "It is actually in a parading of narrative that the units of the lower levels are integrated: the ultimate form of narrative, as narrative transcends its contents and its strictly narrative forms (functions and actions)."\(^{55}\) Barthes points out that, "the narrative is translatable, without fundamental damage: what is not translatable, is determined only on the last, narrational level: the signifiers of narrativity."\(^{56}\)

In the book *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* Seymour Chatman also cites the examples of the
masterpieces with regard to narrative theory. According to Aristotle, Praxis, the imitation of actions in the essential world, was visualized as argument, logos, from which the units were selected and this formed the plot “mythos”. The Russian formalists also made the differentiation but only used two terms, the ‘fable’ and the ‘plot’. According to formalists, fable is “the set of events tied together which are communicated to us in the course of the work”\textsuperscript{57}, or “what has in effect happened”\textsuperscript{58}, and plot is “how the reader becomes aware of what happened”\textsuperscript{59}: this implies fundamentally the “order of the appearance (of the events) in the work itself”.\textsuperscript{60} Claude Bremond, the French structuralist, has indicated that “any sort of narrative message (not only folk tales) regardless of the process of expression which it uses, manifests the same level in the same way. It is only independent of the techniques that bear it along. It may be transposed from one to another medium without losing its essential properties: the subject of a story may serve as argument for a ballet, that of a novel can be transposed to stage or screen, one can recount in words a film to someone who has not seen it.”\textsuperscript{61}
Jean Piaget demonstrates how philosophy, social anthropology, physics and linguistics have turned to a practical use of the idea of structure and in every case three key theories have been implemented: wholeness, transformation and self-regulation. A narrative is absolutely a whole because 'it is constituted of elements – events and existents – that differ from what they constitute. Events and existents are single and discrete, but the narrative is a sequential composite'.\(^62\) In Piaget's analysis, the events in a real narrative, "come on the scene as already ordered".\(^63\)

Both transformation and self-regulation are used in narratives. The structure that maintains and closes itself may be regarded as the process of self-regulation. Piaget says that "transformations inherent in a structure never lead beyond the system but always engender elements that belong to it and preserve its laws...In adding or subtracting any two whole numbers, another whole number is obtained, and one which satisfies the laws of the 'additive group' of whole numbers. It is in this sense that a structure is 'closed'."\(^64\) Chatman points out that narrative structure
conceived semiotically should contain: "(1) a form and substance of expression and (2) a form and substance of content." He also says that: "story is the content of the narrative expression, while discourse is the form of that expression." One may ask: "what does narrative itself (or narrativizing a text) mean?" Chatman in response says: "The signifie's or signifieds are exactly three – event, character and detail of setting: the significant or signifiers are those elements in the narrative statement (whatever the medium) that can stand for one of these three, thus any kind of physical or mental action for the first, any person (or indeed, any entity that can be personalised) for the second, and any evocation of place for the third." Chatman describes that a narrative is a mode of communication in which two parties are taken for granted, a sender and a receiver. ‘On the sending end are the real author, the implied author, and the narrator,' and ‘on the receiving end, the real audience (listener, reader, viewer), the implied audience, and the narratee’. From one occurrence to the next, narrative existents may stay in the same form, otherwise some elucidation must appear. If a story is told like, “Peter fell ill. Peter died. Peter was
we suppose that in each case it is the same Peter. The example cited by E. M. Forster was: “the King died, and then the queen died of grief”\textsuperscript{72}; we suppose the queen was the wife of the king. If it was not so, then there would be some elucidation of the queen’s death: “Though she did not know him, she died of the grief she felt for the decay of royal houses.”\textsuperscript{73}

Chatman writes, “what is communicated is story, the formal content element of narrative; and it is communicated by discourse, the formal expression element. The discourse is said to “state” the story, and these statement are of two kinds – process and stasis – according to whether someone did something or something happened; or whether something simply existed in the story”\textsuperscript{74}. He also pointed out that, “Process statements are in the mode of DO or HAPPEN”\textsuperscript{75} and “Stasis statements are in the mode of IS”\textsuperscript{76}. He further says that “A text that consisted entirely of stasis statements, that is, stated only the existence of a set of things, could only imply a narrative”.\textsuperscript{77} Again events are “either acts or actions, in which an existent is the agent of the event, or happenings, where the existent is the patient. An existent in turn is either a character or an element
of setting, a distinction based on whether or not it performs a plot – significant action. A stasis statement may communicate either or both of these two aspects: the identity of an existent or one of its qualities. 78 On the other hand, “A process statement may be said either to recount or to enact an event according to whether or not it is explicitly presented, that is, uttered as such by a narrator.” 79

**Narrative Discourse** by Gerard Genette is a valuable work as it fulfills the requirements for a systematic theory of narrative. Genette argues that most theorists are unsuccessful to perceive a difference correctly between mood and voice, that is to say, between the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective and the identity of the narrator. Genette’s idea of internal focalization implies that the ‘narrative is focused through the consciousness of a character’ 80, while external focalization is somewhat completely different: ‘the narrative is focused on a character, not through him.’ 81 Moreover Gerard Genette tries to illustrate the meaning of the word ‘narrative’ and three distinct conceptions are clearly visible. In the first place, “narrative refer to
the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events."\textsuperscript{82}

Secondly, "narrative refer to the succession of events, real or fictitious, that are the subjects of this discourse, and to their several relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc."\textsuperscript{83}

Thirdly, "narrative refer once more to an event: not, however, the event that is recounted, but the event that consists of someone recounting something: the act of narrating taken in itself."\textsuperscript{84} Genette uses the "word 'story' for the signified or narrative content."\textsuperscript{85} He also uses the "word 'narrative' for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself,"\textsuperscript{86} and uses the "word 'narrating' for the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place."\textsuperscript{87}

According to Genette, clarification of narrative discourse is a "study of the relationships between narrative and story, between narrative and narrating, and between story and narrating."\textsuperscript{88}