CHAPTER 3: INTERROGATING FOLK REALISM

This chapter explores the meaning of Folk realisms and analyses it with respect to the primary texts. The description of the primary texts in Chapter I depicts the importance of beginning a new conversation toward understanding indigenous situations as a step toward retrieval of indigenous epistemologies. In this context, Folk realisms are understood as an important framework that facilitates a move towards discourse of contemporary indigeneity. And, as elaborated in Chapter-II, Folk realisms are formulated in the framework of spatiality. Folktales and writings were probed to identify key concepts that make Folk realisms; also, a hypothetical statement of Folk realisms was arrived at. So, with the focus on hypothetical statement of Folk realisms, in this chapter stories are read and analyzed to understand indigenous perspectives on contemporary situations and issues. The concepts chosen emanate from the definition of Folk realisms.

Before an analysis of Folk realisms is begun, it is relevant to locate it in the contemporary conversations about indigenous epistemologies. Linda Tuhiwai Smith observes in *Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples* that Imperialism, the destruction of indigenous place, the politics of academics that have always discounted and discredited indigenous knowledge that arises out of their world views, indigenous researches that foreground these become important. It is only when indigenous researches emerge, the methodology is recognised and from within this methodology, the indigenous epistemology can be
re-presented. (Smith 2012) Thus, defining indigenous epistemologies is to
foreground the manner in which they are formulated. Michael Anthony Hart cites
Maggie Kovahc’s definition of indigenous epistemology in the article titled
*Indigenous Worldviews, Knowledge and research* as “. . . a fluid way of knowing
derived from teachings transmitted from generation to generation by storytelling,
where each story is alive with the nuances of the storyteller. It emerges from
traditional languages emphasizing verbs, is garnered through dreams and visions,
and is intuitive and introspective. Indigenous epistemology arises from the
interconnections between the human world, the spirit, and inanimate entities.” (Hart
2010: 8)

The definition emphasizes ‘fluid way of knowing’ as a method of
comprehension of everyday life realities. Emanating from this emphasis on ‘fluid
way of knowing’, it gives precedence to storytelling as an important method of
recording and preserving realisms that are considered important by the indigenous
people—folk. So, stories are indigenous manner of communication. Also, it
recognizes the role of a different language-folk language- that is used to
communicate meaning making, in which stories play a vital role. Third and most
important, it understands the indigenous vision that includes ‘human world, the
spirit and inanimate entities’. It provides a broad foundation that is inclusive of
insights, visions.

The concept of Folk realisms, in fact, has emerged from two
important understanding. Firstly, the primary texts persistently situate the folktales
and writings in the contemporary milieu to privilege indigenous people and place.
Secondly, the endeavor of the contemporary literary theories is to move beyond the Postcolonial discourses to indigenous researches. This, of course, is not to discredit the Postcolonial Conversations. In fact, the desire to move toward indigenous researches spring from understanding the importance of decolonizing methodologies. One important manner that is recognised is to turn inwardly and re-emerge to find indigenous ways of regaining identities and selfhood. Understood in this perspective and so situated, in the context of the primary texts, the definition turns the attention toward literatures and the representations of indigenous in it. Again, this comprehension is also tangentially related to Postcolonial theories as it recognises that just as colonial experiences are different and so, the decolonizing methods are varied too. So, the configuration of Folk realisms must be understood in the background of these urgencies in literary theoretical milieu and so situated in the indigenous literary expressions of realisms. Thus, Folk realisms emerge as a concept that endeavors to identify and bring into discussions indigenous epistemologies in Indian literatures.

So, an analysis of Folk realisms is taken with the understanding that the present Indian literary scene opens to both transnational and global influences and perspectives with the demand that its indigeneity be understood. Two streams of concepts are identified that emanate from the definition of Folk realisms. One stream emerges from a desire to search for and identify our own literary orientation in terms of theoretical discourses based on the contemporary literary scenario. This is one of the central concerns because it is this global space where indigenous identities are homogenized. The second stream arises from the contemporary
necessity to re-present indigenous epistemologies in the global space. Thus, two sets of distinct concepts from the present literary theoretical discourses that are chosen foreground Folk realisms as an indigenous epistemology that facilitates indigenous responses and perspectives.

The first set of concepts is chosen from the discipline of Folkloristics. The concepts are—story, folk imagination, narration, region and cultural specificities. These concepts are chosen because indigenous Folkloristic discourses depict these differently from the European Folkloristic discussions and the written literary theoretical discourses. But most significantly, these concepts formulate Folk realisms as they are part of epistemological heritage of indigenous Folkloristics. Also, in the Indian literary context, it is observed that the written and the folk co-exist. Since Folk realisms is in this intersecting space—where the written literatures are seen using folktales/motifs and the Folkloristic discourses are re-examining the colonial folkloristic endeavor from Post colonial perspective to move towards the significance of re-membering indigenous epistemologies—these concepts undergo re-configuration. The reconfiguration is understood better through analysis of the chosen tales and writings.

The other set of key concepts that are identified for discussion are—realism, Postcolonial Exotic and Subjectivity. These concepts arise from literary theoretical discourses that have been consistently revised over a period of time. But, specifically with respect to *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends* and *In Quest of Indian Folktales Ram Gharib Chaube and William Crooke*, these concepts undergo a revision as the two texts are both situated and re-membered
from its colonial folkloristic endeavor to the present indigenous researches. As argued in earlier chapters, with respect to Sirigannada, the response of vernacular literatures to colonial experiences and so, their Postcolonial responses are different from the literatures written in English. Again, as discussed earlier, a study of these concepts under indigenous literatures—folk and written is important to register indigenous responses to contemporary concerns that are open to globalization. However, the analysis points out that the each tale and writing, in their distinctive style, re-configures the concepts consistently to present the voices and experiences in the multicultural scenario of Indian literatures.

Extensive as this perspective as it is, a study of each of the chosen concept facilitates an understanding of indigeneity in the contemporary literary scenario. The discussion of the chosen concepts in the context of the primary texts helps to probe both the concepts and contextualize the concepts for a better understanding of the same. Contemporary, as understood from the disciplines of Folkloristics and Literary Studies, is continuously evolving; yet, it does not discard the past-be it with reference to the memory or epistemologies. That is, though each concept has evolved over a period of time, it accommodates the present. The concepts are interrogated for the contemporary they accommodate. And so, they are now studied with reference to Folk realismss. Secondly, each concept chosen for study under Folk realisms, it is understood, is bound to the concept of realism. So, analysis of stories with respect to chosen concepts follows this order: realism, Postcolonial exotic, folk imagination, subjectivity, narration, region-cultural specificities.
The first concept that is taken up for study is realism because the discourse of socio-political realisms emerged predominantly during colonization. It was also at this time that written literatures voiced their region specific realities in the vernacular literatures. So, in a manner of speaking, story tellers and writers portray their understanding of realisms from their respective positions of caste/class, gender and/or language-Sanskrit/English/ Vernacular. Also, as noted in earlier chapters, each period has represented its tryst with realisms in varied manner. And each literature-folktales and written literatures presents and represents their comprehension of reality emerging with their own realisms. With respect to the study of Folk realisms, as will be seen, each concept relates and represents realisms.

Folk realisms or Counter Systems?

It is important to understand the discussion of realism in the indigenous folkloristic context. Apart from the political need that arose during the colonial period that changed the representations and discourses in written literatures, it is interesting to know the discussions that arise from within the indigenous Folkloristics. For example, A K Ramanujan discusses realism as consciousness in his essay *Countering Systems* with specific reference to women’s folktales. He also clarifies that by woman’s tales he means both tales told by women and tales concerning women. (Ramanujan A K: 39)

Citing the example of the folktale *Deepadamalli* or *The Lampstand Woman* told in Kannada, Tamil and Telugu languages, he demonstrates that the tale portrays a counter system of *Vidhi to Karma* of the canonical/brahminial
perspective to interpret realities. The folktale does present a counter system to
*Karma—Vidhi / hanebaraha* (lit. what’s written on the forehead) in Kannada. The
tale narrates the sojourn of a princess whose bed of flowers turns out to be her
nemesis. She doesn’t share this with anyone and is separated from her husband. She
goes through innumerable trauma before she is united with her husband and family.
The tale is remarkable for the manner in which it positions the woman and the
message it conveys to its audience—men and women. Typical of the cautionary
tale, it has a number of situations that are symbolic, that portray the world view of
the folk, that voices the anguish of the woman and communicates it through a
different concept to *Karma—vidhi or hanebaraha* in kannada.

This tale presents a counter system of not just the Sanskrit /
brahminical tradition; it counters the male/logical world view as well. In this
counter system, the folktale embeds the hidden/ silenced voices of anguish and
trauma, to present the feminine world view. It succeeds in presenting the gendered
dimensions of realities that is inclusive of the metaphysical perspective as well. For
example, the suffering of the Princess is apparently illogical. She is unable to
express it and also resist it. It is not, as A K Ramanujan suggests in the essay, a case
of punitive super ego. On the other hand, it presents to its listeners a message of the
silent, uncommunicated anguish of the woman in a different, and perhaps an
indifferent, system. It is significant that the princess reunites with her husband only
after he has heard her story. Her suffering has empowered her to voice herself
without blaming the indifferent system she has dealt with. And the folktale deals
with ripeness to this travail of the woman. The princess is aware of the fact that it is
her own journey of life. Yet, the message for the woman is to speak, to voice and share her anguish. The tale does not speak aggressively against the system of patriarchy; but, it is a subtle criticism. In this understanding, the folktale is already in the third phase of feminism, which places woman’s empowerment as an understanding of herself. Thus, folktales of women negotiated with the canonical belief systems with a system that emanated from their experiences. When the folktales are passed on from one generation to the other, it is this negotiated belief system consciousness that is diffused. This is true of the folktales in general as well. And perhaps it is for this reason that A K Ramanujan begins his essay with acknowledging the fact that folktales are embedded with a consciousness of realisms.

Surely, there are many tales that perform countering the hegemonic/dominant world view. It is interesting to compare the available dominant literature with a folktale to understand how Folk realisms enable to recognise and privilege the folk voices to re-present the realisms of the folk. For example, Old Deccan Days Or Hindoo Fairy Legends records the tale Chandra’s Vengeance (Narayan 2005: 212) is a folk version of Silappadikaram—The Tale of Anklet. While the Epic has all the features of classic literature—the structure of Epic, the cause of destruction, chaste woman-Kannagi; Kovalan who falls in love with the courtesan Madhavi and the ensuing burning of the city of Madurai. It also is highly moralistic in tone. But, retold as a folktale in Chandra’s Vengeance, it is devoid of the complications that are present in the classical epic and presents the thread bare story of Chandra’s vengeance. Of course, the entire tale is set differently because it
has a different beginning and so a different ending. The folktale is intimately connected with the storyteller and their contemporary realities to provide of vision of Folk realisms that pervade the everyday life.

