Chapter 5 - Conclusion: A Postcolonial Perspective

The semantic basis of the term 'post-colonial' might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power. It was occasionally been employed in some earlier work in the area to distinguish between the periods before and after independence ('colonial period' and 'post-colonial' period), for examples in constructing national literary histories, in suggesting comparative studies between stages in those histories... We use the term 'post-colonial' period, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of pre-occupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted.242

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The origin of the discourse is in political context and not cultural context. Its subsequent depolitizing will be elucidated in this chapter in a 'cross cultural context'. The various issues like the colonial collections, politics of survival, ethnicity, myth, history, authenticity and various traditional concepts related with folktales have been analyzed from contemporary perspectives.

During the colonial era, the British administrator-scholars followed a discriminate policy while including the oral folklore as part of their collections. The folktales depicting the truths about colonial empire were intentionally not included in the collections. Therefore, it becomes imperative to know what has been deleted from the records. As Naithani states, "The folklore collections cannot be defined only by what they include, but have to be defined also by what they exclude." In the systems of imperial ethnography, the content that was included and excluded was not based on scholarly considerations. If the tales of Indian narrators are collated with their representations by British collectors there are severe discrepancies as Naithani's work details. They claimed that the narratives of the Indian folk

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was “ancient, spiritual and traditional”, that it did not have any “historical consciousness”; that it was "completely" untouched by European influence; and that the “narrators were incapable of any literary conception and representation of their contemporary socio-historical reality… Instead of being passive bearers of a repertoire of tradition, the narrators emerge as self-conscious subjects whose narratives performed multiple functions in social communication. They were carriers of change and growth; as such, they did not possess live traditions so much as have a live relationship with tradition.”

All the collections have been marred and have been operationalized according to what Mary Louis Pratt has called the “contact zone”. In the context of Peru, Pratt’s contact zone “refers to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing.”

It can be understood that the Britishers did not understand our language and culture when they came to India. They must have availed the help of the natives to get familiar with the new surroundings. Many of the administrators driven by the passion of knowing more about India must have taken the help of well-read natives who could not only collect folktales for them but also translate these from vernaculars into English. The language of publication turns out to be English that misleads many to come to the conclusion that Britishers were our first folklorists. In the postcolonial world the linguistic dominance of English has left the regional languages struggling for their survival.

Haryana, as being a part of Indian geographic mainland, had been under the political domination of many rulers in earlier centuries and under Britishers for almost two centuries. Even after independence in 1947, it could not attain its political Independence till 1966. It came after a period of “unqualified assimilation” followed by a stage in which the native is disturbed and “decides to remember what she is” and finally, “the fighting phase” in which she will “shake” the people. The independence was a result of growing consciousness among people of shared cultures. The other important factor was the political movement for the formation of the state of Punjab.

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244 Mary Louis Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, 1992.
The debate of whether postcolonial theory provides an appropriate framework for the analysis of indigenous literatures in the settler colonies began already in the 1980s but gained momentum in the 1990s. Indigenous literatures have always occupied a peculiar position in theorizing the New English or Postcolonial literatures. While a systematic approach to the question is still missing as to whether postcolonial theory can or should be applied to indigenous literature, it has been addressed more frequently from diverse angles since the beginning of the 1990s.

Folklore, Nationalism and Politics of Survival

The appearance of folk historic as a discipline coincided, not by chance, with the heightening of nationalism in a number of countries, since folklore traditions could help reinforce the sense of national identity, once the intellectuals of policymakers became aware of their existence. They faced a paradox in seeking national traits and characteristics in tales, songs, proverbs and customs found in similar forms in many lands, but the nationalists chose to emphasize seemingly local and indigenous elements. Their quest for a national language, literature, history, mythology and folklore often overlapped, and folklore proved of special use, for it could be embedded in regional dialects, suggest literary themes and contain remembrances of the mythological and historical past. As a nationalist strategy, folklore restores the old peasant values of community being weakened by urban impersonality. Hence, political folklorist sought to reverse the trend of migration from country to city.

All the questions about ideology, politics and nationalism have inspired new courses as postcolonial studies are a field of necessarily intense interdisciplinary relations. In "Subaltern as Perspective"246, Veena Das analyses the anthropological view of rational behavior and order on humanity, particularly on the Indian population. Postcolonial studies increasingly adopted and referred to anthropological and sociological concepts of culture and society; likewise, anthropology in particular took postcolonial concepts of culture and society; Arjun Appadurai’s "Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology", is one example of how the issues addressed by postcolonial studies and cultural anthropology overlap, especially when dealing with questions of migration and globalization as well as with disciplinary self-reflexivity. Appadurai defines ‘ethnoscapes’ as:

The landscape of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live; tourists, refugees, exiles, guest-workers, and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. This is not to say that nowhere are there relatively stable communities and networks of kinship, friendship, work and leisure as well as birth, residence and other filiative forms. But it is to say that the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the wool of human motion.247

Mary Louise Pratt’s coining of the terms “contact zone” and “transculturation” in “Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation” have been particularly influential for postcolonial theory. Both a study of genre and ideology, “Imperial Eyes” analyses the ways in which European travel writing from 1750 onwards invented the New World, how this invention helped to define Europe as much from the outside as from the inside, and how these inventions served expansionist purposes. However, employing the term, ‘contact zone’ to denote the space of colonial encounter, Pratt also investigates cultural exchange and how European discourses about the Other were appropriated by the very same cultural Other. A “contact” perspective, she argues, “emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relation to each other. It treats the relations among colonizers and colonized not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of co-presence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.”248

Pratt’s model offers a less dualistic understanding of the relationship between colonizer and colonized to postcolonial theory, an understanding that is aware of power imbalances without reducing the colonizer-colonized relationship.

