CHAPTER 5

Conclusion
The fairy tales of Brothers Grimm are still relevant for a modern reader in so far as these narratives invite a curious reader to isolate specific narrative components that make up these tales. These tales go thousands years back and these narratives naturally display an interesting process of narrativistic transformation. This transformative process may be considered as a transmission from the oral to the graphological. It has also been claimed that these stories probably originated in different parts of the world. Thus Theodor Benfy traced some of these stories back to the ancient Sanskrit tales. This view has been further substantiated by scholars like Joseph Bedier who believe in the polygenesis of these stories. This view naturally opens up another significant critical perspective: it implies the possibility of intraracial transmission. These stories travelling throughout the world adapted themselves to multiplex forms of culture.

The stories of Brothers Grimm may, however, be considered from specific socio-cultural standpoints. In Chapter 2, we have made an attempt to analyze the socio-political framework reflected in these stories. These tales may never be regarded as
scientific documentations of the socio-political pattern of primitive past. These tales, chiefly oral in character, were handed down from generation to generation. But if we carefully examine these tales, it seems that we may locate an alternative history in them. These tales do not document real events and real situations, which may be validated by authentic history. But we may discover a psychological history – the social and ethical ideals, their superstitions, their religious beliefs, their thoughts about human relationships etc. This alternative segment of history may help us to find out a design of cultural pattern. It was a society that was sharply polarized. This society was sharply divided between the aristocracy and the poor. Brothers Grimm do not usually present the complex designs of the contemporary social hierarchy. The nature of social governance was largely based on the system of tyrannical autocracy. Thus the king was the centre of power and all other forms of socio-political relationships were subordinated to the powers of the king.

These tales largely concentrate on three distinctive segments of socio-political framework: (1) familial relationship
including parent–children relationship, position of women, relationship of love etc. (2) Moral and ethical values which exerted a great impact on the pattern of social behaviour in general. (3) Position of the King, with an emphasis on the nature of social governance, autocracy and royal duties. These three socio-political features may be regarded as dominant factors in the formation of the sociological pattern in these tales.

But the most significant aspects of these stories may be located in how all these thematic components have been narrativised in these tales. Recent developments in the science of narratology may be largely useful in explaining the narrative design of these fairy tales. In 1969, Todorov pronounced the necessity of the grammar of narratology. 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 Carroll’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 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 is 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 of 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 are always constructed paradigmatically. Steven Cohan 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 transformation. 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 'narrativics', '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.” Vladimir Propp’s *The Morphology of the Folktale* also contributed much to the development of modern narratology. Propp made a systematic analysis of the 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. 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 behaviour 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 step daughter
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.” In another tale, a stranger who comes to win the hands of a princess performed difficult tasks like killing the dragon, bathing in the boiling water, fetching a golden hair from the sea king etc. An inexperienced listener will find differences 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.” 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 anymore” – 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. As Levi-Strauss says: “myth and the wondertale exploit a common substance.” This is adequately true if substances signify the ‘advance in the narrative or the plot.’ 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 the folklore.”

Claude Levi-Strauss in his book, Structure and Form: Reflections on a Work by Vladimir Propp argued with Propp’s view in Morphology of the Folktale. Levi-Strauss tried to elucidate various opinions as cited by Propp. He writes: “The wondertale 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.

When we start analyzing the stories, Vladimir Propp’s thirty-one steps for the narrated structure of any Russian fairy tale seems to be very useful. Jack Zipes’s discussion on the general scheme in Grimms’ fairy tale also provides a distinctive critical pattern in these tales. However these critical researches have never
attempted to discover a significant and uniform narrative design, which will explain a hidden sense of methodology governing the fairy tales.

While analyzing the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm we find that there are various types of stories enhancing our pleasures of reading. But the most important element in the stories is that they all follow a distinctive narrative formula i.e. beginning with a crisis that finally leads to a resolution. The oral composer is careful about maintaining the static nucleus. He applies various styles and thus brings variety, modulation and other significant forms of changes in the story. In these fairy tales we notice a distinctive projection of the entire social hierarchy, from the prince to the pauper. As far as this hierarchical pattern is considered, it is extremely realistic. But the contextual framework in which these characters have been used is in most cases imaginary. This naturally presupposes a unique balance between reality and fantasy. Thus if we carefully analyze the tales, we note a huge body of characters and incidents that can be classified into distinctive groups.
We notice as many as five different narrative variants. Various types of themes are present in the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm. These are: (a) sense of enchantment, (b) moral order, (c) transformation, (d) beast stories and (e) theme of struggle. In this work, we have primarily tried to analyze the narrative pattern of these fairy tales with reference to these five narrative variants.