The tale begins with how the Sawkar’s childless wife adopts her sister’s son. She disappointedly returns him to her sister as he behaves disrespectfully with her saying that if she were his mother, she would have taken better care of him. She decides to meet and receive the boon of motherhood. She meets two women on similar errand—Coplinghee Ranee and a nautch woman (street dancer). She meets Mahadeo who grants her the wish for a child by giving her a mango and permits her share it with the two women. Out of this is born Koila the boy Sawkar’s wife, Moulee to nautch woman and Chandra to Coplinghee Ranee.

The tale relates how Chandra, born with a unique anklet is set afloat in a golden box because the Pandit predicts that she will cause the destruction of the city Madura Tinivelly. It reaches a fisherman, who gives it to the Sawkar. The tale traces the marriage of Koila and Chandra as babies, the growth of the children and the chance meeting of Koila with Moulee and their subsequent marriage, which brings Chandra to Madura Tinivelli. From here, the tale follows the known facts i.e. Koila’s selling of the anklet, his arrest and death, Chandra’s anguish and the burning of the city. But, apart from these incidental similarities, there are a number of differences between Silappadikkaram and Chandra’s Vengeance.

Apart from the important information regarding the birth of the three children by the boon of Mahadeo, there are many interesting details that the tale
provides. For example, in this tale, Koila who is married to Moulee is a lazy man. Moulee’s mother asks him to earn money and this is the time he remembers and wants to re-unite with his wife Chandra. He returns to the town, tells Chandra that he was made to drink a potion that made him forget her. Now, he wants to return but for which he needs to repay a loan. As a result it is that Chandra gives him her anklet that was with her from her birth. When he sells it, the Coplinghee Ranee recognises that it is her daughters but by which time Koila has beheaded himself as that is dignified than being put to death by the soldiers. All this time, Chandra is taken care of by a ‘purwari’ a low caste woman old woman. At the time Koila is killed, Chandra feels blood in her mouth as eats the food brought by the old woman. And of course, with the news of Koila’s death, Chandra reaches the queen’s palace; the mother-Copalinghee Ranee recognises it as her daughter’s anklet but is soon destroyed by Chandra’s anguish, rage and anger. The tale relates the burning of the city in this manner: “The Rajah was unable to answer her with a word. Then she fell on her knees, and rent her clothes, and tore her hair; and when she tore it all the land began to burn, and all her hair burned too.” (Narayan 2005: 226)

And not only is this extremely different from the curse of a chaste woman, when the entire city is burning with her anguish, the old woman reminds and requests Chandra to spare the Purwari lanes because she who lives there has helped her and it is spared. But the tale ends with the revival of Koila as a needle and thread drop from the heavens on his body; Chandra sews the two halves and prays to Mahadeo to revive her husband, which is fulfilled. What is extremely
important is Anna’s final words in the tale. She says: “But to this day in the Madura Tinivelly country you can trace where all the land was burned.” (Narayan 2005: 226) This statement by Anna denotes the indigenous manner of relating with the place that formulations identities and retains them; the folk imagination that connects facts and tale that formulate the realism of the folk’s everyday life. And dismembering from the place that takes place during colonization destroys their subjectivities and realisms. It is in this direction that folktales play a significant role in preserving memories that are important in retaining subjectivities, formulating identities through the realisms of folk.

Of course, the tale presents a counter-system in the fact that it presents a counter to Karma to explain the reason for the events as the Silappadikkaram does. So, the tale does more that presenting a counter system—it empowers the common man to be a part of the place and its historicity. So, it successfully re-presents and counters some of the dominant prejudices against the portraiture of low caste people that were/are prevalent. Here too the folktale seems to be fulfilling the conventional role of presenting the popular voice. It is so; yet, along with this, it is also presenting the world of the common man, embedded in the everyday realities of life—inclusive of seeking Mahadeo’s blessing and being drugged. But, that which emerges forcefully is the framework of an inclusive realism that it portrays. The tale makes no attempt at erasure of factualities and/or voices. The folktale does voices forcefully the varied faces of womanhood—the pain of the childless mother, the empathy that binds the three childless women; the helplessness of a woman, the loving woman, the beguiling that is caused by the
woman, the sympathetic woman. Female subjectivity emerges forcefully and in its different dimensions. And the burning of the city is not because of the prowess of chastity but the trauma of loss—of the beloved husband, of their honesty and reputation. Koila’s death destroys the ideal of the responsibilities of the king. Seen also from this position, the destruction of the place springs from this betrayal of responsibilities, showcasing a different dimension of power configurations in indigenous system.

There are the realities of caste system represented graphically in its description of the place, the travails of a childless mother, the problem of desertion and the ensuing realities of the status of a woman; there are also emotional realisms that rule the tale—the blessing of Mahadeo, the generosity and the meanness that formulates many realities and, the suffering that results in the final burning of the city and the revival of Koila from death by Mahadeo’s blessing. Of course, in terms of narration, the tale is wrapped in the final realism of that which is most enduring—the sense of fellowship that defines Chandra’s relationship with the low caste woman. The tale successfully presents the complex realities enframed within the realisms of the place.

At the same time, included in *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends*, it also depicts Anna’s realisms too. It must be remembered that Anna speaks ‘our Calicut’ language and her grandparents moved to Goa and here they converted to Christianity. This tale, told by Anna, possibly relates a part of the realities of their lives that encouraged them to take to Christianity. Thus situated, the tale surely is a source of cultural memory as well as cultural realities, which
cannot be only counter-systems. Another dimension is the interesting presentation of folk imagination that can twine apparently diverse realities—of the burning of the city and the anguish of a woman—into a single realism with help of the world view of the folk.

Folk realisms and Socio-Political realities:

In continuation with this line of argument—that realisms are formulated by folk, it is important to analyze the contribution of editors in formulating contemporary literary discourses. As said in Chapter-1, the introductions by the editors play a vital role in re-membering and re-presenting the literatures of the past decade. In this direction, the introductions by the editors present two different aspects of realism. First, they re-member the folktales narrated by the people collected during the colonial period to retrieve indigenous epistemology; two, in the context of Postcolonial and Indigenous literary discourses, the introductions present a story of the journey of these story itself. It is the stories that carry in them both indigenous epistemologies to enable a study of Folk realisms.

Thus re-organized, there are two distinct stories that the primary texts narrate. The first story is the folktales themselves in *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends, In Quest of Indian Folktales* and the written literary narratives in *Sirigannada*; second, the emergence of the theoretical framework under which the Editors discuss these folktales and literary writings. Each of the primary texts is differently situated with respect to temporality. But they are re-contextualized in the 21st C and this provides an opportunity to re-think, re-
configure indigenous epistemology from an indigenous perspective in the 21st C. In presenting the narrator’s (Anna Liberata De Souza and Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube) narrative, both Narayan and Naithani rightly express an anxiety of betrayal that is distinctly Postcolonial. But this anxiety does not rule the introductions; instead, the editors succeed in drawing the attention of the reader beyond the immediate Postcolonial discourses to the necessity of indigenous research and epistemology.

Narayan begins her introduction with ‘Situating Old Deccan Days’. Here she tells of the interaction between Anna Liberata De Souza and Mary Frere that leads to the story-telling session first and then to the documenting of the folktales. From this primary relationship, grow the connected discourses of colonization, Postcolonialism and necessity of retrieving indigenous epistemologies. She firmly pinions Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends in its political and literary scenario to present everyday life of people in this effervescent but decisive moment of history. The subsequent sections, organized in this order – ‘The Folktales’, ‘Anna Liberata De Souza’s Life Story’, ‘Bartle Frere as Colonial Authority’, ‘Mary Frere as Collector’ and the final section ‘The Afterlife of Old Deccan Days’- fashioned from this Situating the Old Deccan Days. So, each section captures the essence of social, political, economic and gender equations as Anna narrated her marvelous folktales to Mary Frere during their tour of ‘Southern Mahratta country’ in 1865-6.

The section ‘The folktales’ situates the conversations about the collection of folktales in Indian written literatures. “Centuries before Mary Frere began her project of writing down Anna de Souza’s stories in English, oral tales had
been transmuted into literary texts in a range of Indian languages. Some of the classic Indian story collections—the *Kathasaritsagara, Jatakas, Panchatantra, Suka Sapati*, and others—had a wide circulation in Indian and were also well known in translation in Europe” (Narayan 2005: x) This information presents the literary and language interactions that were prevalent and recorded in Indian literatures ‘centuries before’. But, it also has two implications in the contemporary literary scenario: firstly, accepting that collection of folktales in the written form is not new to Indian Folkloristics, (Anna’s narrative too draws attention to folktales in the print form. Narayan 2005:27) the difference is in the manner of documentation and the question of authorship of these documented tales.

Second, since this is colonial folkloristic endeavor, this section divulges the three distinct time zones together—classical, colonial and post-colonial. By re-contextualizing the information about folktales in written forms, Narayan re-presents indigenous socio-literary realities and their discourses in the contemporary. This trajectory of time-zones also helps to understand and explain exoticization that shape colonial and Postcolonial discussions. But, these conversations are held with reference to the folktales that are indigenous epistemologies—of imaginative re-presentations of realities and of the ‘folk’ or ‘the common man’ perceptions of colonial history that disturbed India. At the same time, one must recognize the conscious use of narrative fissure here. It demands the readers’ active participation to comprehend indigenous realisms that is formed in this context of time.
The next section ‘Anna Liberata De Souza’s Life Story’ is detailed study of ‘Narrator’s Narrative’ recorded by Mary Frere. Of course, the recording of the narrator’s voice is a radical step that Mary took since this seems to be unprecedented. Yet it must be acknowledged that the book, with its radical outlook, continues to contribute to the colonial project of presenting the colonized as exotic. As Narayan presents the reader with the historical data of the formation of Lingayat as a community in Karnataka, of how Anna’s family migrated to varied places that equips Anna with many languages and her present deteriorated financial state that forces her to take position Ayah with the sahibs that the book is re-membered to its Deccan days. And this re-membering is a facet Folk realisms because it counters exoticization of both tales and its narrator-Anna that happens in the process of the book and Postcolonial exoticization of folktales by connecting it with Anna. This re-membering gifts another effervescent moment that opens vistas of socio-economic and political discourses of the nineteenth century. At the same time, Anna’s individual perceptions of this historical moment gains immense significance. That is to say, a study of the trajectory of—classic, colonial, Postcolonial and indigenous-history is enabled. This provides a kaleidoscopic vision as well as a polyphonic quality to the discourse.