James Clifford’s “Routes Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century” is a patchwork of different genres – articles, reviews, lectures, poems – and explores travel in its widest sense as a paradigmatic situation in the late 1990s. Drawing on post colonialism as one theoretical framework, Clifford analyses changing approaches to issues such as ethnographic fieldwork, culture, localism, diaspora, minorities, etc., in contemporary anthropology and transnational cultural studies. However, the term ‘postcolonial,’ for Clifford, makes sense only “in an emergent, or utopian, context, there are no postcolonial


cultures or places; only moments, tactics, discourses. ‘Post-‘ is always shadowed by “neo”. Yet, “postcolonial” does describe real, if incomplete ruptures with past structures of domination, sites of current struggles and imagines futures”.249

In “Undoing Culture: Globalization, Postmodernism and Identity”, Mike Featherstone attributes a significant role within contemporary cultural theory as well as within cultural globalization to postmodernism and particularly to post colonialism. Postcolonial theory, he argues, has helped decentre the West:

Postmodernism and post colonialism present theory as mobile, or as constructed from an eccentric site, somewhere on the boundary. This conscious mixing of traditions and crossing of boundaries highlights the ways in which the east, now so obviously visible in the West, have always been a part of the West. This destroys the unitary clean and coherent images of modernity that have been projected out of the Western centres.250

For Featherstone, post colonialism fundamentally questions the homogenous self-image and projection of Western modernity and discourse. The resulting decline of Western power and authority has forced the West to increasingly listen to the non-West. Thus, economic and cultural structures exported by the West to the former periphery are not as homogenizing as the adversaries of globalization proclaim. Instead, the process of globalization “does not seem to be producing cultural uniformity; rather it makes us aware of new levels of diversity”.251

Homi K. Bhabha illustrates the close connection between cultural and postcolonial studies on the one hand and the importance of issues central to postcolonial studies – migrancy, hybridity – for multiculturalism and minority discourse on the other. Bhabha argues that the way in which culture is used on liberal discourse to debate multiculturalism often relies on a necessarily fixed notion of the concept of cultures and the ways in which they fundamentally challenge national cultures, not from the outside but from the inside. Migrant cultures, ‘partial’ cultures, cultures-in-between, and their ambivalent relationship to their home as well as to their host society provide the tissue and the boundary at the same

249 James Clifford. Routes Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century, 1997.


251 ibid
time, “the partial, minority culture emphasizes the internal differentiations, the ‘foreign bodies’, in the midst of the nation – the interstices of its uneven and unequal development, which give the lie to its self-containedness. In fact, the challenge is to deal not with them/us but with the historically and temporally disjunct positions that minorities occupy ambivalently within the nation’s space”. 252

Bhabha’s text makes clear how interdisciplinary postcolonial studies are – or could be. Unfortunately and despite these interdisciplinary connections, postcolonial theory does not always exhaust the full potential of what cross-disciplinary influences can offer. A fundamental critique of postcolonial approaches by scholars whose work could also be subsumed under the heading of ‘postcolonial’ is their general, non-specific and often ahistorical tendency. It is here where postcolonialism could benefit more from a closer alliance with, for instance, sociology and history.

Questions of Ethnicity and Identity

Anna-Leena Siikala in the “The Mythic Narratives” states that “the increased interest in the tradition today is part of identification process of ethnic groups building their own cultural capital” 253

The word ethnicity comes from the root word “ethnic” which loosely means race. An ethnic community does not strictly have a racial connotation. A community can be distinct from others in many ways: their racial stock or origin being one of them. A community may distinguish itself from others by way of particular or distinctive culture, language, religion or combination of all these. Because of this distinctive aspect the ethnic communities often come in conflict with other communities with whom they come in contact.

The definition of a concept in any field of social science is usually difficult. And a term such a ethnicity loaded with meanings, values and prejudices in even more difficult to


define. Ethnicity pertains to the ethnic which is a distinction of mankind based on race. Ethnicity has now lost the original connotation.

It is now employed in a border sense to signify self-consciousness of a group of people united, or closely related, by shared experience such as language. Religious belief, common heritage, etc. While race usually denotes the attributes of a group, ethnic identifies creative response of group who consider themselves marginalized in society.\textsuperscript{254}

F. Barth and Benedict Anderson feel that “boundary is an important criterion for self definition by ethnic group, to separate themselves from others.”\textsuperscript{255}

The re-organization of Punjab and the formation of Haryana using linguistic ethnicity as its plank has not been without trouble. The various issues like sharing of the common capital region- Chandigarh, sharing of river water that led to post 1980’s problems continues to daunt this region. One may state here that the linguistic ethnicity in Indian context has been used as a complement to religious, caste and other ethnic groups. It has never operated as an exclusive principle of re-organization.

Ethnic activity and separation came in a big way in the post colonial, newly emerging nations. This was very easily and crudely explained away as tribalism, backwardness etc. but ethnic activity effected even the developed countries. In fact, ethnicity has now become a worldwide phenomenon.