Another reality that is presented is the trauma of the individual caught in the time of transformations as part of colonization. Of course, many of her woes are part of Life. Forty odd years old, Anna was already an old woman. She suffered much—widowed at a young age, took to the job of Ayah with the ‘sahibs’, lost her only son the year before she told these tales to Mary. Impoverished, forced
to fend for herself and her children, she is painfully aware of gender inequality. Narayan notes: “... Anna pointed to gender inequalities in employment and earning potential with the same sort of forthrightness used by the plucky heroines in her tales: “I know your language—What use? To blow the fire? I only a miserable woman, fit to go to cook-room and cook the dinner. So go down in the world, a poor woman: (not much good to have plenty in head, and empty pocket!) but if I’d been a man I might now be a Fouzdar [Chief Constable]” (Narayan 2005: xvi)

There is yet another significant layer of reality to this historical moment that Narayan unfolds through Anna’s life story. As noted earlier, Anna’s forefather belonged to the Lingayat community. Embracing Christianity meant greater opportunities and not just opening up to a new world view. But Anna is to be sadly disappointed—it has not benefited her at all. “Anna confided that she would like to travel about and see the world, particularly Calcutta, Madras, England and Jerusalem. She does not appear to have travelled, having stayed on in domestic service for other British employers in India after Freres returned to England.” (Narayan 2005: xvii) Anna’s articulate anger about the new system—colonial, Christian patriarchy—is equally disillusioning. In this system, she could only be the exotic colonial subject. This also explains Mary’s indifference to what possibly was an indirect appeal of Anna for monetary support that could procure a livelihood in her old age.

Such an understanding also leads one to interrogate the question of the importance of cultural identity to the individual. It is, of course accepted that identity too is constantly evolving, context dependent as such. (Hall 1996) But, the
The irony of the colonization is that the identity of the colonized subject is constantly dismembered and has no place of identity. The identity of the native subject, especially during colonization, constantly slips because it is constantly dismembered and mutilated. Thus, over a period of time, new identities were forged; these identities, though were not disparate from the earlier ones, are novel. This is so especially in transnational interactions. Anna’s identity within the Deccan plateau, even after embracing Christianity, is within the indigenous worldview. Though her grandfather converted to Christianity, the family structure and the values remained much the same. It was her grandmother who told them stories when Anna’s mother was at work. And, much of her criticism of the changes that have taken place arise out of this lived experience—be it her critique of how her father’s insufficient income as a tent lascar or the observation on the rise in the cost of living (Narayan 2005:22) or on her pride in having her daughter Rosie married in grand style with music and song (Narayan 2005: 29) or her remarks on the status of women in their marital home—“... Our native people have a very happy life till we marry. ... but after they’re married they go to live at their husband’s house and husband’s mother and sisters are often very unkind to them. ... you English people can’t understand that sort of thing. When an Englishman marries, he goes to a new house, and his wife is the mistress of it; ...” (Narayan 2005:27) The change of religion has not changed Anna’s indigenous identity.

But, it is with Bartle Frere’s introduction that Anna becomes unfamiliar even for someone who is familiar with the cultural history of Karnataka!
The Lingaets form one of the most strongly marked divisions of the Hindoo races south of the river Kistna. They are generally well-favored, well-to-do people, noticeable for their superior frugality, intelligence, and industry, and for the way in which they combine and act together as a separate body apart from other Hindoos. They have many peculiarities of costume, of social ceremony, and of religion, which strike even a casual observer; and though clearly not aboriginal, they seem to have much ground for their claim to belong to a more ancient race . . . (Narayan 2006:12)

Thus contextualized, and seen in this situation, exoticization reveals two distinct aftermaths. Firstly, it exposes the process of dismembering of indigenous people from their epistemology; secondly, it uproots Anna from her indigenous identity. This is evident from many descriptions that Bartle Frere provides in his introduction with respect to the indigenous customs as well as worldviews. (Narayan 2005: 26-27) It is Narayan’s portrayal of Bartle Frere that counters this colonial authority that creates exotic. And it is not easy to counter these representations. One way of doing this is perhaps to turn around to see him as the colonizer, and NOT as an authoritative voice. The data provided by Narayan in this section- Bartle Frere As Colonial Authority-deconstructs his quasi-authoritative voice and counters it to re-member the tales to turn away the colonial gaze.

It is during the time of his appointment as Governor of Bombay in 1862 that many short-lived measures like the introduction of New Orleans cotton
plants were introduced to make up for the shortage of cotton in Manchester mills during the American Civil War. When it ended in 1865, Bombay markets crashed and Bartle Frere was blamed for it. (Narayan 2005: xix) These historical data thus contextualized in the background of the collection of ‘wonder-filled tales’, makes dismembering of indigenous people and their trauma evident. It is the folktales with their imaginative recording of socio-political realisms that are at the centre in the contemporary literary scenario. This cartography is a part of Folk realisms. This is the indigenous palimpsest moment that Folk realisms makes available for study.

*Mary Frere as a Collector* draws biographical information and portraiture of Mary as an independent individual with her own convictions and style as a collector of folktales. It is the latter that is pertinent for the study of Folk realisms, though it is true that the former shapes the latter. It is possible that in the long absence of her mother, Mary did see the motherly in Anna. And Anna too might have seen in Mary a shade of her daughter Rosie. Perhaps, it is this mutual perception that helped Anna to share both her personal life and the folktales as well. Mary was helped by the fact that Anna spoke fluently, though in her idiosyncratic manner, in English. Also, as Narayan rightly observes, it is this familiarity that makes Mary see Anna as a ‘speaking subject’, with her distinct voice and wisdom. No wonder, then, that Mary could resist opposition to retain Anna’s *Narrator’s Narrative* in her language and expression.

However, in spite of this relationship, Mary too assumes the role of colonial-master in *The Collector’s Apology*. Here is what Narayan has noted from the manuscript: “The stories were written down, because they appeared not only
interesting in themselves, but calculated to throw light on our knowledge of the character and customs of one of the people of India.” (Narayan 2005:XXIII) And she continues to write about essential difference between Hindoo stories and Mahometan stories of the sort of Arabian Nights. But though she begins in this manner, this burden of exoticization, as Narayan rightly says is taken over by her father.

It is the final section Afterlife of Old Deccan Days that connects the book of fairy legend directly to the contemporary necessity of discussing indigenous epistemologies. In fact, the introduction ends on a positive note of the joy of reading the marvelous, imaginative folktales to Narayan as well as its readers. The end is typical of many a folktales that says: “Everybody went to their homes and told the stories to their children.” Like the folktale with a message, the introduction too ends with the twenty seven marvelous tales. This archipelago like structure of the Introduction enables a move toward immense possibilities to retrieve indigenous epistemology—Folk realisms.

Similarly, Naithani’s Introduction too is situated in the contemporary necessity of finding indigenous epistemology. Her search for North Indian Folktales is a detective research work for precisely this reason—that silenced voices are made visible. The final tone of Postcolonialism in Naithani’s Introduction also presents similar trajectory of temporality—Colonial India, Post coloniality and search for an independent indigenous epistemology.

In fact, the entire focus of the introduction is on the research possibilities that arise out of this relationship situated in the colonial folkloristic
background that is partially academic—evident in the respectful conversations between Chaube and Crooke, and in part serves the colonial purposes of establishing Imperialism—the overtly anthropological intention of the collection of folktales. The recognition of this kind of ambivalent and ambiguous in situations is important to suggest possible interdisciplinary approaches for a better understanding of the complexities of the contemporary. And a move towards indigenous is bound to be shallow if these complexities are not understood and studied. Naithani’s introduction deals with these complexities and the desire for indigenous researches arise from this comprehension. A comprehension of these realities and the manner in which they affect the contemporary is one of the important understandings that emerge from situating it within the framework of Folk realisms.

**Folktales, Realities and Folk realisms:**

One of the revisions that is suggested and is expressed too is a different approach to understand the role of folktales. Naithani suggests that contextualizing the tale, folk and their milieu is important to situate the collection of tales as well as the tales themselves. She draws attention to the structure of the folktales that was designed while collecting it and uses ‘narratives’ instead of the usual term ‘folktales’. This change in description is important as it allows layers of meaning to be read and it allows her to narrate the story of Pandit Chaube and William Crooke.

The folktale is conventionally defined as fictitious telling, without any connection with the reality, far removed from real life. For example, many tales
begin with “Once upon a time, there was queen /king . . .” ‘Ranee/ Rajah’ of the folktales, mostly, are generic names; their lives depict the simple joys and sorrows that pervade the common man’s life. Even so, such narratives do depict two different realities—the kind of administrator the people expect and a reflection of their aspirations, fears and concerns. Thus it is relevant to probe the tales for these elements of politics as well as to contextualise the collection of narratives in their contemporary political exigencies and ideologies. This is so because, each tales is chosen by the narrator carefully, especially the collection of folktales by the colonial administrator-folklorist, with the understanding that s/he is narrating it to the ‘other’. That is, the folktales are narrated with the consciousness of the political context and its larger purposefulness.

For instance, the first tale and the only tale recorded by Chaube himself, quoted in Chapter-II also serve to prove a similar point. Chaube should begin with this tale that recalls the dignity that is an important world view. This is true of Anna as well, though Mary collects the tales with the intention of entertainment. For example, one of the tales told by Anna ‘Less Inequality than Men Deem’ (Tale 8) The tale narrates the theme of inequality from a different perspective. The young King asks his Wuzeer when he sees a young shepherd, out in the winter, clad in a coarse blanket. The king is surprised because with all the care he takes, he is prone to frequent illness. The wuzeer replies “overmuch care is worse than none at all.” (Narayan 2005: 120) To prove this, the wuzeer takes the shepherd to the palace and pampers him with all the good care—food, clothing and protecting him from cold weather and heat of the sun. After somet ime, the shepherd
is asked by the *wuzeer* to spend some time on the marble floor sprinkled with cold water. The shepherd is unable to withstand this change and soon dies. The king is much shocked by the turn of events and says “you see now what dangers we are exposed from which the poor are exempt. It is this that Nature equalizes her best gifts; wealth and opulence tend too frequently to destroy health and shorten life, though they may give much enjoyment to it whilst it lasts.” (Narayan 2005: 121)

Coming from the king, the observation is multiple implications. It presents a critique of differences in privileges, of comfort. At the same time, this is a lesson for the young king to understand his responsibilities as well as a warning to avoid too much of comfort. It is not farfetched to apply this to Anna and Mary Frere’s situation as well. This presents

However, to a large extent the events in the tales are far removed from reality; but it is also well known that the tales present not truth but people’s perception of reality. Yet, it is a limiting description only because it does not take into consideration the circumstances in which the tale was born. It’s the concept of narration that allows recognition and recording of these contexts. This shift in recognizing the fact that context is integral to the building of folktales is an important to contemporary Folkloristics. It is the contexts that depict the importance of folktales to indigenous situations. Because to indigenous people, the tales are not simple stories told; it comes wrapped with occasions in which the tales are narrated. In this specific situation, as Naithani rightly observes, the descriptive word ‘folktales’ masks both the context and the realities that facilitated the collection of tales. ‘Narrative’ focuses on many aspects of the story because, like Narayan, who
situates the old Deccan days in the storytelling time, Naithani too situates the quest of tales in its story-time of colonization of India. And so, the story is not, to repeat, a mere past time nor a store house of anthropological information; as Naithani says “it masks many realities and consciousness”. It is by understanding this feature of Folkloristics that its realisms are fathomed.

Folk realisms and Narratives:

In this connection of privileging the indigenous Folkloristics, Naithani presents four-fold approach in the third section of the introduction *Crooke, Chaube, and Colonial Folkloristics, 1868-1914*. (Naithani 2006) These suggestions allow and provide directions in the contemporary folkloristic endeavor—research or a theoretical discourse emanating from these collection of tales. The suggestions to re-visualize Folkloristic endeavors emerge from her concerned understanding of Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube’s role in the collection of folktales for William Crooke. This is a concern not just about Pandit Chaube but an entire community of Folklorists who were a part of the colonial Folkloristics. It this concern that demands a new approach; it is also rooted in the gruesome political reality of colonial conflict between the indigenous people and White man — the desire to be free and the desire to rule. And it is precisely this desire to be free that demands an indigenous approach to literary discourses today. Throughout the preface, Naithani persistently draws attention to Chaube’s presence at various levels to insist on the role of people in creating their lore. In this perspective, Chaube is as much a folktale as the tale themselves. Within the context of the primary texts, a trajectory of the changed perceptions in the representation of tales is visible i.e. from the
description of the story as ‘folktales’ to ‘folk narratives’ to ‘contemporary writings’ in the present. It is important to recognise this trajectory. It is relevant to understand that this trajectory itself is a result of the awareness of the changes in the setting of the folktale and situating the tales in this changed setting which is its contemporary milieu. That is, ‘narration’ emerges as an important concept that enables a discourse of layered realities and so, leads to an understanding of realisms that are depicted in these narratives. This is also one of the reasons as to why ‘narrate realities’ is identified as an important aspect of Folk realisms.

**Folk realisms and Postcolonial Exotic:**

The vernacular literatures present a slice of life of the indigenous people. Such narratives counter and question Postcolonial exoticization. One of the important questions that need to be asked is: to whom is the question of exoticization to be addressed and how is it to be countered? Obviously, answers to the two questions are inter-related. In the contemporary globalizing scene, even in literary context, the politics of publications are well understood. The publication of *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends* is an example of the role of publications that do extend exoticizing programme. So, just as it is important to counter the exoticization that happened during colonization, it is important counter it consciously in the contemporary literary scene as well. There is an important difference between the exotic of the colonial endeavor and the Postcolonial exotic. The differences, in purpose and the end, for the indigenous is the same. It robs the indigenous of their singular identities. “Exoticism is the process by which a cultural practice is made stimulating and exciting in its difference from the colonizer’s
normal perspective.” (Ashcroft) This exoticization is to be countered both at the local and global spaces and is done by both Narayan and Naithani. Whereas, Huggans explains Postcolonial Exotic as “The Postcolonial Exotic is, in part, an examination of the sociological dimensions of Postcolonial studies: the material conditions of production and consumption of Postcolonial writings, and the influence of publishing houses and academic institutions on the selection, distribution and evaluation of these works.” (Huggan2001: vii)

Evidently, translations of vernacular literatures play a vital role in countering Postcolonial exotic. But, the countering is strengthened when supported by indigenous researches and literary theoretical endeavors. And the relevance of the role editors is already discussed in detail. But, a study of the writings from Sirigannada does give an opportunity to examine the kind of counter that vernacular literatures in translation can offer.

An important charting emerges within the anthology within the Navya tradition. The anthology opens with a short story Kaamaroopi. U R Anathamurthy is widely known writer whose critique of modernity has arisen from indigenous perspectives. The unique feature of the short story is the consciousness with which it recognises globalizing tendencies, its effect on the indigenous people and their world view. Of course, typically, there is recognition of influences that are detrimental to indigeneity. Kaamaroopi presents such a situation. It presents the dwindling political scene that is cruel and brings the worst in the individual. The story, set in the early twentieth century, presents Shankar Babu in the political milieu that he aspires to ascend. Throughout the narration, the focus is on the ever
changing—chameleon—nature of the politician in Shankar Babu. Like the photos that he asks the writer-narrator to take in different poses, his personal life too is without a firm stance. And, as his conversation reveals, so are the people who he wants to please—his brother-in-law and the minister who his brother-in-law strongly supports.

Just as this political system is framed within the family, the protests against this group of men come from within the family—his sisters and his mother. The older sister—Saroja, who is married to the Minister’s assistant, commits suicide; Geeta joins the Naxals in their fight against the political vendetta and his mother joins her daughter Geeta by supporting Geeta’s protest against the brother’s survivalist position. Along with the women of his family, in the lounge of the airport where the narrator meets Shankar Babu, the academician writer-narrator too forms community of the women of the family, whose protests are not strong enough to prevent corruption. But the protest is there, registered. It is the overwhelmingly strong desire of Shankar Babu that seems to survive. That which keeps Shankar Babu going on is both fear of being left out and the desire to belong to the ‘rich class’. But, ironically, the dominant voice is still Shankar Babu’s in the sense that he continues his tryst with the desire to belong. The narrative ends with his self-assuredness that he will build a strong political career.

This writing brings together the global that has influenced the local politics and a critique of it in indigenous situation. From this perspective, the anthology opens a conversation of the indigenous response to the global in terms of political scenario. Of course, it does not glorify the indigenous; it showcases the
plight of the individual unable to cope with the contemporary changes—political and social. What is cruel about such a scenario is that alienates the individual from himself. Shankar Babu’s refusal to face this reality is the cause of fall of indigenous systems and people.

**Folk realisms and Folk imaginations:**

If this critique depicts one kind of resistance in the global space, *Tejaswi’s Indentured Spirit* presents an alternative perspective of indigeneity. It presents the complex and unique face of contemporary that presents the indigenous as well as the modern. The shift is not only in the differences between the two writers; it also spans the changes in perception that was taking place in the Kannada literary and cultural scene within the Navya traditions. The literary movement known for its emphasis on structure and narrative technique, it accommodates within the movement a polyphonic quality in terms of acknowledging and portraying indigeneity.

The essay is taken from his collection of *Parisarada Kathegalu*, presents a hilarious situation. *Maara* lives in the Harijana colony and is employed by the writer to guard his farm from thefts. *Maara* is an old man and the writer has to be satisfied with him as the young, robust men will go for a work that fetches them good salary. He is appointed by the writer to guard his estate from thieves who steal jackfruits, cardamom, bunches of banana’s etc. At a time when the rational, scientific psyche is a celebratory must, the writer presents a situation in which the indigenous epistemology rules. Thus, what the reader faces is a representation of the complex concerns of contemporary. The complexity is in the
fact that this situation that does not negate a possible co-existence of the modern (rational) and the folk (imaginative).

The humour in the essay arises out of the juxtaposition of Maara’s belief in the existence of supernatural beings— ghost or goddess chowdee and that their presence can be exploited for the benefit of humans versus that of the writer’s scientific, logical, rational explanations for the happenings (and for that which does not happen too; and according to Maara, that is because of his ‘contract’ with Chowdee) on the estate. Maara has a ‘supernatural explanation’ for all the mischief that befalls on the writer or the estate. And what is funny is that the writer has to accede to Maara’s explanation each time. It is this acceptance on behalf of the writer that presents a unique, complex epistemology to the reader. Thus, the essay presents a unique slice of life which is dominated by the folk imagination.

It is not ‘folk imagination’ because of the presence of supernatural beings nor because Maara perceives that through his devotion can he harness the supernatural to prevent thefts on the estate. (The thefts range from stealing of the chappals by the domestic dog Kiwi to pigs destroying the paddy field.) This folk imagination recognises man in harmony with nature and supernatural beings, has its distinct logic that does not conflict with the rational logic of the ‘scientific world’. So, the strength of this imagination, as the author perceives, cannot be discredited, however illogical it may seem. When the writer asks Maara if he believes in god, Maara has this to say: “Maara didn’t see much difference between the visible and the invisible, the form and the formless. The formless wind became manifest as a cloud; the same cloud became even more tangible as water. He didn’t spend a
second to answer my question. ‘What a thing to ask! Can children be born without parents?—he asked me in turn, pushing aside my question as stupid.’ (Sirigannada 2010: 31)

And it is not that from within Maara’s community there are no other voices; there is Chikka Maara and Rudra who are youngsters. But, their beliefs are different; they do not display the same strength—either of belief or of imagination. Perhaps, they are more conscious of the present day complications that arise from dilution to this folk imagination in the face of materialism in the twentieth century. But, it is paradoxical that the writer’s ‘scientific’ reasoning should meet Maara’s folk imagination. Of course, the conclusions are the same; but the route to the conclusion is ‘scientific’ and the route to Maara’s is his folk faith. It is because the writer has no other choice but to accept the favourable ending that humour arises. It is through this that Tejaswi successfully presents the complex thoughts that pervade the contemporary. In this context, it may not be farfetched to note that it is not mere coincidence that Maara is an old man who is a guard.

The story provides a platform to discuss the process of exoticization that was set in motion and the fact that such stories from vernacular literatures contribute to counter not just exoticization but counters the danger of Postcolonial exotic in the contemporary. In this context, it is important to compare the difference between the responses of Indigenous writer and the colonizer to this prospect of folk imagination. This reveals the process of exoticization that was set in process by the colonizer and defines the folk imagination from an indigenous perspective. In
*Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends*, Bartle Frere’s Introduction speaks of the indigenous practices and their deities. Frere notes:

. . . Wherever a few of the pastoral tribes are settled, there Byroba, the god of herdsmen, or Kundoba, the deified hero of the shephards, supersedes all other popular idols. Byroba the Terrible, and other remnants of Fetish or of Snake-worship, everywhere divide the homage of the lower castes with the recognised Hindoo divinities, while almost every village the circle of large stones sacred to Vetal, the demon-god of the outcast helot races, which remind the traveler of the Druid Circles of the northern nations, has for ages held, and still holds, its grounds against all Brahminical innovations. . . . Some information of this kind is to be gleaned from the present series of legends, though, the object of the collector being rather amusement than antiquarian research, any light which is thrown on the popular superstitions of the country is only incidental.” (Narayan 2005:13-14)

This revision and re-configuration is enabled in the context of narration. The writer narrates varied situations that present both Maara’s realisms that are rooted in his world view and the writers logical world view. It is *Tejaswi’s* sensitive portrayal of indigeneity that pervades the writing. Modernity enters the scene in the form of logical reasoning does not prevent appreciation of folk imagination. In fact, it facilitates folk imagination. Also, modernity does not create
conflicting situations; it sees community at work and so is a part of it. That is, the logical reasoning and scientific outlook, in the context of this story, is also indigenized. This is an important way of registering indigenous literary expressions that are steeped in region specificities.