The problem of ethnicity and national building has been widely discussed over the past few decades. The phenomenon of ethnicity has become and intrinsic component of the socio-political realities of multi-ethnic or plural-cultural societies, like Haryana.

In India, with its variety of pluralities, in terms of language, race, religion and so on ethnic conflict has become a part of the political scenario. In most states, including mine, the


\textsuperscript{255} Benedict Anderson Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, London.

processes of development and change have generated conditions for ethnic conflict, as the fruits of these development processes have come to the distributed unevenly. Also, the nature and character of the power structure and political leadership have their role to play.

Let us see how the identity of a group is defined vis-à-vis another community and how this identity becomes psychologically and socially important for a member or members of the community.

Why do human beings slip so easily into ethnic prejudice? Human beings have a natural tendency to form generalizations and concepts. Their categories are close to their first-hand experiences. They also categorize based on hearsay, fantasy and emotions. This process of social categorization leads to the formation of an “in-group” and “out-group”. All groups develop a way of living with characteristic codes and beliefs. Therefore, the formation of ethnic attitude is functionally related to becoming a group member. According to the social categorization theories given by H. Tajfel as well as J.C. Turner, “every social group attempts to achieve an identity in contradiction to the “out-group”.” Identity can be broadly characterized as the process by which an individual is bound to his/her social group and by which he/she realizes his/her social self.

Ethnic antagonism has posed four serious challenges to Haryana. In the context of the Indian political identity, such a formulation has several implications. Sharma has described these as:

Casteism

A curious mix of ethnic identity and modern interest in which the ethnic group uses the caste ideology to further its economic and political interests, e.g. a regional political party asking for votes of a particular caste group for instance Yadavs.

Communism

The “unholy” alliance between religion and politics, in which religion may be used for political or economic gains.


Nativism

The ‘sons of the soil’ concept in which regional identities become the source of ethnic strife.

Ethno-nationalism

The transformation of an ethnic group to a nationality which may start demanding autonomous governance in a particular territory or even secession, separation and recognition as a sovereign nation, eg. the movements in Mewat region leading to the formation of Mewat.

The normative character of ethnic prejudices involve far more than the fact that attitudes are shared by members of a majority or minority group. Each member is expected to hold such attitudes and various kinds of pressures are brought on those who fail to conform to it. A sense of identity is a very natural human tendency but when an ethnic identity is consolidated and used as a reference point for mobilization to share in the power structure, the mobilization becomes far more effective.

While ethnic attributes are categorized for the purpose of classification which is a static formulation, ethnicity is a dynamic process, whereby a group of people or community regroups itself as an adaptive strategy in response to specific demands of the situations.

Following are some of the characteristics of ethnicity that can be observed in context of Haryana:

1) Ethnicity relates to inscriptive identities like caste, language, religion, region etc.

2) Inequality in terms of sharing power between two ethnic groups results into conflict for instance Jats and Gujjars. The ethnicity is socially mobilized and territorially confined. It has numerically sufficient population and is a pool of symbols depicting distinctiveness. It has a reference group in relation to which a sense of relative deprivation is aggregated.

3) Being left out of the developmental process or even being a victim of uneven development, ethnicity causes ethnic movements in Mewat region of Haryana.
4) Ethnicity is manifested in Haryanvi politics not merely due to grass root discontent but is also a creation of vested political interest.

5) Ethnic groups that use ethnicity to make demands in the political arena for alteration in their status, in their economic well-being, etc, are engaged very often in a form of interest group politics.

In Haryana, the focus of interests of an ethnic group, is to get some benefits for itself. The group often uses ethnic criterion like religion, language or caste to mobilize itself to give identity to itself which separates it from other group or groups. Thus delineation of boundary of an ethnic group of community is an important aspect of ethnicity markers. But exactly which one will get projected at a specific point of time would usually depend on where or how the person draws the boundary. Since delineation of the nature of boundary rests on the conditions existing at a given moment, the whole exercise becomes a response to the specific conditions. This adds fluidity to the situation and makes the identity projection a dynamic phenomenon. The nature of identity shifts along with changing circumstances and calls for change in boundary or a change in identification. The seeming singularity of identity, by and large, conveys a notion only. In reality, plurality of identities appears much more widespread than it ordinarily appears to be.

With plurality of identity as a matter to reckon with, it is important to appreciate that all the identities of individuals or groups cannot be noticeable at a time. In fact, among various identities only one becomes manifest or apparent at a given point of time and the rest of the identities remain sub-apparent at a given point of time and the rest of the identities becomes manifest at a specific hour would depend on the nature of the immediate boundary delineation. It is thus, through the interplay of latent and manifest identities that ethnicity expresses itself in a dynamic process. In general, whether an individual would identify himself/herself as Hindu or a Rajput or a Haryanvi would depend, by and large on the existing conditions and felt needs of given moment. A person ordinarily exercises his/her mind in order to work out what response would be most appropriate at the given situation and acts accordingly. Thus, he/she contributes to the overall dynamics of the process.

India as we know has cultural economic and social heterogeneity. The complex ethnic plurality or our nation is a know fact. The ethnic groups vary in size, culture and consciousness of group. The system on the whole is highly segmented and heterogeneous. In
such a system what are the ways in which these groups have incorporated into the nation state?