Of course, these texts depict region and cultural specificities in the contemporary global consciousness that pervades the stories. That is, indigenous epistemologies are contextualized in the complex contemporary literary scenario to re-present unique region and culture specific worldview as the writer’s perceptions of the realism. This perception of Folk realisms that pervade the written narratives is rooted in the writers’ consciousness of the indigenous epistemology as well as their exposure to the contemporary western literary influences. Thus, folktales and folk elements/motif in vernacular literatures have an important function to perform in retaining not just identities but formulating it as well. Also, while these moments are presented in the context of the contemporary, a process of re-evaluation is begun. That is, the re-evaluations are enabled with respect to indigenous experiences and within the framework of region specific responses to global influences. It is one of the features of folktales and what facilitates this is folk imagination. It is folk imagination that facilitates intelligent connections between disparate events and guides the spirit that enables the contemporary to be included in the tale. And to envisage this folk imagination that pervades the vernacular literatures is exciting as well as interesting.

So, imagination is another concept that undergoes re-visioning with Folkloristics. Narayan’s introduction to *Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends*
pins the value of folktales to its fine imagination. Throughout her introduction, at varied instances, she refers to the fact that the tales appeal to the reader because of its imagination. “For anyone who delights in the imaginative spaces opened up by fairy tales, this reviewer’s comments hold true into the twenty-first century.” (Narayan2005: vii) “These are marvelous imaginative tales.” (Narayan2005: x); and again, “The wonderful, wonder-filled stories would alone make Old Deccan Days a classic.” (Narayan2005: xiv) Later on, “Looking at the brisk, bold handwriting in manuscripts for Old Deccan Days, one senses the excitement with which Mary recorded imaginative worlds opened up for her through her “Annie Ayah.” (Narayan2005: xxiii); and as a conclusion, “I wish readers the pleasure of learning which stories come to occupy their own imagination after the book has been sent.” (Narayan2005: xxviii)

Thus contextualized, Narayan’s persistent attention to imagination of the tales has two imperatives. One, the story-teller/writer consciously plants worldview throughout the text. Close reading to pay attention to these details is an important approach to focus on the complexity of the tales. This is an important approach to that helps to recognize the re-presented indigenous perspectives in the writing. The reason is that the texts are no longer written in isolation; they are contextualized by the writer in the contemporary socio-economical and political realities. Thus, close reading is essential to emerge with the indigenous world view that the writer is representing in the literary text.

Secondly, the complexities of the tales arise from the fact that there is unique dynamism between realism and imagination. It presents a complex
situation as both historic context and contemporaneity of tales, discourse 
surrounding it and people involved are all a part of situating the tales. The emergent 
Folk realisms is polyphonic and is multi-centred. This enables comprehension of 
the connection of imagination and realism in the tales. That is, instead of 
problematizing imagination and realism that leads to a binary vision, as supposedly 
opposed faculties, if imagination is scrutinized for its ability to incorporate and re-
present realism, the tales are a representative of the complexity of reality as the 
common man experiences realities in the contemporary scenario. This unique 
feature of Folkloristics enables a comprehension of the complexity to folktales, folk 
narratives and their relationship with the contemporary scenario.

Folk imaginations and the feminist perceptions:

So, with the idea of presenting a facet of folk imaginations that 
presents realisms of the folk, the tales and writings are chosen from the primary texts 
and discussed. How the Sun, the Moon and The Wind went out to Dinner (Narayan 
2005: Tale 10,142-143) is a remarkable tale that explains the nature of the celestial 
bodies. The tale is different from the myth explaining the origin of the world; but, it 
explains the nature of the ‘celestial bodies’. The tale goes like this: the Sun, Wind 
and Moon go out for dinner with their uncle and aunt-Thunder and Lightning, 
leaving the mother “one of the most distant stars you see far up in the sky.” (Narayan 
2005: 142) Throughout the night, the mother waits for her children to return. When 
they return, she wants her children to show what they have brought for her. The Sun 
and the Wind answer her rudely. The Sin tells her “I have brought nothing home for 
you. I went out to enjoy myself with my friends—not to fetch a dinner for my
mother!” and the Wind too replies “Neither have I brought anything home for you, mother. You could hardly expect me to bring a collection of good things for you, when I merely went out for my own pleasure.” But the moon tells her “Mother, fetch a plate, see what I have brought you.’ And shaking her hands she showered down such a choice dinner as never was seen before.” (143) the mother angered by the indifferent responses of the Sun and the Wind, curses them that they in turn will be cursed by people for being hot and disagreeable. To the Moon her daughter, she points out the because she remembered her Mother in her own joy, she will be cool always and 'men will always call you “blessed”’ And the tale ends with this “And that is why the Moon’s light is so soft, and cool, and beautiful even to this day.”

This simple tale focuses on the need of the mother and her reaction toward the neglect by her children. At the same time, the tale does deconstruct the archetypal celestial prowess of the Sun and the Wind. The Moon represents the strength of the calm affection that is often not acknowledged. It is this silent presence-masked reality as Naithani in different situation calls it- that is privileged. It is structured to present the ethical realism of the folk. This ability to identify the silent presences and weave in into the tale that describes the nature of these celestial beings is indeed ‘marvelous’. It is here that the representation of the mother is different. The factuality of the Sun’s heat, the dryness of the Wind and the cool of the Moon are self evident. But that which is unique about this tale is the connection it makes between family values of—sense of belonging and respect with the apparent quality of the Sun (heat), the dryness of the Wind and the cool of the Moon. And within the framework of Folk realisms, it is the narration of this
imagination of the folk that recognises the silent presences and represents it in the tale.

Another tale that is structured to recognise and reward the good and punishes the bad is *A Funny Story* (Narayan 2005: Tale 2) As the title suggests, the tale presents a funny situation where the *Ranee*, after a long time of being childless, gives birth to two puppies and her pet dog gives birth to a beautiful two girls.

*Ranee’s* effort to exchange her puppies with the baby girls of the dog-mother turns futile as the dog-mother runs away with her daughters to a forest to live in a cave. Here, she brings them up with lot of care and affection but to her disappointment and surprise, the children are discovered by another Rajah and his brother. After a while, they persuade the sisters to marry them. But the dog-mother goes searching for her daughters and one fine day the older daughter finds her, gives her shelter and takes good care of the tired dog-mother. Ignoring the first daughter’s request to stay with her and ask the second daughter to visit the mother, the dog-mother runs to see her second daughter.

Afraid of the public opinion, the second daughter does not allow her to come in; instead, asks her servant to pelt stones to shoo her off. In the bargain, the mother is hit on her head by a boulder and is fatally wounded. Seeing this, the first daughter runs to her and takes care of her; but she dies. The daughter keeps her in the store-room thinking that without the knowledge of her husband she will bury her respectfully. When she gets up in the morning, she finds that the dead body of the dog is turned into a statue studded of gold, studded with precious stones. The husband enquires about how she got it and the *Ranee* lies that it is present from her
parents, upon which the Rajah expresses his desire to meet them. Desperate, the Ranee goes to the forest to destroy herself by putting her hands into a mole hill where a cobra lives. The cobra helps her because as the Ranee puts her hand, a thorn stuck in its mouth is removed! The cobra out of gratitude, conjures a palace and her parents where the Ranee takes her husband for a visit. After sometime they return home with the gifts that Cobra has given them. The brother of the Rajah enquires how he got these. Rajah relates that his parents-in-law gifted him with these. Hearing this, he is angry with his wife and demands that they too be felicitated. When the sister asks the Ranee to tell how she got the gifts, the Ranee angrily quarrels with her about the way she treated their mother and so refuses to share her secret with her. But, she yields in the end and relates her experience. The second sister goes to do a similar action but dies as the cobra bites her.

This tale evidently has many stereotypical features — the story of a Rajah and a Ranee, the element of magic and fantasy, of unbelievable events (not a single event that is even near truth!) and ends on a note of caution death. Of course, its non-relation to reality itself could be a possible value of entertainment, which accounts for the title of the tale. At this point it is important to recall two very important functions of folktales told to children. One was to caution them, to safeguard them, and the second was to instill, pass-on culturally important value systems. This is a story her grandmother tells Anna and she narrates this to Mary now. At the same time, Anna notes the plight of the married women at her marital home in her narrative about the life of married woman in India and says
You English people can't understand that sort of thing. When an Englishman marries, he goes to a new house, and his wife is the mistress of it; but our native people are very different. If the father is dead, the mother and unmarried sisters live in the son's house, and rule it; his wife is nothing in the house. And the mother and sisters say to the son's wife, ‘This is not your house, you've not always lived in it; you cannot be mistress here.’ And if the wife complains to her husband, and he speaks about it, they say, 'Very well, if you are such an unnatural son you'd better turn your mother and sisters out of doors; but while we live here, we'll rule the house.' So there is always plenty fighting. It’s not unkind of the mother and sisters, *its custom.*” (Narayan 2005: 27) (Emphasis added)

Obviously, the ‘*custom*’ that Anna is referring to is the patriarchal system where the mother-in-law and sister/s-in-law, like the second sister who becomes a face of the patriarchal system, perpetuate indirect power positions of the patriarchy obtained through the presence of men in the family and smother the daughter-in-law. The tale, when situated in its system, presents an ironical picture of the plight of mother. It is ironical because amidst all the cult mother images and celebratory mother worships, this folktale should present such plight of the mother and such a warning to the daughter. Understood in this background of female experiences, narrated to a white young woman, the tale reveals layers of feminine perception of position and politics of patriarchal society.
The tale presents an unlikely mother for the daughters but the dog-mother is epitome of motherhood. She takes care, protects them from being separated from herself when they are young, and removes them to safety. And once they marry and leave her without informing her, she searches for them till she finds her daughters. Once she finds her eldest daughter, she is not satisfied with her well being and uncaring of her own plight, she wants to ensure the well being of her second daughter as well. The second daughter, like the elder sister, is afraid of owning her mother. But unlike the sister, she does not fulfill her responsibility by taking care of her. What helps the first daughter is her conscientiousness in attending to the mother and her refusal to be ruled by the fear of public censure. And succumbing to the fear of public censure (read as ‘patriarchal objections’) is a complete erasure of feminine identity is the warning of the tale. And the obvious moral of this folktale is ‘you are punished for selfishly ignoring the mother’. The preserving of female identity in the patriarchal system, formulating a feminine system is the emergent world view. That means, tales and writings, infused with folk imagination successfully critiques the contemporary gendered realities that are formulated by the patriarchal system. The emphasis of the critique is to question the system that encourages unequal power configurations; but it is also understood that toppling the system may not be the answer to this gendered realities and unequal power configurations. This understanding is important to identify the emergent different indigenous feminism. So, the question of subjectivity and an answer to it is also region and culture specific as each region has its distinct patriarchal system and its own ideas as well as discourses of subjectivity and selfhood.
Folk realisms and subjectivity:

Female subjectivity has been the topic of discussion in Feminism for a long time and the role of patriarchal system is analyzed from varied perspectives. But, this tale passed on from Anna’s grandmother to Anna has seen three generations and the tale seems to have been appealing enough to be passed on to next generation as well indicates the almost unchanging patriarchal system that corrodes female subjectivity. The tale lends itself to psychoanalytical approach. But, it also moves beyond as one recognises that Anna and Mary are much the part of the similar patriarchal system. It is beneficial to recollect at this point Bartle Frere’s critique and dismissive tone of Mary Frere’s collection in his Introduction. Mary too, at a different level, suffers erasure and loss of identity. And, it is A Funny Story indeed if one recognises these layered realities embedded not only within the narrated tale but that surrounds the tale. A cognizance of these narrative layers gives the tale its contemporaneity and marks its survivance. Another important feature of the female survivance that is depicted in the tale is the significance of coming together of women to protect each other, which again is a part of the nineteenth century feminist discourses. It must be reiterated here that recognition of these discussions is possible because the tale is imbued with folk imagination that plaits together realism with the reality of female experiences.