There is a general notion that narrow loyalties are expression of retrogradation or prejudice. This originates from the concern for broader identity and lack of appreciation of the fact that plurality of identity is a reality. In fact, emergence of ethnicity all around primarily on cultural counts has put the boundary of any nation-state under severe stress implicitly assuming the political boundary as something very sacred, the quest for larger identity is usually emphasized. No doubt, this serves some immediate political purpose but at the same time, this emphasis on a large identity like a state or a nation ignores the reality of plural identities and their possible interplay and thus reverts back to the state or nation where religion, language etc. become static categories of ethnic attributes. At this stage, it will be beneficial to understand how nationality or a nation has originated in India. This we hope will clear some confusion regarding the conflicting relationship between ethnicity and nationality.

Geographically, Indian sub-continent has facilitated the existence of numerous group belonging to various racial stocks, speaking different languages and having different patterns of culture. Centuries of living together has not removed these differences. At the same time, the different groups moved in unison in the political, economic and social spheres. The different groups were united by a common historical destiny which created a psychological unity. Though diverse practices were allowed, the Hinduism retained a pan-Indian quality. Language too played its role in uniting the diverse elements. Sanskrit in ancient India provided the bridge between various pluralities, while Urdu, English and Hindi sough to do the same in later times. Thus there existed a pan-Indian culture as well as various diverse, regional, local and ethnic culture what we may call as great and little traditions respectively.

Politically and administratively, India came under one umbrella under the centralized rule of Ashoka's empire. Later, the strong centralized monarchy under the Mughals created a pan-Indian sentiment. At the same time, several political powers, small identities had emerged in India. These were like the kingdoms of Marathas in Maharashtra, Sikhs in the most of Punjab in the North-West and in Bengal in the East. These territorial identities were not always well defined. By the time of the British took over the reigns of India, the change was enormous. With the British came the printing press, new system of education, new means and modes of communication and transportation and ideas of secular state, fraternity and liberty. Years of discontent with the British rule and its policies resulted in the first
indigenous revolt in 1857. S Gopal states that, "the failure of the movement of 1857 to drive Britishers out of India led to rethinking amongst educated Indians about alternative ways and means of getting rid of foreign domination. They commented that new education, science and technology had to be accepted in order to forge a new Indian national identity. If Indians could strive as a single entity, the task would be easily and quickly accomplished. Thus in the second half of the 19th century, organizations with the prefix 'Indian' began to appear". The growth of national feeling was facilitated by infrastructural facilities and conditions such as printing press, new means of communication and transportation, etc, as mentioned above. This growing consciousness was implicit in the growth of such pan-Indian Congress in 1885. Indian nationalism reached in maturity and became the uppermost concern, though there were occasions when ethnicity and plural identities were in conflict with nationalism. The latter, very often, appeared as integral part of Indian nationalism was on the rise the questions of region relegated to the background. However, "secular nationalism, in the face of foreign rule kept ethnic and caste identities under control. It did not subdue them, but made compromises".

Once the freedom was won all the subdued forces surfaced again in the independent democratic India. Political power came to be the key of economic prosperity and enhanced social status. Henceforth, conscious attempts have been made by vested interests to whip up ethnic identity and invariably all political parties have made compromises with ethnic demand. Thus, we can see that the articulation of ethnicity or ethnic movements in Haryana has closely been related to the power structure, the democratic process and initiation of socio-economic development.

Narration and Narrator

Anna-Leena Siikala states, "a narrative is embarked on either in reply to some external stimulus such as request from audience or the narrator may express something she considers


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important, amusing or otherwise worth telling”\textsuperscript{260} The performance of the narrative is logical, goal oriented but carried out in the state of interaction. The narrator may aim to entertain, to teach, to warn or to criticize his listener. She may also tell her story as proof of something, as an example, or nearly to satisfy the listener’s wishes. At the same time she may try to attract the attention to find amusing expressions or to enter into an intensive interaction with the listener.

Question of Authorship

There is question of authorship related to the narratological issues of story telling Is the story teller the real author of the stories? The narrator tells the story ‘in her/his own words and with new variations every time with every recounting of the story. In this sense every performance is a creation of an event and the story teller is the real author of that version. So the real author in one sense absent and in other sense very much present. Ramanujan expresses this idea in the preface to his Folktales from India.

Authority and Authenticity of Tradition

Folklore is a dynamic component of culture which functions adaptively in situations of rapid cultural change. The study of contemporary folklore encompasses a vast array of old and modern expressive behaviours, text and contents and in the modern world. The cultural products are communicated both by oral and technological data.

The American media researcher John Fiske has defined popular culture as “culture that emerges when people themselves use, think or play with the cultural products communicated by mass media if these products fail to be meaningful to the people, they will reject them”. He writes, “If the cultural commodities or text do not contain resources out of which the people can make their own meanings of their social relations and identities they will be rejected and will fail in the market place and they will not be made popular”. He further states “Popular culture is made from within and below, not imposed without or above as mass culture theorist would have it”\textsuperscript{261}


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Casoline Thumpherey in her article “The Moral Authority of the Past in the Post-Socialist Mongolia” states that “drawing on the authority of the past represents two forms. The first mimics facts and appearances from a time attributed with greatness and genuineness in an analogical way. The “copies” of ancient culture symbolize ideas in the present culture and provide models for the future. The second transforms present activities into “sacred actions” by giving them an ideological meaning in a way that actions and their significance are interpreted as having ‘identical parallels’ in the past.”

Traditions are cultural phenomena which have ideological basis in the negotiation of identity. In everyday lie the ethnic identity rests on the “traditions” of every human being. The social group or state needs symbol greater than that, national symbols are sought from sources that have the authority and the unifying power of the past.

In most cultures, there are ready models for having an idea of the past as moral authority of the present. Mythic narratives represent these models. They show how the prevailing state of affairs became divinely authorized in the beginning of time. Therefore, the narrative which bears the authority of the past need not be understood as a time history; it is valuable as a metaphor of the group it is defining. The value of ethnic or national symbols cannot be denied on the basis of claims concerning their authenticity or turn.

It is not possible to deprive the living culture of its authenticity. The things people do in their lives are authentic and real, no matter what kinds of roots these things have. So, traditions are legitimized and authenticized by the processes of their use.

Myth, History and Folklore

The problems of the authority, authenticity and truth of tradition can be illuminated even more clearly when we examine oral traditions. As J S Kirk says, “Oral myths and history are intertwined in many ways in the constant process of saturation and reinterpretation in changing political contents”. There is no static stage in the life of oral mythic history. It is constantly recontextualized and reinterpreted, even recreated as and when needed. The authority, authenticity and truth of an oral narrative is constantly challenged and constructed

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262 Casoline Thumpherey. The Moral Authority of the Past in the Post-Socialist Mongolia (1992)


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in the cultural practice. And yet then is continuity in the life of mythic history; which should be remembered, which bears the authority of the past. He further states that “myth concern is not only for the part they play in all primitive, illiterate cultures which make them one of the main object of anthropological interest but because of men’s endearing insistence on carrying quasi – mythical modes of thought, expression and communication in a supposedly scientific age”. 264

In nineteenth century, Schelling stated, “All mythology was essentially the theory and history of the gods”. In the twentieth century, the view persisted. Northrope Frye said, “myth is a story in which some of the chief characters are gods”. These views could be misleading. Many myths relate to supernatural which involve polytheistic religions. Apart from Oedipus there are various types of myths in legends and folktales with no religious content. Myth is not derived from ritual or vice-versa rather all cultural phenomena must be seen as functional parts of a complex system. Myth and religion or myth and ritual are twin aspects of the same subject.

All myths are about gods, or derived from rituals; all myths an either quite distinct or quite indistinguishable from folktale. In primitive and peasant societies, myths and legends are part of oral traditions and specify the supernatural entities that are believed to exist, describe the origin of things, explain the nature of reality and assert the proper organization of values. These narratives become codified in the scriptures and auxiliary texts of civilized peoples and, over time, come to form consistent, logically integrated, closed systems of thought that explain all phenomena of the universe. Primitive belief systems, on the other hand, are inconsistent, and poorly integrated this is so because of the lack of writing and absence of theologians and apologists where task it would be to render the systems closed and rigid in order to cope with hereries and antagonistic doctrines put forth by philosophy, science and compiling religions.

There is no binary categorization between a myth and a folktale. It exhibits mobility from one genre (myth) to the other (folktale). Myths often have serious underlying purpose beyond that of telling a story. Folktales, on the other hand, tend to reflect simple social situations; they play on ordinary fears and desires as well as on men’s appreciation of neat and ingenious solutions and they introduce fantastic subjects more to widen the range of

264 ibid
adventure and acumen than through any imaginative or introspective urge. Both genres are to
different degrees controlled by the laws of story-telling, which operate more prominently – in
tale tales than in myth. In practice, the two often overlap.

The Folklore Tradition:

The state of Haryana has its civilizational roots dating back to Harappan civilization
(2600-1700BC). It has been under the Ashokan Empire (250 BC), the Guptas, the
Harshavardhana (646AD), Delhi Sultanates and the Britishers. The present tradition has been
the end result of all these 'cross-cultural' interaction. For a folklorist to study these facts have
been always been an area of interest. Unlike what a folklorist has traditionally been
traditionally known to do or the textual/thematic oppositionality of what Gary Alan Fine state
"Folklorist should treasure the proverb that "The more things change, the more things remain
the same". Their inmate belief in static rural culture doesn't prevent them to sow seeds of
continuity and change in the paradigms of the folk literature study.

The quintessential question is how one approaches the issue of tradition and
modernity in a postcolonial Haryanvi society? In colonial days there was a clear demarcation
between tradition and modernity. The traditional societies tended to be large personal, face to
face with nature and inferior in terms of market value. On the other hand, modern societies
tend to be neutral and more capable of dealing with market and environment.

Let me catalogue a few conspicuous advertisements before I embark upon the literary
exercise of changes that can be deciphered in the present context. The modern mass culture
depicts the traditions of ancient times in a different way.

The superheroes and tale heroes of folklores have become heroes of mass media. For
instance Coca-Cola advertisement in which the modern Bollywood element has been
integrated with the traditional folk element. The 'Bollywood hero' Hrithik Roshan in a
'contemporary look' is shown in an apparently Rajasthani 'village' along with his film
unit. The 'village heroes' attired in 'traditional dress' are 'dancing in traditional steps'on a
tune which is similar to the actors one of the hit movies. The Bollywood hero appreciates
their gestures and participates in their dance similar to their folklore style.
The famous Cadbury’s advertisement in which the Diwali festivities are being celebrated by distributing ‘chocolates’ instead of ‘ladoos’ but the background score and the dance sequence are ‘traditionally’ Indian.

The Govt of India initiative to drive the message of unity and diversity by internalizing the tunes classical tunes from states in captioned tune “Miley Sur Mera Tumhara”.

The frequent spurs in Haryanvi in the midst of a modern show i.e.on 98.3 FM Radio Mirchi.

What do they have in common? Even if these advertisements are of multinational aerated drink etc or a national broadcast they are instrumental in establishing a ‘missing link’ element. These signify a ‘symbiotic relationship’ between two areas that have been debated since time immemorial -city and country or tradition and modernity. They all reveal that how folklore is important even in modern times to ‘connect’ creatively to the Generation Y.

The theories of modernization have a western bias. However, Yogender Singh feels that process of contact led to positive changes in the traditional set up and he thinks it would be inapt to think of a clear polarity between tradition and modernity and he feels it is more theoretical than actual. He explains in context of colonial India that “the changes which occurred were confined to differentiation within the framework of traditional social structure and values. Structural changes were way few and those which took place were limited in respect of the types of roles. Similar development in religious role and organizations partially followed the emergence of other traditions. But these changes by no means could be called structural, since differentiation of roles was segmented and did not alter the system as a whole”. 265

Hence, during the British period, modernization was selective and segmental, not in synchronization with family, caste and village. These areas had not been their focus, as these were not dynamic and were not the avenues for revenues. Singh feels that these reasons influenced the post-colonial modernization process.

After independence, the society has been undergoing a process of becoming modern called as modernization. Some of the defining features of such societies are the emergence of

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nation state (Haryana was formed on 1966), industrialization and capitalism, rise of democracy, heavier dependence on technological innovation, attendant urbanization, the overall development in mass media etc.

One of Germany's leading social philosophers in the period following the Second World War, Gerard proposed the theory of "Cultural Crystallizations" to describe the modern situation. According to Gerard is a famous phrase, "the premises of the Enlightenment are dead, only their consequences remain". In his view "the institutional complexes of modern society have separated themselves from cultural modernity which can now be discarded... Cultural ideas are no longer able to produce the "new" that was central to modernity". Any culture could be impacted by the increase in scientific consciousness secularization of religious and the growth of instrumental thinking. Modernity then issues from rationality which is culture neutral.

The worlds of folklore and contemporary are not contradictory or competing concepts rather they act symbiotically to each other as expressed before.

Tradition is an ideological corpus that holds a society together in linear progression, non-linear progression and its entropic tendencies. There are, however, other defining characteristics like there is growing disenchantment with the world, secularization, rationalization, commodification, mass society.

Mass Society implies large scale movement of goods, people and information among separate areas, standardization of many aspects of society which are helpful for mobility, increased specialization and interdependence of different parts of the society.

Thus modernity can be apparently contradictory but these features listed above are different parts of the overall ontology of this process. When the elements or products of modernity 'invade' folk culture through popular processes as various cultural aspects such as folktales, there is a widespread "overhaul of cultural and social ontology" and these tend to

266 Gerard Delanty, Modernity and Post Modernity. 1963

267 Gerard Delanty, Modernity and Post Modernity. 1963
change a society and prepare it for further changes. This results in a “homogenization of culture”\(^{268}\) and creates widespread diversification at the local level.

Rationality is one of the norms in Modernity. According to Weber, it has four aspects: Efficiency, Predictability, Quantity rather than Quality and Substitution of non-human for human technologies. If system has all the four, is termed as a hyperational but it is also accompanied by the “irrationality of rationality”\(^ {269}\). It demystifies and dehumanizes things by injecting efficiency into the system and similarity across cultures.

Habermas says, “system (society) and life world should exist together living an intermarked but parallel existence”.\(^ {270}\) The problem of the modern world is that now the system begins to exercise power or to “colonize” the life world. This leads to a situation where the rational system denies the freedom to the life-world a freedom that is necessary to allow the life-world to “grow to further maturity”. So, “restraining barriers” should be erected and “sensors” used to make a greater impact on life.

The various other discernable changes in the modern tradition of folklore are: the professional oral transmitters of folk tales have donned in an experimental mode. They narrate tales which exhibit the interactions of a plural society. One of the key institutions, family differed in its nature in traditional societies. The family was multifunctional but in modern set up, the functions of the family is the domain of the state.

The contemporary situations in folklore can be studied under interfaces: The “Folk”, “Lore”, “City”

In recent years folklorists have begun to think urban. According to Mclever, folk narratives deals with “living and vigorous tradition” not with “relics and survivals, but with aspects of contemporary custom and social behavior, usage and beliefs with folklore, in short, as a living activity of a given community, not as a body of knowledge fixed in time or as a

\(^{268}\) Ibid.


corpus of survivals which does not become folklore until it has reached a certain degree of antiquity".271

The concept of neighbourhood emerges, as an ingrown community with its fixed sense of physical boundaries. The various degrees and limits of neighbourliners that can be observed: middle aged women will bring meals to a seek neighbor but never invite her in to tea or watch TV their husbands meet friends at a pub, club, football match, at the mill, but never at home.

If one scans their lore, one finds them in the form of little traditional narratives, belief in good luck and bad luck, expressed through proverbs, amulets, and rituals, and a corpus of "sub-proverbial sayings" uttered on street corners, in shops, on buses. Many layers of urban folklore has been deposited by successive immigrations of Nepalis, Bihar, Multanis et al. Rural migrants come to the city in search for greener pastures also influence the folklore tradition. City serves as teeming labs for folklorist offering almost endless possibilities among ethnic, occupational, socio-economic, professional groups.

"Folk" "Lore" and "Industry":

In the older theory of folklore, Earth and peasant and pastoral life preserved the seasonal rituals and traditional culture that folklorists studied not only in oral but also in physical forms. Craftsmen of village and farm, along with oral narrators transmitted folk skills and products. The industrial revolution polluted the rural rhythms so conducive to story telling, folksinging, and the persistence of folk belief and in replacing the craftsman by the machine. In common usage, "folklore" has meant preindustrial traditions and artifacts. The machine, the factory, the assembly line method of mass production and the wholesale distribution and consumption of goods supposedly mark an end to folklore and folklife pattern in the steadily expanding domain of the world they occupy. Urban industrialism has destroyed the old folk community and created in its place a traditionless, faceless labour force bound to machines.

A body of counter-evidence and counter-theory is beginning to appear. Hermann Bausinger challenged the traditional view of tradition. He speaks of a "fundamental new

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approach in folklore studies". Today this study of survivals, predominantly mythological in orientation, has by and large been transformed into a historically oriented investigation of contemporary patterns. We no longer believe that industry necessarily implies the end of a specific folk culture but rather we attempt to trace the modifications and mutations undergone by folk culture in the industrialized and urbanized world.

This requires a shift in methodology. A folklorist brings to the job a set of tools quite distinct from the tools of the sociologist like tourism and folk culture. The vast influx of visitors in villages catering to tourists does not destroy the traditions, although the intrusion of alien ways do alter the existing social and economic institutions. Commercializations of folk festivals, dances, custome and crafts had led to the neologism “folklorismus”. Almost the whole countryside has responded to the focus of industrialization represented by increased mobility, resulting from the advent of the automobile, the mechanization of agriculture, policies of land reclamation and resettlement and the speed of small-scale industry into the countryside. Industrialization is seen as a rural as well as an urban development affecting folk traditions. There is commonality of interest between the peasant and the worker. With the introduction of machinery and collective management to the farms the successful young workers have declared their resentment of the humiliating labels leveling all distinctions between city and countryside. Industrialization has thus linked the erstwhile peasant and the city factory worker in a common newfound self-confidence. Two of the great technological symbols of the machine age, the automobile and the computer have captivated the folk fancy.

“Folk” “Lore” and “Mass Media”

In the traditional concept of folklore the spoken word is of utmost importance. Oral tradition and oral transmission are supposedly the sine qua non, blighted in our time by the printed word and the new electronic channels of communication—radio, cinema, t.v. It seems, at times, the enemy of folklore is media that blankets mass culture—newspaper magazines, television, recording desks etc.

The linkages among folk and mass culture is reflected in the manner in which millions watch the same episodes and laugh at the same comedies, idolize the same stars et al. In 1972, in Myth and Modern Man, Raphael Patai drew bold analogies between classical myths

and expressive formulations in western industrial society. He compares, Hercules with Mickey Mouse of Walt Disney's film cartoons "the basic similarity of the two new types lies primarily in the power relationship between the new and his adversary. Whether Mickey or Hercules the new in each case faces overwhelming odds. In fact, in the course of the almost ritualized combat sequence, then are invariably one or more junctures at which the new is quite clearly trapped and defeated. A second and equally important similarity between Mickey and Hercules in that both partake of a double character superhuman hero and ridiculous buffoon [Mickey's] very appearance provokes laughter. But then after sufficient provocation by the cat, he shows his mettle, underneath the mousey exterior he is, in reality a great hero in as much as he defeats the cat, he is superman."\(^{273}\)

The three directions in culling folklore from mass media are: to identify folkloristic themes, apply these themes to oral folk sources and to interpret the use of purpose to which this mediated folklore is being put. For example advertising industry utilizes mythical heroes and beasts in advancing the claims of their products through television commercials and advertisements. The Superman -Shaktiman becomes the representation of the archetypal mythical hero. On radio, one can listen to agriculture related information- best time and methods to sow and harvest seeds, information about monsoons, prevention of crops from diseases et al. The cover of greeting cards carries folk themes and symbols like the picture of Lord Ganesha, love couples of Lord Sri Krishna and Radha. The folk songs of Haryana like Ragnis talk of love stories, freedom fighters, saints, kings, folk rituals etc. Printed books with illustrations on folk narratives, posters like Ram Darbar that depict scenes from the epic Ramayana, Gitaupadesh where Lord Krishna is theologizing Arjuna about the importance of "Karma", films redifining the epics in contemporary context like the two latest hit flicks - Mani Ratnam's "Ravan" and Prakash Jha's "Rajneeti" ,novels but whose language has always been Hindi. I never came across a novel written in Haryanvi language.

The Local festivals and customs have been loosing shine with each passing day. As more and more people are flocking the city and getting employed in the city, the lack of time has been hampering the spirit of local festivals.

The traditional rituals and customs are vanishing fast and are being replaced with new modern westernized ways. Earlier when a close relative visited, he or she was welcomed with

a "tilak" of kumkum and "roli" on the forehead and the guest touched the feet of the elders as a token of respect and love. Now a days guests are welcomed without much rituals. Earlier entire food dishes were made at home but now a days they have been substituted by ready to eat and ready to cook food.

Pattern of a Modern Hero

He expects only a word of gratitude and helps out of kindness in his heart. Not that he is too good but quite likeable and refreshing. The female counterpart could easily be created for new audience: creativity and receptivity are their defining characteristics. The children seek out aspects of commercial television as a consolidation and confirmation of their every day lives. There is a balance between preservation of resources with their commoditization, development and marketing.

Pattern of Modern Society

In the traditional rural society, cultural space was limited based on series of events. In modern societies it is unlimited. There is a continuous flow like railways have reduced space; electric lights have changed the traditional division of day and night, the working routines, daily social life etc.

Have the ideological orientations like purity and pollution, karma, been able to stand the test of time in context of Haryana in view of western onslaught, economic liberalization, globalization, independence? One thing is certain. There is still a wide social base for the acceptance of these age old traditional epical ideas. They still hold relevance to a large extent. However along with the existence of these traditional ideas, there are new permutations and combinations that have part of new Haryanvi society. For instance the various assertions by caste organizations for availing government favour by asking for reservations, funds, inter-jati politics during elections, emergence of crime and politics, erosion of jajmani relations, inter-caste marriages, weakening of bonds of kinship due to modern education, new occupations, geographical mobility, mass media, women sharing domestic chores, greater freedom in the choice in marriage, rise of new form of spirituality in the form of various cults etc.

I could decipher the use of various folk elements in various arenas in my state and it is an interesting exercise to enlist few of these.
During the event of election campaigning, the politicians mouth hollow platitudes quoting from Ramayana, Mahabharata and other epical-folklore material to connect with the audience. The partition stories narrated by Pakistan immigrants in Haryana have become a part of Haryanvi folklore tradition itself. The heroic biographies of benevolent outlaws in Haryana have become a part of Haryanvi folk history. The narrative songs sung by child labourers in fields and factories, farmers, factory workers, the discourses of pain like some bodily handicap have contributed to the richness of its folklore tradition.

The various views regarding the concept of identity-similarities/dissimilarities between individual groups (language), a sense of continuing identity only in memorized culture (oral history and folk lore), recognition of identity by others have been a part of folklore of today.

The memories of migration are the separate sub category of narratives ‘told as truth’ altogether they actually may be as fantastic and untrue as any fairy tale. The handwritten newspapers of early popular movements are a part of folklore tradition too.

There has been a growing exchange of jokes, incidents, pieces of personal anecdotes, other information through electronic medium. Computer lore as concept of folk lore is about computer and its related subjects. It is a boundary less space in which it is a not at all a simple thing to draw lines between the devices intended for the recording and study of lore by folklore scholars and the environments which allow for the inscription and exchange of lore by the computer literate and plugged-in folk.

The mass media, popular culture and new technologies like railways, television, phones, electricity, car, radio have been instrumental in creating new folklore material.

Agricultural practices now have to be understood in the context of peasant’s level of technological knowledge, legal and social institutions, religion and the way of life. His agriculture constitutes a body of skilled knowledge which is transmitted from one generation to another. It has enabled him to survive for several centuries in a harsh environment and a corollary of this survival is a certain amount of faith in his traditional techniques and certain amount of skepticism. His technical system is interwoven in a closely enmeshed social and religious system. The introduction of any single tool or institution will have repercussions not only in the field of techniques but also in social and religious fields. Resistance to a new tool can be seen even if its efficiency is proved because it disturbs the traditional sanction,
division of labour between the sexes. The several hundred years have been rendered partially obsolete by the new knowledge, technology, new political norms and population growth. By changing his traditional culture to suit the new environment will be beyond his limited capacities. The state should have special responsibilities in this regard.

Honestly speaking, as a native and also as somebody who had a fairly good interaction with the natives as a field worker, there is a mix bag of feelings. I feel intense pain at the enormity of unawareness that Haryanvis have about the cultural importance of their state. Generally speaking, the popular opinion is everything related with Haryana is old fashioned and out of sync with the times. The proximity to a metropolitan has resulted in an unrestrained onslaught of westernization. There is a lack of realization of their cultural roots that is usually discernable among people sharing common culture in other parts of India. The lack of consciousness of their identity that existed at the time of its political formation is continuing till date. Whatever rich culture that formed its basis for separate political identity has been deteriorating. The common layperson considers folk traditions and culture as 'Purane Jamane ki batein’. It appears as if there had been lack of institutional set up – social, cultural, political for reconsolidating its waning culture thereby allowing western impact to invade in a very horrendous way. For instance if one switches to Haryanvi entertainment channel, one comes across derated music songs which have no connection with the folk culture of Haryana. The presenters make use of Punjabi pop tunes for Haryanvi songs to climb popularity charts. The role written for female counterparts are performed by girls from other states for the video albums shoots. There has been growing malpractice of hiring call girls for the same. The style of dressing is simply a confused way of dressing. It is neither western nor Haryanvis nor Punjabi.

As a researcher I have tried to analyze Haryanvi folk narratives by representing myriad angles in contemporary manner. This research work is an effort in the direction of making a layman in Haryana more conscious and aware of the rich culture and heritage of the state. It is also an effort to make the state government more sensitive and responsive to the needs of preserving the ‘Haryanvi Loksahitya’