There are fifteen folktales related to women narrated, collected, translated and documented by men in the section So Wise are Some Women from In Quest of Indian Folktales. Naithani observes “And others are deceptive and wily, materialistic and playful, literate, virtuous and brave, and fighters against social
injustice.” (Naithani 2006: 187) What is interesting in this description is that these tales present women as individuals with idiosyncrasies and not the glorified roles that women are supposed to adapt. Such a collection of tales are important for Feminism and Gender Studies because the tales lend themselves for a probe from both these literary critical theories.

However, seen holistically one also gets a glimpse of the plan that Crooke and Chaube had envisioned in their Folkloristic endeavor. These folktales when read together depict the rationale for this particular section. As Crooke had repeatedly suggested, understanding India was better done through a study the popular religion. In fact, as Naithani notes, he took *North Indian Notes and Queries* from Temple who had named it as *Punjab Notes and Queries*. It was published under his editorship from 1891 till Crookes retirement in 1896. But, in this journal too, his intention of studying popular culture and contributing to the field of Folkloristics are evident. But Crooke had a different intention with this journal. He writes: “The title has been for the present extended so as to include, roughly speaking, that portion of India where the language of the people is of the Aryan type. We shall, however, insert occasionally notes and queries in connection with the Dravidian, Kolarian and Tibeto-Burman races. . . . the journal’s fields of interest were given as “Religion, Sociology, Antiquities And Local History, Folklore, Ethnography, Language and Philology, Anglo-Indian Local History, Bibliography, Numismatics, Arts and Manufactures, and Agriculture. . . . Under religion the journal was concerned the matters of “Popular faith of the people” as distinct from scriptural matters; . . .” (Naithani 2006:44-45) This indicates the breadth and
intention of Crookes’s vision of the journal and from this, one possibly could comprehend the mammoth collection of folktales in association with Chaube. Chaube, of course, as Naithani notes, was not exoticizing Folkloristics. This is evident in his conscientious collection, documentation and translation of folktales. Like in the other sections, here too, the storytellers are chosen from all walks of life- Pandit, Bania, teacher, student, ahir, and muslim men. The tales present women in their varied roles—as a wife, a mother, sister but she is also seen as someone who can protect herself with her intelligence. And they do so with imagination and intelligence.

For example, the title of the section *So Wise are Some Women* is a statement made in Tale 91 told by a *Dakkhini Brahman of Saharanpur*. It relates the adventure of a ‘young and faithful wife of a banker in the city of Ratnakar. One day robbers break in and beat up the servants. The wife tells them that she is tired of her husband who is old and wanted to run away from him. She suggests that if they help her run away from her husband, she will show them the where the wealth of the banker is kept. Robbers were taken by her beauty and do as they are asked to do. She slowly leads them to the underground telling them that the wealth is kept there. But once she reaches, she pretends that she has forgotten the key of the vault and seeks permission to bring it. She goes up, closes the vault and lights fire which draws the attention of the neighbours. When they come to enquire, she tells them of the robbers. The neighbours catch the robbers and kill them.

There are a number of tales that depict the adventurous aspect of women which saves them from difficult situations. In this category of tales, one
finds women of varied age groups—young wives to old women. Also, some of them do not profess to provide a rationale for their treacherous act. For example, *The Old Woman and the Thieves* (Naithani 2006: Tale 100) relates the tale of a clever old woman who fools her neighbor—a washerman, the Nawab and his begum as well as the thieves who help to steal wealth! Here, there are no excuses or reason for her treachery—she is not identified as poor or as an orphaned old woman. The tale 101 is an incomplete tale of a woman named Dalla. Chaube recognises it as an important tale. It is about the “...the cleverest woman that the world had ever seen. She got up a new case of deception and treachery daily. Through this means she brought into her hands the property of the citizens. She had three daughters who got the upper hand of their mother in treachery and deception. ...” (Naithani 2006: 204) She is an expert in disguising herself and fools, among other men, a common man, the Khalifa and a blind religious mendicant with élan.

Another interesting tale is Tale 103. Crooke gives the title as ‘*The clever girl—unfaithful brothers and the faithful dog*’. The tale relates the story of the wrath of a king against his minister who refuses to pamper kings fancy of a ruby he has found and goes on bragging about his ownership of it. The minister observes that though the King may find it to be unique possession in his country, there may be a place where it would be adorned as a dog’s collar. Angry, the King orders that he put into jail. The minister’s daughter vows to release her innocent father. She goes in search of a place where a dog could be found with a jeweled collar. She disguises herself as a man. She reaches a city where she finds one such dog. She convinces this merchant to come to her place where he can do business beneficially.
And in the course of action, he reaches the kings palace with minister’s daughter who is still disguised as a man. He goes along with his dog as well as his brothers who are caged. On query from the king, he relates how the dog faithfully saved his life while his brothers treacherously fooled and robbed him of all his wealth. At last, when he succeeds in regaining his wealth, as a mark of his appreciation, he makes the dog a collar of precious stones and he puts his brothers in a cage as a mark of punishment for their treachery. As the king listens to him, the ministers daughter reveals herself with the request that her father be released as she has provided the king a proof of what her father had said. Impressed by her intelligence and bravery, the king marries her to his son.

The tale is interesting for its portrayal of woman’s intelligence that connected the minister’s irked remark to an interpretation of the statement. However, the tale is remarkable as it presents different aspects of relationships and presents conflicts of masculinity situating it within relationships. The core of the tale is a warning—by a man—a merchant- to another man—King. The complexity of the tale is in the fact that the daughter gives this messaged wrapped in another man’s experiences. It is an invaluable lesson and a warning for the King. From the daughter’s perspective, his position is the same as the merchant’s unfaithful brothers. The king understands the messages at the end of the tale and the listener too realizes the embedded realism of depicted in these relationships. The tale is unique for another important reason—the way it envisions the role of the woman in the face of conflicting masculinities. The conflicts that arose between the King and his minister due to the king’s ego and the conflict that arose out of treachery to
prove oneself as superior to the other sibling reveal the possible reasons for conflicts amongst men. The mediation in the former is facilitated by a woman and in the latter, there is no reconciliation but resolution comes as imprisonment of the brothers. The tale is remarkable also for the gendered perception of men it presents and the role of woman it envisages in it. It’s a critique of masculinities that function within the identified roles of the system.

A similar tale told by Anna is the story of The Brave Sevantee Bai (Narayan 2005:Tale 3). Logedas Rajah married to the lovely Paurbattee Bai is the only son of Siu Rajah falls in love with the beautiful Sevantee Bai, the daughter of Wuzeer. The king objects to Logedas’ marriage to Sevantee Bai because she is his minister’s daughter, threatening that he would be thrown of his kingdom if he marries her. Logedas marries her and the angry kings bans from his kingdom only after he provides him with wealth and comfort. His wealth all spent, Princesses suffer in poverty; unable bear this, he leaves his two wives in the forest and goes his way. Parbatee Bai is anxious but Sevantee Bai disguises herself as a man and assures her co-wife whom she treats as her ‘little sister’. Parbatee Bai is instructed by Sevantee Raja (her new name) not to mingle with anyone and be cautious so that none know it is a woman. Her life of adventures begins as she pledges to serve the king for £24,000. It is interesting to note the use of pounds here in the tale. Anna in her narrative does speak of Indian currencies:

In those days house rent did not cost more than half a rupee a month, and you could build a very comfortable house for a hundred rupees... Then a whole family could live as comfortably on six or seven rupees a month as
they can now on thirty. Grain, now a rupee a pound, was then two annas a pound. Common sugar, then one anna a pound, is now worth four annas a pound. Oil which then sold for six pice a bottle now costs four annas. Four annas worth of salt, chillies, tamarinds, onions, and garlic, would then last a family a whole month, now the same money would not buy a week's supply. . . Water also was much cheaper. You could then get a man to bring you two large skins full, morning and evening, for a pie, now he would not do it under half a rupee or more. . . Narayan 2005: 22 Anna knows her English and finance quite well; she is conscious of the fact that the economics has changed. This insertion points to the changing realities of Colonial India as well as the common man’s perception of realities.

To continue, Sevantee Bai goes on with her adventures of defeating cruel masculinities, she wins lovely women’s hearts – Hira Bai, the deadly cobra’s daughter; Tara bai, Raksha’s daughter and three more princesses. On all these occasions, she is aided foremost by her intelligence and also magical powers of the women whom she has won as wives. Finally, she returns home bringing the golden sari; but not before she meets her husband who is in an unrecognizable condition now. Six months of utmost care restores his former health and look. The Rajah has decided to give his daughter in marriage to Sevantee Rajah on her birthday. On this day, her parents and the Sui Rajah arrive by the king’s invitation and as they meet, she reunites with her family and her husband to whom she gifts all the wealth she has amassed along with the eight princesses. The father is overjoyed and they return to live happily ever after.
The point of interest is that on each occasion Sevantee Raja meets with an adventure, a face of masculinity is revealed—especially as the father’s. They are cruel, guard their daughters zealously and jealously. On each occasion, it is Sevantee Raja who rescues the women, safeguards them actually, by marrying them. This structure of the tale is interesting and in contrast with tale from *In Quest of Indian Folktales* discussed above. The two tales do share certain similarities in terms of adventures that befall the women; each tale has another tale embedded in it and both end happily. But the masculinities it reveals and the subjectivity of the protagonists is different because the two women are dealing with different types of masculine-ego that exercise control. Adversity begins because of the father-king’s unbending ego that is un-accommodative of the child’s individuality. The tale *The clever girl—unfaithful brothers and the faithful dog*’, accommodates a warning of retaining such a masculine trait; in *Brave Sevantee Bai*, the tale counters masculinity by finding ways of dealing with challenges. But, both young women overcome the challenging time with wisdom and bravery. In both the tales, the events are triggered by class-differences and both end by proving that their identity is beyond both gender and class. The two women protagonist moves beyond the gender perceptions yet conscious of their sex and sexuality.

Folk realisms, Subjectivities and region specificities:

But a study of the two tales also facilitates recognition of region and cultural specificities. These specificities are identified, of course, in the system women are set and their individualist manners of dealing with it. Another factor that contributes to these differences is the fact that *The clever girl—unfaithful brothers*
Thus this tales map masculinities though the perception of the young woman protagonist. The tale succeeds in foregrounding different masculinities but they don’t cloud or dismiss female perceptions—in fact, the polyphonic scheme emphasizes the female voice. In *The Brave Sevantee Bai*, the voices of women and their perceptions are privileged. The tale presents voices of young women who share similar experiences with their father—patriarchy. Yet, the solution comes without conflicting with the patriarchal system. No wonder Kirin Narayan and Mary Frere are taken up by this tale of Brave Sevantee Bai.

A varied version of this coming together of women of the family to formulate and protect identities is seen in *Vaidehi’s Going by tables and Chairs* in *Sirigannada*. *Going by Tables and Chairs* by Vaidehi displays a fine balance of an essay and shortstory i.e. of facts and imagination, which gives the writing a multi-layered texture. The writer begins with this observation: “Tables and chairs, so common have they become today!” (Shanbhag 2010: 119) That is, the excerpt relooks and thus re-constructs the past from the contemporary reality. Situating the common place furniture—tables and chairs—at home, she presents a unique view of the gendered reality. The entire situation interspersed with sparkling humour pervades the narration and lends to the balanced perception.

The narration opens with recounting how boys were allowed to sit on the chair with the table in order to write and girls are positively prevented from doing so. With this contextualizing, (that it is the men-grandfather, father and the
older sibling who could use the table and chair) the query of the emergence of this hierarchical consciousness is begun. She asks:

“Ajja, this table and chair, came from where?
From the British, from their offices . . .
If so, do a table and chair constitute an office?” (Shanbhag 2006: 121)

Situating this query about gender in the context of early twentieth century, through the imagery of tables and chairs that grow into a metaphor of power, the writer presents a slice of life from everyday; yet, the narrative does not judge people. The narrative is interspersed with sparkling moments of humour that retains voices of people as they are. Built into this narrative is the consciousness of the past that provides a trajectory of-colonial and Postcolonial-that is contextualized within everyday life realities seen from the perspective of woman. This rich texture of the narrative is strengthened further as it presents of voices from different age groups and different strata of the society. Also the interspersed sparkling sense of humour balances the narrative in presenting the slice of life.

The older generation of grandfather and grandmother share a dynamics that is conscious of the patriarchal, gendered hierarchy. At the same time, the grandmother is not just a face of patriarchy but an individual with her distinct sense of understanding of men and life that is depicted through humour. It is in preserving the distinct individuality of each person that the narrative gains its strength and the individuals together constitute the community and its belief. Thus seen, Going By Tables And Chairs is a study —of a crucial moment in history that
left its mark on the life of the community; of writing a history of one’s own; of gendered realities and its reverberations in the contemporary reality.

The grandfather represents both the official world that is regimented to power-structures and the world of home that is equally conscious of the patriarchal hierarchy that governs the family. However, the role of grandmother who balances and stabilizes the structure of the family is interesting because where at times she is seen also as the representative of the patriarchal system, as a woman she has her distinct sense of humour. And the humour of the essay arises partly from her responses and partly from the narrator’s tongue in cheek observations. For example, she notes that the privilege of sitting on the chair, after the grandfather, was the father’s. The narrator cites the grandmother’s observation of the configuration of power, sitting of the chair and tradition: “And so sat upon by this custom through many generations, it seemed that the chair itself gathered power. For imagine, grandmother herself says that even Vikramaditya’s throne had gathered power owing to this same tradition.” (Shanbhag 2010: 122)

And ironically, it is the Bombay lady who fearlessly sits on the chair in front of the grandfather who brings out the rebellious in the women of the home as well as questions the male supremacy. Her entrance into the male world is acknowledged because, again ironically, the woman is independent. As the grandfather himself admits the Bombay lady manages her finances and her profession all by herself as her husband is out of station. She deserves all the sympathy and respect as well. It is because of this independence that she is
respected by none less than the grandfather himself; and the rationale is one has to follow one’s own tradition!!

If the Bombay lady is admired for her independence, a girl and her entire family is slighted because she sat opposite to the groom on a Sofa in the drawing room when he came to see her. (Ramanand’s daughter wedding) As though this was not enough to show the hypocrisy of patriarchy, the narrator draws the reader into the narration with this final observation: “There! Grandfather is laughing. In the photograph! Well, Grandmother is in a chair, in the photograph, at least. Grandfather stands beside her, holding the edge of the chair and his other hand on the waist.

Surely, you must have a similar photograph at home.” (Shanbhag 2010:146)

The essay, of course, maps gender perceptions in the early twentieth century and the distanced narration lends it objectivity. But, in the twenty-first century, the essay depicts indigenous responses to colonial attitudes that were imbibed by the patriarchal society and an indigenous feminine perspective to the same.

_Sirigannada_ presents another dimension of reality with respect to subjectivity. Analysis of writings from _Sirigannada_, with respect to female subjectivity, presents the changes in the twentieth century and the perception of relationship between men-women. The writings also points to the changed dynamics of man-woman relationship. _Prathibha Nandakumar’s_ poem _The survivor_ (Sirigannada 2010:275) expresses the perceptions of a woman in relationship with man. The indifference of the man depicts that the dynamics of the man-woman
relationship seems to have fallen apart. The poem, situated in the experiences of a
twentieth century woman who finds no “helping hand” from God, husband, friend
and lover; the woman finds neither solace nor a savior in the relationship. The poem
conveys with clarity the breaking ties in the relationship between men and women.
The poet says “That night/ He kept the phone off between the look and event to
sleep.” The pain here is of cruelty indifference. The poem narrates the perceptions
of the relationship with a man from the perspective of a woman; but it does relate
the sense of loss rather than condemn the man for indifference. The concern is
central to the consciousness of the poem.

Just as ‘The Saviour’ prevents the anxiety a young woman in the
contemporary scene, Sunanda Prakash Kadame’s Imprints of Little Feet
(Sirigannada 2010:261) captures the anxiety of an old woman Anchakka who lives
with her son Vittala, daughter-in-law Anju and granddaughter Chimmi. The writing
consistently foregrounds Anchakka’s disquiet about her place in her son’s family
and keeping the voices of Anju and Vittala. The ‘nuclear family’ places a demand
on Vittals who struggles to manage himself with his wife and is equally concerned
about his mother but is confused in the ensuing/continuous rift between mother and
wife. Both demand attention, forcing Vittala to wonder in reply to Anchakka’s
nagging remark of lack of attention from him ‘Just because I don’t hover around
chirping Amma, Amma some umpteen times each day, does it mean I have no love?
Amma is Amma, Anju is Anju, Chimmi is Chimmi. They are three distinct routes of
love, but balanced evenly. If there is a heary that can love, doesn’t it mean that it
has enough place for all the three? It’s a different thing, if I’m incapable of love,’
Vittala worries himself. ‘Must I explain all this to Amma and how?’ (Sirigannada 2010: 264)

In this fluid situation of confusion, it is Chimmi who seems to be the answer to Anchakka’s loneliness and anxiety. It is Anju’s father’s who revives her memory of her village, when he visits them on a rainy day. Anju’s father takes her on a journey into her past through a reference to the places in her village. “I remember seeing you as a little girl.’ ‘Hmmm . . .’ ‘Weren’t you fair and plump’ . . . Anju’s father’s words immediately transport her to the past, in a manner of negating the last forty years of her life.” (Sirigannada 2010: 268) This memory softens her; she offers him cup of tea and as their conversation continues, she finds comfort in herself. And when Vittala, Anju and chimmi return from their outing, Anchakka is a changed woman. “Anchakka’s bodily pains refuse to fit into her gamut of experience. ‘This very body is not mine. The tranquil, clear and lightness of being that Anju’s father bestowed upon me is what is mine.’ (Sirigannada 2010: 271)

A striking difference between this writing and the folktales is the emerging significance of memories. The folktales pointedly remain pinned to the present in terms of the identity of protagonists. The protagonists of the folktales related by women and possibly to woman, find the forceful emergence of female subjectivity which comes from their ability to act-irrespective of their age. This ability to act, be in charge of the situation as they understand themselves prevents the erasure of identity and so leads to self-hood. The lonely old woman in The Old Woman and the Thieves (Naithani 2006: tale100) is not just clever and adventurous, she is intelligent, knows that these thieves are weak and she seduces to get them out
of her way and retain the wealth they have looted! But Anchakka is depicted as extremely anxious and conscious of her loneliness as she has suffered erasure and so loss of self-hood. Thus it is that memory plays a central role in reviving Anchakka and re-member her with herself. The writing is unique for the reason that the narrative maps the presence of the past as located in oneself and so attaining self-hood and feminine subjectivity is an act of retrieving archived memory of oneself. It is emphasized here because Anna too in her narrative remarks on the difficulties of a married woman. The tales she tells Mary of these brave women, for Anna is a part of her cultural memory that sustains her subjectivity; but, it encompasses the folktale. However, its performance is similar to Anchakka’s retrieval of her childhood memories to reach self-hood.

The attempt in the analyses of these folktales and writings with specific reference to the cartography of female/feminine subjectivity is depict the revisions that are enabled in the course of this study. Of course, even in vernacular literatures, the discourses of Feminisms have evolved from the female-feminist-feminine phases. But, a study of the folktales and vernacular literary writings translated into English is a unique opportunity to present indigenous portraiture of women and their discourses. Feminism as a literary-political philosophy is rooted in western thinking and surely has influenced many writers and thinkers; but, indigenous literatures have retained their identities in their portraiture of women and related concerns. The folktales from the primary texts are evidences of this. In this connection, an examination of the selections of writings with respect to women does add new sensibilities and sensitive perceptions to the existing repertoire of
discourses of both Feminism and Gender Studies. Folk realisms present an opportunity to present and probe the indigenous perceptions of women and associated concerns that narrate realities in the frame work of region and culture specific systems.

Also, just as it is important to recognise the political context of the ‘folk narratives’ to situate them in their milieu and comprehend their relevance to the contemporary, it is essential to probe each writings in Sirigannada, though, the Editor’s note establishes spatiality. Sirigannada, unlike Old Deccan Days or Hindoo Fairy Legends and In Quest of Indian Folktales that are retrieved to be situated in the twenty-first century literary scene, is already part of the literary discourses that recognise its relevance to its socio-political and literary-cultural scenario. But, three anthologies have been re-envisioned by the editors. However, the writings are to be probed for their region and culture specificities with respect to their ‘intersecting’ space –of the use of folktales and/or motifs in the writings. It is from this perspective that Sirigannada presents region and culture specific representation to the concerns of the latter part of the twentieth century. The selections in translation communicate the indigenous space in literatures. The selected writings not only represent Navya literary traditions; the writings also narrate region and culture specific responses to the global socio-economic-political forces that shape the vernacular literatures. A wide selection of writings from different regions of Karnataka thus anthologized accommodates re-presentation of realisms of the region. The writings are writers’ concerns and anxieties of transformations to the indigenous world view in the twentieth century. Portrayal of
everyday life realities in the writings interrogates global influences of socio-economic-political forces that question and at times dismiss the indigenous world views. And in an interesting subversion, the writings register and call for retaining indigeneity unhesitatingly in the face of globalizing forces.

**Folk realisms and Narrating Narratives:**

However, folktales evolve different techniques to narrate stories and convey their realisms. One such technique is story within a story (*Thousand and one Nights* is the most popular in this genre). Another favored technique used in folktales is planting clues that lead to a solution—a kind of riddle story. Again, the efficiency of these tales is in the fact that they are neither idealistic nor unrealistic. Naithani notes its use during The First War of Independence that shook, for the first time, the colonial supremacy in India in 1857:

One aspect known from the record of the time is that oral and symbolic discourse was the organizational backbone of the revolt (Temple Collection, MSS Eur A59/1, 9-10). The sepoys who were never in close proximity to the British were actively supported by the peasantry, spearheaded the action, and secretly planned and organized it over a vast territory by sending and receiving messages in the form of tales and objectives. The tales, which are concerned here, were not only in the so-called “popular languages” but also coded in the laws of story-telling. Thus, even if the language were deciphered, the meaning would not be . . . the oral narratives
were important not only in the organization of the revolt, but also in the later reconstruction of events and identification of heroes and villains. . . . (Naithani 2006:40)

In such tales, graphic details of the place play a very important role. One such tale that depicts that life could be saved by intelligent watching of the place is *The Alligator and the Jackal* (Narayan 2005:236). It narrates the story of how Jackal escapes each time the alligator tries to devour him. It is the Jackal’s presence of mind and his power of observation that saves him each time. What begins as a question of survival continues as a dual of survival of the fittest. It is obvious that in terms of physical strength it is the Alligator who is strong and Jackal earns his enmity as he outwits him to survive. And it is impossible for Jackal to survive unless he does it every time and Jackal makes it happen by being watchful both of the surrounding and of the possible ways alligator would catch him. Interestingly, each time the Jackal manages to escape by his observation of the place. For example,

. . . So on the following day, when his little tormentor returned to the water-side, the Alligator hid himself close to the bank, in order to catch him if he could. . . . the Jackal was afraid of going to near the river. . . so to make-all as safe as he could, he cried ‘Where are all the little crabs gone? There is no one here and I am hungry. . . . on hearing this, Alligator thought ‘I will pretend to be the crab.’ And he began to blow. . . and there was such commotion when the huge monster began to blow bubbles, that the huge monster began to blow
bubbles in this way, that the Jackal saw very well who must be there
and he ran away as fast as he could, saying “thank you, kind
Alligator. . . (Narayan 2005: 237)

And this is the beginning of the dual between them. Alligator hides under a great
heap of wild figs that raises doubt in Jackal and he fools Alligator again by talking
to the fruits. As Alligator shakes himself to roll-off figs, so reveals himself and
Jackal runs away once again. Finally, Alligator reaches Jackal’s den from where he
knows Jackal can’t escape. But, this time, Jackal sees Alligators foot-prints, fools
him to talk once again as he gathers dry leaves and lights fire at the mouth of the
den and so, kill his mortal enemy. What aids Jackal to survive, is his knowledge of
the place, his ability at panning space and his power of observation that supports his
intelligence. So, it is not so much the foolishness of Alligator as the fact of his
ignorance of the place and space.

In many such tales that carry symbolic meaning, the power of
deduction resides in the knowledge of place and space. And these clues are rooted
in the knowledge of region specificities. Because, region specificities are inclusive
of the belief systems that are rooted in and at times arise out the discourse of the
description of place. For example, Tale 96, The disputed baby (Naithani 2006: 194-
195) is interesting in the way a dispute is settled. The dispute is this: once a soldier
goes off into a distant land to earn money, leaving his wife behind. For some time,
there is no news of him. So she took a neighbor to live with her, from whom she
gives birth to a baby. But, one day, when the husband returns, she has no word of
welcome. Later she understands that she has to tell him the truth about her lover and
she tells him the truth. The sepoy insists on his right to his wife and so, the baby but
the lover refuses to give in. The dispute goes to the court. The king demands an
explanation and the three of them present their situation through imageries: the
husband claims ownership by alluding to plant imagery. He says he planted
cucumber near the wall of his house and some of them went over to the neighbors’
side. The king replies that the cucumber belongs to him. The lover presents the
imagery of a ruby lost by someone which he has found. The king replies that the
ruby is his. The wife says “I have a cow in milk and I borrowed some rennet from a
neighbor to make curd. Now she says the curd is her’s.” The king replies “certainly
not”. So, the woman took the child and went off with her husband.” (Naithani
2006:195)
The tale is important for feminist discourses that recognise the body-
politics. The implications of the imageries are understood in one comprehends the
implications of the objects mentioned in the imageries through which the discussion
is voiced. And most significant fact is that the discussions through imageries that
employ everyday life objects decide the relationship and the ownership of the baby
and the woman. What clinches the debate is that the imageries are understood in
their spirit rather than objectification of people that is vociferously objected to in
many of the writings by women writers in the twentieth century. The tale holds a
mirror to some extreme changes that India has experienced over a period of time.

However, this solving the riddle of planted clues is true of Naithani’s
re-membering of Chaube too. The only and the final clue about himself is his
signature. But that is the final one; there are other clues that he has left behind—in
his association of collection of folktales, the changes he has introduced to North
Indian Notes and Queries. The saddest part of the clues is that none of them are located in his place; it has reached spatiality as Crooke carried the tales with him to his home. His name is mentioned only in Shukl’s history of Hindi literature as Pandit Ram Gharib Chaube. Apart from this and some vague memories of the villagers who remember a pandit who went insane collecting papers, none remember him nor is there any other clue of his existence. In finding him, remembering him (not just the folktales because the tales by themselves are of little significance) to his place that Naithani fulfills her role as a folklorist. This narration of colonial realities enabled by Folk realisms in the knowhow of region-cultural specificities as well as an understanding of how to solve the riddle embedded but made invisible because of the politics of erasure.

That is, the manner of planting the clues and so, the manner and purpose of solving it has altered over a period of time. That is the narrative techniques have imbued different influences; but the purpose of expression and communicating the experiences to the reading-community is retained as the writings portray region and culture specificities. This is evident in the writings in Sirigannada. Two writings from Sirigannda- Reason by Vivek Shanbhag and Story within Story by K V Akshara are chosen for a discussion of narrating realities that acquires unique complexity as they employ different narrative techniques to convey the story embedded in region and cultural specificities to portray Folk realisms.

Region specificities in Folk realisms:
The short story *Reason* by Vivek Shanbhag, is about ‘reason’ which is at the centre of the story—the reason for everything, including superstition, to slight, to fight, to be. The story, narrated from the perspective of a child, gains a sharpness of vision about the simplicity of relationships. The narration is rich in the graphic description of the place progresses in a cinematic camera movement, panning the place and the space of relationships—both intimate and social. Just as the segregation of places are confining and sometimes constricting, similarly, the reason becomes so. But, these enclosures created in relationships are in stark contrast with the open spaces in the village. The narration zooms in and out, panning the place again and again for a study of relationships of the inhabitants. Space is pitched along with the place to reveal a complex perception of the constriction of space, place and gendered realities. Seen through eyes of the child, the simplicity of experience becomes clear just as the irony of constriction and the complication of reason is emphasized.

The narration opens with the child’s humourous observation that the pitch of the fight lets the children understand the length of their stay at their grandparents’ home. The narration that begins from here moves to the mother, her four sisters and their way of dealing with their relationships; the wedding of *Nagesh Mama*-their reason for the visit, the complicated view of neighbourhood that arise from *Mukta’s* supposed ‘evil eye’. The neighbourhood galore in the stories of the evil doings of *Mukta’s* ‘eye’ which range from the burning down of a healthy coconut tree to the death of young bride. But, these ‘reasons’ are examined and exposed when the boy-narrator meets *Mukta* as he is distributing laddu pockets after
the wedding. As the boy is ‘interviewed’ by Mukta, she comes across as an enthusiastic woman, who has preserved her zest through her childhood memories. But interestingly, her narrative of the memory of happy childhood is enveloped by Nagesh Mama’s comments: “Nothing will happen. If anything, the evil eye will get reversed if it falls on this puny boy. It might put some flesh in his ass at least then.”

*My mother became angry at these words. She muttered something to him. He hit back. Since the quarrel wasn’t hitting the roof, it didn’t look like we would leave grandfather’s house soon.*” (Shanbhag 2010: 202) The story ends with the emphasized sentence; but the story also began with a similar sentence.

Within this, reality of childhood is encased the realisms of the adult relationship through the place-space re-presentation. What is extremely interesting is that it is pointedly graphic and region specific. For example, ‘Houses huddled along the sides of the small street leading to the Marikamba temple. The street coursed between the rows of these houses like a thread in a flower garland. A row of these clustered houses was abruptly interrupted by a vacant plot.” (Shanbhag 2010: 183) The vacant plot opposite Grandfather’s house was large enough to hold at least four houses.” (Shanbhag 2010: 184) “The Pandit’s house was so large that it seemed more like a palace.” (Shanbhag 2010: 185) “Ten wide steps led up to a long veranda.” (Shanbhag 2010: 185) “The whole shop was empty. The darkness inside the shop and the dull color of the back wall made it seem like a deep cave or an endless tunnel.” (Shanbhag 2010: 185) “. . . wondering if Madhukara’s might be in his house instead, I went towards it to give him the packet. I went past the platform in the middle and stood facing the door. No one seemed to be inside. I knocked the
door. No answer. I stepped inside. There was a large hall. It was a bit dark. On one side, wooden stairs led to the upper story. A rope handy for climbing the stairs dangled from a beam above. . . . the emptiness of the house stood out. Only bare walls seemed to be here. . . .” (Shanbhag 2010: 196) “Stay, stay. I’ll open the window. You act as if you’ve left your horse outside,’ (Shanbhag 2010: 198) “I wound my way through the dark, empty rooms to the main door.” (Shanbhag 2010: 201)

In the context of this chapter, the analysis of the chosen narratives from the primary texts depict the possible reading and interpretation that support the identification of the contemporary literary discussions that are possible and the relevance of recognizing varied indigenous epistemologies. Folk realisms is one such epistemology that addresses the contemporary indigenous responses and records it to privilege the indigenous. It is possible because the research recognises a unique space of vernacular literatures that probes that co-existence of the folk and the written. But, this is not the only unique space of Indian literatures. But, within the space of the co-existence of the folk and the written, one of the epistemologies that studies and endeavors to recognises indigeneity in the contemporary literary scene is Folk realisms. Thus, the hypothetical statement of Folk realisms that was formulated in Chapter II is understood as an important definition. Folk realisms, thus, is defined as an indigenous epistemology that maps region and cultural specificities, narrates realities encapsulated in contemporary everyday life as experienced by the folk.
Work Cited:


