

Tribhuvan University  
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Cultural Poetics and Nepali Folktales: A Critical Inquiry of Socio-Political Connections

A Thesis Submitted to Faculty of Humanities and Social Science, TU.

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree  
Of Master of Philosophy in English

By

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July 2024

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Devi Prasad Pokhrel has completed his thesis entitled “Cultural Poetics and Nepali Folktales: A Critical Inquiry of Socio-Political Connections” under my supervision. He carried out his research from 2080/06/15 B.S. to 2081/02/32 B.S. I hereby recommend that his thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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**Approval Letter**

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## Acknowledgments

I express my heartfelt appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Komal Phuyal, for his invaluable guidance in conceptualizing the title and completing my research work. His positive suggestions, support, and hard work were instrumental in our successful collaboration on this research project. Similarly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Central Department of English for M.Phil. program for their contribution to this work. I also want to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Dhruva Bahadur Karki, Head of the Department, for his support and for enabling us to work on the project. I am grateful to the entire faculty in the M.Phil Program for their excellent teaching and helpful suggestions on research writing, which greatly enriched our work.

Similarly, I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Abhi Subedi, Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Prof. Dr. Jib Lal Sapakota, Prof. Dr. Anirudra Thapa, Prof. Dr. Beerendra Pandey, and Dr. Tara Lal Shrestha for helping me acquire the theoretical groundwork for the research.

My sincere gratitude goes out to a few of my friends who assisted me in obtaining the necessary resources from various libraries. I also want to express my gratitude to my family for their unwavering support while I was completing my dissertation. Lastly, I would not have been able to finish my acknowledgments without also thanking my spouse, Niru Bhattarai, and my son, Moksha Pokhrel, for their emotional support.

Devi Prasad Pokhrel

July 2024

## Abstract

This study delves into the profound cultural poetics embedded in Nepali folktales, a topic of immense significance in understanding how these narratives convey and sustain social standards and collective consciousness. Through the critical analysis of the narrative structure and thematic elements of folk tales such as “*My Baby is Crying to Death*,” “*The Meeting with God of Death*,” and “*The Origin of Alcohol*,” compiled respectively by Popular Nepali folklorist Tulasi Diwas, Karunakar Vaidya, and Keshar Lal. The research aims to uncover how folktales reflect historical contexts and societal norms. Folktales are cultural treasures and living entities that represent and perpetuate the essence of the community. This thesis emphasizes the significance of interpreting folktales as dynamic, developing texts that challenge static interpretations and critically examine their limitations in expressing contemporary cultural variety.

This thesis argues that Nepali folk tales are important cultural conduits that include political, social, and historical components in their narratives. These stories demonstrate perseverance, challenge power systems, and promote important social values. The study looks at how Nepali folk tales promote social inclusion, challenge historical ideas, and preserve cultural identity. By examining these stories through the lens of cultural poetics, the study highlights their long-term significance and potential to promote fundamental cultural transformation in Nepal. As they are passed down through generations, these stories adapt, reflecting and influencing changing social, cultural, political, and economic environments while remaining relevant today.

**Keywords:** Nepali folktales, Cultural Poetics, Societal Values, Narrative Structures, Cultural Transmission, Legal Frameworks, Cultural Critique

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## **Chapter I. Critiquing the Nepali Folktale through Cultural Poetics**

Nepali folktales provide a connection between Nepali peoples' customs and their socio-historical backgrounds. Folk existence, then, actually stems from folk tales as almost all of the folktales are passed orally, through an unseen process, from one generation to another. Apart from "My Baby is Crying to Death," "The Basket Used to Carry the Aged Father," "The Owl and the Elephant," "The Orphan Boy and Girl," "The Fall of Simraungadh," "The Origin of Alcohol," "The Meeting with God of Death," "Bhairab Dance: The Cultural Identity of Pokhara," "The Ghost and his Son," "The Prince and the Demon's Daughter," "The Brahmin and Mushroom" and "Destiny" are those narratives which on the one hand, hint at the socio-political relations of Nepalese society but the other hand these subtleties reflect the number of questions raised.

Nepali folktales have developed links with the socio-political reality of the nation. Maximum cultural dimensions are typically observed in folktales. Folktales contain socio-historical elements that are fully internalized. In this context, the cultural factor becomes relevant in extending one's social and political horizons. Folk tale views historical and literary texts as autonomous selves. Poetics of Culture seeks to divest texts from their socio-historical context. According to Jan R. Veenstra quotes, cultural poetics presupposes that texts register not only discrepancies of the social forces that both inform and constitute history and society but are themselves actively present in the social processes through which both individual identity and socio-historical situation are molded (174).

In order to explain how social energy is distributed throughout society through the use of folktales and other symbolic objects that are passed down through conversation and trading, Greenblatt proposes the concept of cultural metaphor.

Because of this, Greenblatt is believed to have provided significance and worth to the depth of experience. One becomes indispensable in cultivating individuality and self-awareness via living oneself. The dialectic between difference and wholeness gives folk tales their mighty social power. It appears to imitate the tapping heart of the folk tale, of this whole circulation process, oscillating between two poles, sameness and otherness (175). When one side of society regards another side in high regard by emulating many things, it is almost certain that the bridges of socio-political interactions with culture are coated.

Greenblatt's approach to literary and historical texts, underlined by the socio-historical context, nicely parallels the rich tradition of Nepali folk tales transmitted through generations via oral tradition. As attested by Anne D. Hall, Greenblatt's rhetorical approach brings to life the narrative elegance, along with the foundation in the refined and articulate style reminiscent of New High Western. A folktale genre usually pertains to modern versions of traditional Western folklore, often merging aspects of historical and contemporary settings with distinctive cultural variations. Flexibility, intricacy, emotional depth, wit, and nuanced intimacy with readers, as well as historical figures, Jessep goes on overlaying to show that it was a human sympathy, like what earlier historians admired in their humanist predecessors(442). Greenblatt shows empathetic engagement with pre-scientific age figures, and his argument's credibility from ethos strengthens his persuasive power in contemporary discourse. This kind of rhetoric parallels the role of Nepali folk tales, passed down for generations and rich in historical and socio cultural significance. However, these stories also have a more significant role: they are essential mediums through which the folk beliefs, value systems, customs, and ways of life of the Nepali people have been kept alive and portrayed. The themes of valor, loyalty, love, and the results of

action by the legendary figures and mythical creatures view precious past events, cultural practices, everyday life, and ways of interaction with nature in ancient Nepal. Apart from this, these also have an essential role in preserving the linguistic diversities due to regional dialects. Both the narrative skill of Greenblatt and Nepali folk tales have, in this respect, served as a means of further preserving and passing on cultural and historical knowledge by proposing real deep insights into their respective subjects.

The Folktales compilation curated by the renowned folklorist Tulsi Diwasa and his contemporaries explores the intricate socio-political realities of Nepali society, shedding light on the plight of individuals who find themselves on the fringes. Marginalized characters experience discrimination and dissent within the societal framework. Diwasa's folktales, including "My Baby is Crying to Death," "The Basket Used to Carry the Aged Father," "The Owl and the Elephant," and "The Orphan Boy and Girl" all establish a living space within a graveyard. This unconventional dwelling becomes a sanctuary for the impoverished and vulnerable, reflecting a secular ethos in the folk narratives. The emergence of this secular enclave challenges the prevailing aspiration to build a cultural, non-religious community. Characters' self-awareness and actions are a subtle critique of the dominant cultural policies that lean towards religiosity, urging a shift toward a more inclusive and secular perspective within Nepali society.

Nepali folk stories retold from Kesar Lal and Karunakar Vaidya explore subtle imaginations of heroism, ethical worth, and the tension between tradition and modernity in richly textured poetics. So, stories narrated by Kesar Lal, which go through the leitmotif of bravery and selflessness, bring vivid examples of honor and virtue in an excellent manner within the cultural values of Nepalese. For instance,

stories such as “The Fall of Simraungadh” and “The Origin of Alcohol” portray bravery and sacrifice values that cement Nepalese society. In contrast, folk stories “The Meeting with God of Death” and “Bhairab Dance: The Cultural Identity of Pokhara” by Karunakar Vaidya blend historical accounts with moral teaching to depict principle wisdom and justice, implying a more complex relationship of the historical legacy with the ethical conduct. The storytelling approaches bridge the gap between past and present and, therefore, provide a schematic framework in which Nepali audiences relate to their heritage and the consideration of contemporary values. Virtue is celebrated, and tradition is negotiated with modernity in these folk stories to sustain cultural poetics that reinterprets Nepali cultural ideals through engaging and didactic narratives. These stories, taken together, draw attention to the complex web that Nepali society is: a cultural tapestry of characters, nature, language, and social, religious, and regional politics in intricate play to present just the multifaceted dimensions of Nepal's diversified cultural and social scenario.

In retellings of Nepali folk stories by Kesar Lal and Karunakar Vaidya, a wealthy poet foregrounds heroism, moral worth, and tension between tradition and modernity. While the stories of Kesar Lal endow bravery and selflessness with priority as Nepali cultural values, Karunakar Vaidya's stories combine historiography with didacticism toward wisdom and justice. These stories reflect on the negotiation of tradition and modernity, offering a poetic and cultural re-describing of the ideals of Nepal. The thesis further explores how these folk stories, through the cultural setup, resonate with the socio-political dynamics and marginalization of Dalits and tribal communities within the context in which they are set. Symbolic imagery works within folklore as a tool for the subversion of the hierarchical structures of Nepali society.

Cultural poetics challenges the notion that history can accurately depict past worldviews, people, eras, or groups and any claim to objective truth. Instead, this study examines the interplay of socio-political dynamics in Nepali folktales, exploring how they function within the cultural context. It investigates the ongoing tension between religious and cultural interpretations of folklore in the socio-political landscape. This tension perpetuates the exclusion of Dalits and tribal communities from the social fabric. Furthermore, it posits that the symbolic imagery found in folklore can be analyzed through symbolic interactionism, offering a means to subvert the hierarchical structures that marginalize minorities in Nepali society.

As in Greenblatt's *Toward a Poetics of Culture*, the framework mainly draws on a hermeneutic approach to understanding culture as dynamic and interpretive. The approach is synthesized with cultural theory and literary criticism to explore how capturing and projecting human experiences and values become an issue for cultural artifacts. Central to this framework will be examining language, symbolism, and narrative as mechanisms for forming and transmitting cultural meaning, laying bare the deeper, often implicit structures underneath cultural expressions. From such an analytical perspective, one is afforded subtle explorations into how folkloric narratives within the Nepali tradition mirror and shape the ethos, beliefs, and historical circumstances prevalent in society at different periods. It helps analyze how Nepali folk narratives deal with the big issue of caste stratification, associational gender constructions, communal dynamics, and their interlinkages with these folk narratives' roles in either reinforcing or challenging the cultural paradigms established within this context. On the other hand, this academic research tries to follow the evolution of these folk tales as they make adaptive responses to the change in the

prevailing social norms and historical needs and, at the same time, track their continued influence over contemporary Nepali traditional practice.

Nepali folk tales simply do not reflect the political, social, and historical landscapes that shape Nepali society; instead, they provide a rich tapestry of symbols and metaphors that act to critique these foundations. The thesis is going to implement Stephen Greenblatt's framework of "cultural poetic" to discuss how these narratives work at dynamic sites where values and historical ideologies are not only reflected but also contested (3). It meant that the cultural products, such as literature, art, and folklore, are not passive reflections of the world but active participants in cultural dialogue and transformation. Folk stories of Nepal are resilient, question systems of power, and teach social values; they do more than provide a cultural diagnosis about societal norms by enhancing social inclusion. Hence, these stories are agents of transformative change to the extent that they challenge entrenched historical narratives and provide new paths for the expression of culture. Thus, they continue to play deep-seated roles in making and changing Nepalese society's integral elements.

The key to comprehending the function of Nepali folktales is to examine cultural poetics, which studies the intersection of poetry and culture. In light of this, Nepali folktales are more than just stories; they have deep cultural significance and represent the many traditions, practices, and beliefs of the country's many so-called ethnic groups. These oral traditions, passed down from generation to generation, use symbols, metaphors, and other literary devices to impart moral lessons, explain a variety of natural phenomena, and give significance to ordinary events. These tales serve as symbols of cultural poetics and are employed as a repository for cultural tradition. This framework shapes and reflects social norms and symbolic systems in Nepali culture.

This study demonstrates that folk stories can serve as a lens through which to examine the complexities of cultural and political relations and reinforce the shortcomings of these conventional historical discourses. Developing this historical discourse framework and becoming more aware of its symbolic elements will open new research avenues regarding how folktales continue to represent counter-hegemonic practices and offer social inclusion and equity opportunities for Nepal's marginalized communities. Furthermore, by illuminating all these various degrees of significance, this research feature elaborates on how Nepali folk stories aid in developing cultural identities and fortifying communal relationships, improving our comprehension of the nation's socio-political structure.

## Chapter II. Folk Tales in Folklore

Nepali folktales resemble colorful, complex vaults of shared memory and cultural heritage. Integrating Vladimir Propp's notion, folktales are composed of mythological elements, legendary heroes, and symbolic motifs portraying the values, beliefs, and customs of the several ethnic groupings that constitute Nepal. They are mediums for conveying ethical instructions and historical documents to succeeding generations (293). In these folk stories from Nepal, several storytelling styles are combined, reflecting the sheer diversity of human experiences and those of geography and area. These stories were told orally and blended the past and present into a continuous narrative, giving the contemporary audience cohesion and cultural pride while giving academics another angle from which to view how Nepali societies have developed over time. Folk stories take center stage in artistic expressions and cultural heritages and depict everyday mores: worldviews and beliefs of the Nepali community. They preserve cultural practices and rituals instead of shaping the moral code and social norms, which are essential constituents of identity that lend form to Nepal's culture.

In the light of Vladimir Propp's "The Morphology of the Folktale," the heart of Nepali folk stories, like that of the orphaned brother and sister, lies in cultural heritage and communal memory. The Proppian structural elements, such as victimization, departure, the encounter with a magical helper, and the ultimate triumph over a villain, are used in this story, as in most of the folk stories of Nepal, to teach specific cultural values and society's norms. According to Vladimir Propp, cultural heritage and collective memory are at the core of Nepali folk tales, just as they are in the story "The Orphan Boy and the Girl." Like other Nepalese folktales, this one uses the Proppian structural elements of victimization, departure, meeting a

miraculous helper, and eventual victory over a villain to impart cultural values and social conventions. “The Orphan Boy and the Girl” tells the account of their encounter, persecution, and eventual victory against the antagonist as follows:

Their father, who used to love them dearly when their own mother lived, had also swayed to his second wife's whims and stopped caring for them once the children were born to her. By now, the orphan girl had attained some distance from him. Seeing that he was sure to catch her now that all her defenses were gone, she begged the cow on the way to let her get inside her stomach. (53)

Folktales are transmitted through the social hierarchy, with social culture prevailing in their varied manifestations. The tale of a brother and sister trudging through hardship with the help of magical items and a benign she-demon epitomizes the resilience and inventiveness that are characteristically Nepali. As demonstrated by the demon's transformation into a crocodile, this story emphasizes the inseparability of human experience and nature. It also incorporates hard-learned lessons about family ties, the struggle for justice, and the victory of good over evil. These plot points encapsulate Nepalese folklore while imparting historical and social lessons for the reader's amusement and cultural awareness.

Nepali folktales are a rich source of cultural heritage and collective memory, representing the values, beliefs, and customs of Nepal's various ethnic communities. These stories, replete with mythic themes and famous characters, are potent vehicles for historical narratives and moral precepts passed down through generations. Nepali folk stories celebrate the regional variety and the shared human experience while providing amusement and safeguarding cultural heritage. They use oral traditions to connect the past and present, encouraging local cohesiveness and cultural pride.

Folktales provide scholars insights into Nepali societies' socio cultural evolution while preserving cultural traditions, conventions, and moral values.

On the other hand, because of the effects of globalization and commercial entertainment, folktales in Nepali folklore are in peril. As younger generations are exposed to more Westernised forms of entertainment, the oral tradition of folk tales has declined due to the widespread adoption of modern media and technology. As a result, there is a loss of cultural legacy and a break from the customs and values that used to characterize Nepali society.

It is imperative to document and disseminate these narratives through diverse media, including literature, cinema, and digital platforms, to maintain the significance of folk tales within Nepali folklore. Such initiatives can rejuvenate the oral tradition and ensure its transmission to future generations, fostering an enduring appreciation and understanding of these cultural treasures. Moreover, integrating folk tales into educational curricula is essential to encourage children to engage with and value their cultural heritage. The role of folk tales in Nepali folklore is both crucial and precarious. Acknowledging their importance in preserving Nepal's cultural identity and implementing measures to safeguard and promote these stories for posterity is essential.

### **Nepali Folk Tales: Revealing the Cultural Values of Past and Present**

Folk stories have always been highlighted in various ways and aspects and have been incorporated into developing the culture, language, and tribal identity of relativistic locations. In one way or another, the survival of folk stories has an impact on steering the motives and facts of folk stories in measuring socio cultural values. Folk stories further impact the recognition, mindset, behavior, and many other fundamental constituents of life and human beings. People were allowed to learn and

understand the human condition better through a visit to the narration of folktales, as they contained sources of discernments, convictions, generalizations, fears, delights, and forms, amongst many other things (Thompson 1946).

The Nepali class, like any other cultural group, has been dominated and accepts only its culture, caste, religion, and language. Although being a diversified nation, state power is not in a position to have detailed information on the cultural, linguistic, religious, ethnic, and geographical diversity impersonated in the country. The data conveyed to the international community by state power are often for the benefit of those at the center of power, which disregards the peripheries, as Sharma (2004) pointed out. For an equal nation to develop, it is necessary to have a reflection of all features of life, including language, religion, culture, and ethnicity. Folktales have emerged as the last direct medium to unveil the facts about these elements, revealing the true diversity and richness of Nepali society.

This research mainly focuses on how folktales assess the status quo over time. At the same time, it will center on folk tales' role in preventing deviance from a community as diverse as Nepal. For this purpose, I have chosen a few folk stories of diverse sorts of Nepali soil. The approach of this present study is a new analysis of these Nepali folktales because it was compiled by the well-known Nepali folklorists Tulsi Diwas, Kesar Lal, and Karunakar Vaidya; each folktale differs because it was collected from respective localities. This has been lacking in the available research, making the arguments here timely and relevant. No comparative analysis has ever been done in this area. At the same time, it explores the importance and significance of the messages conveyed by Nepali folktales of different scales. In the folktales, the use of folk dialects and the combination of reactionary expressions of mythical

figures, images, colors, and events properly criticize the context of Nepali society over an extended period.

Folk tales play a huge role in the constitution of classic storytelling because they serve as a channel through which tried-and-tested wisdom is explained, a story element is attached to everyday people, and people are taught how to behave ethically correctly in the world. Stories, often rooted in fiction, magic, or supernaturalism, are based on interactions with different creatures, whether animals, kings, farmers, or mythic beings. Passed on through oral tradition, folktales were initially an essential device for teaching and entertaining the communities before the discovery of print and other technologies, opines Brunvand. As such, this form of folk literature articulates the common man and showcases the cultural historicity of specific communities where these stories interestingly reflect shared values and norms.

Although 'folk' and 'lok' are significantly used in Nepali culture, 'lok' includes much broader and more positive meanings. While 'folk' may be generally understood to refer to traditional beliefs and customs of ordinary people, in Nepali, 'look' is used with a much broader meaning, avoiding possible pejorative associations of the term 'folk' (Koirala 2011). 'Lok' refers to human issues in relation to their communities, excluding divine things, and includes not only traditional folklore but also famous legends, songs, and common idioms. Because it corresponds to a broader meaning in Nepali culture, the term 'lok' approaches a more comprehensive and diverse conception; hence, communal life would correspond to an English concept of 'folk,' while establishing a rich tapestry of cultural manifestations that define identity and history.

In Nepali folk literature, 'folk' stories represent a richer and culturally significant aspect compared to traditional 'folk' stories. Folk tales hold a significant

place in Nepali folk literature as they are current in widespread usage and reflect the cultural heritage and traditions of the Nepali people. These tales are integral to the folk culture, passed down through generations orally, and serve to preserve and transmit traditional knowledge, values, and beliefs. The collection and publication of such folk stories contribute to preserving and promoting Nepali folk literature, showcasing the richness and diversity of the cultural narratives embedded in these tales. Rhoderick Chalmers uncovers the most minor incidents in Nepali folk tales:

The development of classical Sanskrit literature, there was a reasonably clear understanding of the separate sphere of *lok* culture. In particular, we may conveniently focus on the sense of 'worldliness' that underlies all of the central meanings of *lok* in classical Sanskrit. Just as in English, this 'worldliness' implied a direct link to the temporal rather than the spiritual: what took place in the *Lok* were the affairs of human beings within their own communities rather than the affairs of gods; a discourse that took place in *lok* language was divorced from that conducted in the *devavan*: of Sanskrit. These themes are echoed in the current Nepali usage of *lok*. (245)

Nepali literature, though distinct, stems from Sanskrit literature, which distinguishes between everyday life and spiritual concerns. Similarly, Nepali's "Lok" denotes mundane matters like human and community affairs, akin to English's "worldliness." This suggests that both languages emphasize worldly rather than spiritual aspects. This folk culture is evident in Nepali folk tales, showcasing its enduring relevance in Nepali society. This continuity underscores folklore's enduring significance throughout history and into the present and future. Thus, despite the Cultural Revolution, the essence of Nepali literature remains rooted in these worldly themes, reflecting a broader cultural continuity across generations.

Folktales are an essential part of South Asia's literary and cultural traditions. These oral narratives are a rich repository of cultural information, values, and beliefs that authors and folklorists can draw on for inspiration and theme material. The region's folktales include various myths, legends, and traditional stories that reflect South Asian societies' essential experiences and worldviews. These folktales allow writers and researchers to delve into many themes and ideas firmly ingrained in the subcontinent's cultural fabric.

Folklorists and writers can transcend temporal and spatial boundaries through their engagement with folktales, fostering an appreciation for and preservation of cultural heritage while resonating with universal human experiences. South Asia's rich literary history ensures continuity through these folktales, which serve as vehicles for transmitting cultural memory, values, and traditions to future generations. The relationship between folktales and literary traditions in South Asia is symbiotic, with folktales providing inspiration and thematic depth and literary traditions serving to preserve and introduce the region's cultural diversity to a global audience. British civil servants in South India, believing that refining the context of folklore could facilitate societal evolution, collected and studied folklore materials from various regions, including those overlooked by missionaries. They enlisted native scholars to enhance the quality of this research, thereby inspiring Indian scholars to collect and analyze their indigenous folktales. Consequently, the societal development within South India is relatively well-documented. South Indian folktales and myths exhibit distinct structures, differing in themes of supernatural power, chastity, kinship, and kingship compared to their North Indian counterparts. The variety of oral poetry and performing arts in South Indian cultures is unique and has no parallel in North India. The special semantic characteristics of some South Indian motifs, such as the left

breast possessing destructive powers, do not align with international motif indexes (139). Expanding on this context, author Jawaharlal Handoo provides further clarification by stating:

In the last decade, due to a strong urge to understand and explain the basic features of South Indian culture, especially folk culture, there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in the folklore of South India. This interest has been very influential and has indeed inspired many scholars in the northern parts of India to study the oral traditions of their own cultures. This activity has created a general awareness throughout the country to interpret the oral tradition of the country and invest it in social development. (141)

Everything boils down to cultural poetics, about how cultures express themselves through stories, art, and music. Scholars are really into South Indian folk tales because they give us a peek into the culture's beliefs and values. This interest in South Indian folk tales has made scholars up north curious about their cultural traditions. It is like a cultural swap, where seeing the cool stuff in South Indian culture makes them want to dig deeper into their roots. So, when scholars study these folk songs, it is not just about the tales. It is about respecting and enjoying different cultures, which helps us understand and celebrate our world's rich diversity.

Handoo further enhances his research by highlighting India's efforts in preserving the cultural diversity of the subcontinent. Consequently, folklore studies in Southern India have experienced considerable growth, especially in gathering and examining folktales from diverse regions. This emerging pattern has facilitated the advancement of regional folklore studies (143). Moreover, there has been an evident acknowledgment from established fields regarding the pivotal role of folk tales in South Indian culture, fostering interdisciplinary exploration in both folklore studies

and cultural analysis. Likewise, it is pertinent to note another South Asian facet. Additionally, it is relevant to delve into the folk tale of another Bhutanese indigenous element of the region within this context. Bhutanese oral traditions, encompassing folktales, myths, and legends, furnish valuable insights into local history and cultural beliefs by elucidating the origins of place names, landforms, and cultural practices. These narratives provide a cultural framework for understanding the symbiotic relationship between people and their environment and the values and beliefs underpinning their community. The preservation and dissemination of these oral traditions enable Bhutanese society to sustain a connection to its heritage and customs, fostering a sense of cultural identity and continuity. Through these stories, individuals can engage with their historical and cultural heritage, enhancing their sense of identity and belonging within their local context.

Tshering Cigay Dorji elucidates the intricate relationship between folklore and traditional values in Bhutanese culture. Folktales serve as a conduit for transmitting and reinforcing traditional values within the community (22). These narratives frequently convey moral lessons and mirror societal norms, emphasizing virtues such as loyalty, love, and honor. By disseminating folktales that encapsulate these values, Bhutanese culture perpetuates its ethical principles and cultural identity, thereby ensuring the continuity of these values through the storytelling tradition.

Integrating folklore and traditional values into culture centers on initiatives that yield tangible or visible outcomes, such as preserving traditional customs.

Tshering Cigay Dorji further elaborates on this point:

Cultural preservation is geared mainly toward programs that show tangible or visible results, such as the renovation and construction of monasteries, as well as the preservation of dress codes and traditional etiquette. These efforts are

indeed laudable and have produced very good results, but a more concerted effort may be needed to inculcate an understanding of and an appreciation for our traditional values exposed to various sources of information and entertainment. (24)

Tangible cultural heritage, such as renovating monasteries and preserving traditional dress and etiquette, is essential and has produced good results. However, a more concerted effort is needed also to inculcate an understanding and appreciation for traditional values and intangible cultural heritage.

Intangible cultural heritage, such as oral traditions, performing arts, and traditional knowledge, is crucial for maintaining cultural diversity, facilitating intercultural dialogue, and transmitting knowledge and skills across generations.

The significance of cultural manifestations transcends mere aesthetic appreciation, encompassing a repository of invaluable knowledge and traditions. Achieving equilibrium necessitates concurrent tangible preservation endeavors alongside initiatives geared towards documenting, transmitting, and fostering comprehension of intangible cultural heritage. This comprehensive strategy is imperative for safeguarding the vibrancy and pertinence of cultural traditions amidst the forces of modernization and globalization. Peter Burke comments that the relationship between history masters and folklorists has experienced three stages: the "age of agreement" before the First World War when both disciplines were in their earliest stages; the "age of doubt" from the 1920s to the 1970s, when historians tended to characterize their field barely as the enhancement of the nation-state and to thrust their consistent technique based on advanced bona fide records; and the "age of rapprochement" since the 1970s as historians meandered into the new areas-popular culture, micro-history, history from underneath borrowing procedures from the social

sciences as they did so. Moreover, it looks forward to an "age of cooperation" between the two disciplines. History propagated by the state always favors power, which works to obscure reality. So it is essential to scan the folklore, as Burke said, to unravel the most negligible phenomenon in history:

Disciplinary boundaries are described as a social or cultural historian or as a folklorist. The same goes for an ambitious study of material culture and daily life in "the North" (Denmark and Norway), onwards. This company is certainly not a coincidence. Starting with Skansen in Stockholm, an open-air museum has emerged in Scandinavia. It is necessary to avoid the temptations of nostalgia. This age of harmony was a time when many professional historians and history was becoming a profession in many European countries in this period appeared to have little time for studies of the past that were not essentially concerned with the state and the church. The work of a German historian is based on this to deal with trivial matters. Local history, social history, and cultural history were all treated as marginal subjects by the majority of the professionals. All the same, these approaches continued to be practiced, if mainly by amateurs, and their practitioners did not despise folklore. (134)

Analyzing the setting of Western folklore reveals that the old stories are predominant in a specific time and are deficient. Subsequently, if the prehistorical actualities of folklore are analyzed in conjunction with contemporary folklore, the truth of how old stories can fortify social interrelationships emerges. As it were, by analyzing the setting of our history and legends, not independently, the perspective of sociocultural relations is generally fortified.

If we disagree with the folklore, then the authenticity of history lies within the legend contained in the folktale. So why are we forced to accept folklore that repeats itself, which acts as a reaction to history, encouraging historicity? Suddenly, a tale that may not seem overtly historical can assume a new immediacy, a specific situational meaning that ties it in with cultural history. Put differently, there arises a need for a tale that relates to or comments on specific experiences.

The quest for meaning gained more profound meaning to its audience at the moment the text took root historically. When this made the audience discuss the text, it became clear that there was no consensus on the meaning of the legend: the text looked tragic, especially in the vision of abandonment, wasted memory, and brutal memory. So, the texts could be invoked here, for legend tends to contradict legend and defies the notion that texts from a particular region present a uniform worldview.

The legend genre gets complicated and realistic by locking in that handle inside itself. Neither realism nor history can interpret occasions with the full specialist. However, telling a legend to those who should react to history may give them more existential fulfillment than a magic story or a fable. The legend of Sinclair, whenever told, is what happened recently, and it sets the required reaction that lays the work, if not of the legend as such, at that point, legend told. Niels Ingwersen critically examines:

The magic story and the fable are bound by strict genres that deny the flexibility that a content reaction has. The fable, just like the enchantment story, is contrived and not adaptable enough to be a piercing commentary which the audience put in a particular circumstance may portrayal of both enchantment story and fable recommends that fiction, glorious magic or romping fun, and that storyteller charm in what both subgenres can do for the

mind and hearts. The magic story and the fabliau and frequently takes torments gathering of people that what is being related is authentic. The dream of the legend being verbal history is demanded on by citing areas, non-formulaic names of characters, and dates, the unwavering quality of the storyteller from whom the display story. (82)

Folktales are the connection between cultural relations and are a test of state-controlled and affirmed historical archives. The rulers of any state narrate the history of the nation in their way so that their control is secure. Such so-called history does not cover totality. Hence, it is easy for the state apparatus to analyze the hidden perspectives of history in an all-encompassing way through folktales. This makes a difference for an assorted society to coexist.

Folklore makes us realize that cultural historicity remains, and folklore makes us realize that all the old traditions have yet to disappear. Significant individual differences in "credibility" emerge—many are unrelated to old traditions, others kneel on them, others higher, and some even appear to the neck. As long as humanity exists on earth, myths will exist. In our shrinking world, new myths tend to spread around the world. Japan is supposed to be a cultural reliance on China, where Confucianism was the State religion.

Even though Confucianism was the philosophy in this world, concocted to form a compassionate society, it had no mythoclastic leanings. Mahayana Buddhism contributed liberally to each nation regarding the now-existing pantheons. The centuries-old authority of Buddhism was succeeded by that of Confucianism in its triple forms, that is, classic Confucianism and Confucianism of the school of Chuhsi of the Sung, which of Wang Yangming of the Ming. This resulted in components of

Confucian reasoning and morals being utilized in building up a Shinto religious philosophy by the advocates of a Shinto restoration movement. Matthias Eder argues:

The Emperor is the true son of Heaven and as such entitled to reign over the four seas and the ten thousand countries. The statesmen of the soon to follow Meiji Restoration based the state on a mythological foundation. This was done in the constitution promulgated in 1889, through the school education and in as many other ways as could be elaborated in detail. With the worship of the divine Emperor went together compulsory worship at numerous shrines of gods which were related to the Imperial lineage. In terms of industrialization, commercialization, general education, and military might, Japan became a world power. At the same time, the world of myth was kept intact and sacred as in no other century before and made the very cornerstone of the country's political structure. (19)

As expected, we can give chronic assumptions a positive idea to recognize most folk tales' essence religiously. Putting together all forms of the story with exceptional content, we can be confident that the legend will first appear in terms of the number and ubiquity of the published collections. Japan's rapid modernization during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was marked by significant advancements in industrialization, commercialization, education, and military strength, ultimately establishing it as a global power. Concurrently, the country maintained its rich cultural heritage, particularly its mythological traditions, preserved and revered as never before, serving as the foundation of its political system.

The concepts of a legend or folktales are rooted in a community's collective memory. It is a true story passed down through generations, and its authenticity is validated by those who remember and share it. Legends are often tied to specific

geographic regions and are typically shared within those areas. These stories often revolve around significant events that may or may not have occurred within the boundaries of a particular town but have a profound impact on the community.

Nepali folktales are vital for transmitting cultural values from historical epochs to the current epochs. The oral traditions in the intergenerational transmission are mirror repositories of the norms of society and indigenous customs. At the same time, they add to the delineation of the cultural ethos of Nepal. This paper proceeds to analyze thematic underpinnings, recurrent symbols, and dramatis personae in folk stories that all enhance the understanding of enduring cultural precepts. They have withstood temporal evolution and garnered thematic exaltation involving familial bonds, communal solidarity, and societal concord in Nepali folk tales. These values underline the cardinality of such values within the tapestries of Nepali societal fabrics.

Nepali folktales' mythological and metaphysical elements greatly enrich the nation's spiritual heritage. The fact that these tales have survived even now speaks to the paradigm created in society as an outcome of Nepal's longstanding cultural heritage. Talking about cultural heritage as a means of conservation and promotion, Nepali folktales have established unity and cross-cultural understanding in times of adversity.

### **Approaching Nepali Folktales: From A Cultural Perspective**

Folktale refers to the writings of persons from the folk culture. It is a spontaneous and straightforward depiction of peasant life. Folk language and folklore served as the foundation for all language literature. Before civilization, males would share their life experiences and what they had seen and heard. Folk literature was undoubtedly popular from that point forward. It could also be interpreted as a remnant of far more primitive humankind. Although man has progressed past his primordial,

uncivilized origins, some remnants of his more hominid form have survived. People have long valued language and found ways to incorporate it into their lives to self-express. Therefore, Folklore materials are generated as a public resource and passed through orality. Folklore is thus connected with linguistic media, common social property, oral expression, sound heritage, primitive psychology, and folk psychology, among other things.

Folk tales present a view of society and the social context of a lost time. Among the various classifications of folk tales, oral audio folk tales can be classified under two genres: folk literature and folk music. Such types of folklore have unknown authors and an unknown period of composition. Folk stories belong to this broad folklore classification and are the primary genre. Most folk tales are preserved by the uneducated class rather than the educated. In Nepal, the interested, educated class is saved for scholars who love folklore, society, culture, and related stakeholders teaching the subject. Even though the learned are interested in studying, the uneducated class is interested in making parables of folktales for entertainment purposes and to teach moral ideals within the social structure.

Folktales are a literature genre that seamlessly captures any community's overall cultural aspect. Thus, studying folk tales makes it possible to project the cultural integrity of the community associated with those folk tales. In a culturally diverse society like ours, folk tales can become an essential tool for studying society, culture, and politics.

Folktales' predominant emotional tenor alludes to the emotional influence that pervades social interactions regardless of the situation or level of maturational development of the individuals involved. Power is implied in the structure's origins, whether in the relationship, economic, political, or religious. Situational dyadic power

is the relationship emphasized in any social setting (402). The degree to which the overwhelming emotional trait required does not originate in family relationship dyads, and prevailing dyadic connections are seen as changing with the social context, whereas the passionate content remains unaltered.

This cannot be denied, in a few social orders, the plausibility of a prevailing enthusiastic attribute expanding from a single kinship dyad to all interpersonal connections. Part of the socialization of the youthful then is the case in a few African social orders where extra familial socialization is of more noteworthy emotional noteworthiness. John H. Hamer critically elucidates:

The kin contention is amplified afterward by one's peers within the competition to procure riches, create notoriety for bravery, and illustrate stylistic capacity. At the same time, beginning very early in life, youngsters are taught to revere their elders and provide economic and political support as needed. As one informant says, "The father is like a god." This refers not only to the biological father. However, the distinction is quite apparent to the Sidamo but to all men of their father's generation and older, regardless of genealogical proximity. Folktales symbolize and ritualize the thoughts of shrewdness, liberality, and circumspection related to maturity. (394)

Therefore, local folktales are not the exclusive source of economic, political, and religious rights and duties, even though they significantly determine people's clan identity, marriage rights, obligations to defend clan land, and participation in particular clan rituals. This helps to fortify that location's cultural identity even more.

Every individual must use significant emotional influence to submit to various forms of authority since they have been a part of the community since they were young. A young guy in pre-adolescence discovers that he will receive plenty of food

and praise from the elders in his community if he is vigilant and fast to obey them. As a result, he starts to see that authority is more than just a means of repression and that correspondence takes precedence over its constructive use. Folktales can profoundly alter how people interact with society by influencing social and cultural maturity standards and practices.

Through folklore, folktales foster significant facets of children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. Folktales and fairy tales have a similar effect of enhancing empathy and cross-cultural skills (31). Kostas Magos, who supports folklore's cultural significance, continues. In the same way that folktales can serve as an effective tool for communication that shapes children's life compass and personality development, they can also aid in the normalization of one country and enhance the perception of another. In his examination of children's mental models, Kostas Magos highlights the following facts through a variety of folktale genres:

The cultivation of intercultural competence through folktales may develop by employing two different Practices. The element of otherness is inherent in a large number of folktales. Even though in several folktales, the tackling of otherness is not always politically correct because of the racial and gender stereotypes that are usually found in their stories, through them, children can understand and accept the existence of otherness as a component of every human group. (29)

Through the timelessness and universality of folktale characters, children learn the universal qualities of human life and the symbolic methods of a shared, sophisticated political and cultural identity independent of linguistic, religious, or ethnic diversity.

The use of folktales and storytelling, in conjunction with other sources, prompted a shift in introspection and self-reflection, particularly regarding the solid

national stereotypes that shaped their perceptions of Turks. Although the action investigation appears to have driven most of the members to transcend the stereotypical image of the enemy, a few of them went on to support the existence of social contrasts between the national Other and the national self and to regard the latter as socially overwhelming. It is also interesting to learn about nearby nations where ethnic and socioeconomic generalizations influence, more or less, the majority's perceptions of the national other.

A person's entire social and cultural existence is impacted by folk literature. It is essential to have children's literature in the classroom that encourages young readers to pay attention to what they observe and delve deeper into general human concerns. Children can gain deeper insights from folk tales and have the chance to analyze them based on their personal experiences and ideas for development. These stories feature well-developed characters, realistic dialogue, well-paced plots, and excellent outcomes. Patricia R. Crook acknowledges that folktales allude to human predicaments:

Children move toward a clearer understanding of the meaning of some of life's experiences. It is essential to listen and not preach, not impose values, but encourage through a no threat ending atmosphere the children's airing of thoughts. The children can come to their conclusions; frame their value structure in this way, and you as a leader will gain insight for future stories.

Many folk tales are excellent sources for interpretive questions.(450)

They talk a lot about the inner problems of human beings and their struggles against difficulties in their lives. Folk stories still hold children's intrigued. Anecdotes from folklore reveal many people's inner struggles and troubles.

Folk tales still interest children. They improve a child's life, amuse them, and pique their curiosity. These narratives enhance one's capacity for creativity, foster intelligence, and enable the teller to convey a tiny bit about oneself to others. Folktales serving as a child's safety net are sufficient to enhance the cultural element. These tales are adequate resources for them to make a difference and develop an understanding of society and its issues.

Folktales offer assistance to the community to maximize their qualities. They turn their shortcomings into qualities and dangers into openings. As folktales are metaphorical, their comparison with different life features is communicated allegorically. They recognize culture, which is learned and shared by all community members. They conceal the more profound meaning, which is unambiguous in discourse or composing, and are honest. They may be as ancient as the slope, but they contain genuine issues around life in common and human nature in specific, which individuals have watched. The way folktales are composed recognizes them from other parts of verbal craftsmanship.

Folktales let people discover their multifaceted socio cultural side, which, astonishingly, shapes their future thoughts, aspirations, and emotional states. According to Lekau E. Mfasha, the anthropological notion comprises essential elements of society:

Folktales remain a relevant and competitive genre that will continue to build the communities' knowledge. They cultivate, build, and maintain positive relationships, internally and externally. They make people think differently from animals and try to be responsible for how they live. Even if they are constantly confronted with the perception that they are of a lesser value than other disciplines, they will continue to address critical, diverse issues. Western

culture, according to Shepherd, was judged to be infinitely superior even though African folktales and other related genres like songs, proverbs, idioms, riddles, praise poems and others would leave their mark on world literature.

(301)

Folk storytelling has greatly influenced rural, marginalized, and far-marginalized communities worldwide. Stories with varying substance and tones include different components, such as amusement, instruction, humanity, and the outcomes of actions, poverty, unemployment, and other issues.

Folk stories, therefore, can teach people various values, attitudes, beliefs, and specific behavioral patterns. Their social ideals open people's thoughts to the specific and shared reality in their fast-paced setting. Folktales give many things that have been overlooked for a while a fresh perspective and a contemporary significance.

Folktale is the core and primary genre of folklore. It has contributed significantly to the growth of folk literature and culture. It also aids in identifying and comprehending the objective of growth. Folktale's very existence lends folk literature a sense of creativity. When individuals feel a sense of belonging in different perspectives of culture, experience a sense of beauty in the creation, and discover their existence in that cultural creation, it spontaneously lays the foundation for extending social ties. Sonja Servomaa scrutinizes discourses of identity via folk tales:

Through countless fairy tales, legends, stories, and epics of life and conduct of reverence. In rituals, we have sensed the way of assuring continuity. Learning vocational skills through practical work has ensured the passing of crafts from generation to generation. In the modern world, the idyllic, fully self-sufficient village life is no longer possible. Life has become tremendously many-sided, complicated and constantly changing with new inventions and exciting

possibilities. Yet the new ways should not break the ties with the past and with the familiar. (239-240)

An ensemble of ingenious solidarity is in their folk literature, where all people have their rich participation through their joy in their creation, which is renewed around their cultural sources. The culture of the people ensures that all humanity around the densely populated areas retain their individuality and are still together in a living unity, not a deadly contradiction. The prosperity of folklore should be encouraged in every way. It can be integral to famous life because its natural aspects are always ready to adjust to cultural and social norms.

In theory, the literary forms of old traditions should be compared to barbaric mythological depictions of nature, which are more than just linguistic distortions. While cultural myths exist, any interpretation of a specific story based on these principles should be approached cautiously. Animism is the spontaneous and involuntary attribution of human intelligence to nature. The Massachusetts folklorist W. W. Newell claims that the haphazard symbolic interpretation of myths in folklore was infrequently worthwhile:

The mythology of one period then appeared to pass into the next century's romance and the subsequent ages' nursery tales. Such an investigation, while it went remarkably to diminish our ideas of the richness of human invention, would also show that these fictions, however wild and childish, possess such charms for the populace as enable them to penetrate countries unconnected by manners and language, and having no apparent intercourse, to afford the means of transmission. It would carry me far beyond my bounds to produce instances of this community of fable among nations who never borrowed from each other anything intrinsically worth learning. (13)

Recent studies have strongly indicated that popular traditions, which are entirely unscientific in the sense of folk stories, have garnered significant attention from modern schooling. For example, similarities within folktales cannot be explained by inherited transmission from one generation to the next.

References to European folklore emphasize stories shared by several European societies rather than those exclusive to a single race. Folktales divide people's traditional stock into two parts: those unique to their ethnic group and those shared with other groups, some of which are from foreign civilizations. Most traditional stories from Central and Western Europe are classified as folktales. The context that forms the basis of the folklore of these South Asian nations is influenced by their many religions, languages, and ethnicities. In these stories, from India to the Maldives, one sees a mix of Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and traditional beliefs. People residing within the subcontinent use them to teach individuals what is right or wrong. They also remind us of important historical events and help us fit into society better. This shows that we have unique but, at the same time, connected identities that are manifested in different areas. Folk stories tell the cultures that hold specific values, and by telling of them, communities can have fun and live by them, treasuring the most valuable among their values.

In South Asia, Bengali literature and folklore have a rich heritage. Since the rural people made it, it has been passed orally from one generation to another. Bengali folk literature encompasses many stories, riddles, and proverbs. Bengali folk rhymes are cultural in their entirety. As Syed Mohammad Shahid notes,

Classification of the rhymes is difficult and still in a fluid stage, although certain hypotheses have been advanced. The collection and compilation of Bengali folk rhymes in a systematic way has a history of one century. It was

inspired by the worldwide interest in folklore collection on the one hand and by the rise of Bengali nationalism and cultural consciousness on the other. It may be mentioned here that the early collection of rhymes took place before the study of folklore assumed any organized or institutional shape in Bengal.

(156)

Bengali folk tales and poems have developed a symbiotic relationship with the socio-political and cultural changes that have been taking place in Bengal for centuries. It is also the same one whose work, even today, remains incomplete. Several folktales and poems, although recorded, had most of them still unpublished. This played an important role in making the place known as East Pakistan, which was left by the British, into Bangladesh.

Similarly, Afghanistan's folklore, known as the strict Islamic society of South Asia, has a rich folk tradition legacy. Afghani folktale represents the land's cultural variegation and historical imprints, which capture the spirit of ethnic groupings like the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, and Uzbeks. Folk stories, from that of Mullah Nasruddin, a vital folk character known for his wit and wisdom, have been a source of popularity for communities through oral tradition, thus preserving the ideals and communitarian bonds of that society. They are essential in preserving oral traditions and also as an avenue to understand what is happening socio-culturally.

How Folklore Presents Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage and Spatial Identity In its folklore, Afghans who pursued the puritanical ideology of Islam paid the deadliest cost. The conflict has weakened society and pushed it to the verge of collapse - long-valued cultural values stand jeopardized. Despite changes in direction, the central folklore of Afghan culture is still strong and unique. Its objective is to use cultural

elements to consolidate peace and speed up post-conflict reconstruction work. Nancy Hatch Dupree further on this context in her piece, stating:

Folk tales and folk songs are enjoyed by rural and urban populations alike, among both literate and non-literate. They are largely unbounded by identification with any single group except those that declare and strengthen the historical exploits of local heroes. Other folk stories and legends fall into several categories, such as those related to the heroes of Islam and those with moral messages. These tales perpetuate existing societal values without protest and are important for child socialization. (978)

They engage in intensive socialization. Afghans would be in any excuse to get together, be it the birth, the wedding, the wedding, or a mourning ritual, to mark the changing seasons, to welcome or say goodbye to travelers, or to honor guests. There is no denying the role of folk tales within its folk literature in making each occasion memorable. Folk tales pertain to the preparation of regional and seasonal dishes. It is justly famous for its hospitality. Hence, folk tales have contributed to making a cultured, prosperous society.

Bhutan is known for its cheerful culture, and its folktales have become a way to express moral principles, ethics, and philosophical ideas about society. These tales aim to promote Buddhist qualities and ideals among the people. They revolve around the lives of ordinary individuals and have served as a means to convey ideals in Bhutanese society. While folk songs also serve a similar purpose, they differ from folk tales in their form, content, and thematic treatment. Folktales may genuinely provide objective explanations of difficulties facing the average man, according to Chandra Shekhar Sharma's article Bhutanese Folktales: average Man's Media with Missions for Society. Bhutanese Folktales: Common Man's Media spirituality, even

survival of society. The role of Bhutanese folktales must be judged in the light of the following sentence: each folktale is a medium of communication and a process of communication. Communication is transferring ideas or information from person to person for a definite purpose (87). Sharma goes on to discuss how folktales are connected to the social structure and advantageous to that community:

The values are not new to Bhutanese oral society. It has long back recognized these values and their importance. It has disseminated them through folktales targeted to entertain the young and to bring them some behavioral changes so that society can be happier and more prosperous. These behavioral changes were long-term feedback for the entire senior generation and society. The imbibing of such values could have been done by monastic education too but it wasn't available to everyone. (90)

Bhutanese folktales are a living, breathing medium through which the rich and the poor, the natural and the supernatural, the magical and the real, can mingle and have adventures. It also represents inclusivity to everybody. Women have participated actively in the job, not just men.

Folktales have significantly contributed to the current socio cultural structure of Bhutan. Because it had a tremendous impact on how civilization developed, several years ago, the oral civilization discovered the societal goals and virtues that we wish to see in today's age, and folktales played a significant role in this process. They were thus a powerful channel of communication at the time. Folktales provide a purpose that must be recognized and used. Action must be taken to revive the tradition. Let us exchange experiences and provide direct responses so they might live longer in our culture.

In any society, folk tales are more oral in transmission than written. Short, creative stories about animals, nature, and cultural heroes can help readers understand human nature and stir debate on proper behavior. An objective integration of folk tales into academic study and research and a socio cultural approach to folk tales in interactions with the Nepali people can significantly enhance many aspects of social development. All communities have folktales to preserve their culture, entertain, and educate the masses. They are truly priceless for the benefit of national and global culture. Folktales are helpful for better comprehension and communication between different cultural groups.

Nepali folktales, such as Hare/Turtle, Hare/Lion, and *Kalu*/Trickster, have binary oppositions. Are these binaries reversible, and with what consequences, maybe? Moreover, who or what is in between? What or who is the boundary? Is it plausible to suppose that the lion can socialize with other animals in some version? For example, to achieve cultural congruence, we could look to folktales to connect different philosophical positions to everyday life and incorporate them into our lives. This idea is explained as follows by Hikmat Dahal and Balram Bhatt in their article *Folktales, A Moral Message from the Past to the Future Generation*:

Everything from products and practices to norms of society constitutes the culture. Social dynamics also play a significant role in shaping the culture in the way it is shaped. The dynamics of societies have been formed over a period of time according to the need and circumstances. It includes the interactions that are carried out by individuals being in a society and the relationships which are formed as per the evolution of society. (38)

Folk stories enthrall most people because of their numerous references. These stories explain our society's political, cultural, and historical backgrounds and shed

light on our shared history. They make our shared identity, values, and ideals clear. Young people, particularly, embrace folktales without judgments, regardless of whether they come from the Eastern or Western Hemisphere. As a result, folklore successfully embodies cultural components.

Values, customs, and traditions are modeled by suitable behavior in every religion and culture. Folktales offer us a much more convenient way of continuing this tradition. It teaches us that proper actions will always be rewarded and wrong actions are commonly punished, thus guiding us on how to differentiate between good and bad actions. A folktale can explain that community or religion's general cultural values and customs. The customs and beliefs carried out with time became out of place. This was as wrong as time went on. Ignorance was mistaken for superstitions and wrong customs. With the help of folktales, we can start educating the general public about the proper and correct meaning of religion and its cultural customs and associated behaviors. Folktales, therefore, comprise subjects that repeatedly re-live the prehistoric customs and beliefs.

In the same way, Prakash Upadhyay, in his paper *Folklore, Underpinnings on Some Nepali Folklore*, argues for the role of folk narratives within the general perspective of folklore studies. He shows how people use folklore for communication and interaction and exploit it to "negotiate social and cultural situations. Thus, Upadhyay depicts how folklore becomes instrumental in establishing and strengthening the cultural identity and how these stories unravel the values leading toward a social identity (151). He further elaborates on the socio cultural message of folk tales in folklore:

In the rapidly urbanizing context of Nepal, one should not underrate the continued vitality of folk beliefs prevailing here in remote areas that are useful

for managing social, cultural, and ecological situations in various institutional settings. Folk beliefs are tied to different aspects of social life, for interaction and artistic communication in small groups. Nepali folklore hunts for beliefs and folk knowledge of the past, but there have been no attempts to tie it to the present modern Nepali society and social/cultural situations in various institutional settings. (153)

Anthropologists speak for cultures that were in the fixed present, whereas folklorists narrate the tactical past in the plot of a folk tale. Hence, a communal life will be continued by enhancing our understanding through critical analysis of folk tales about Nepali history and culture for better comprehension of the dominant Nepali tradition binding the past and present.

Folklore is about communicating with an accepted culture, manipulating social or cultural settings in different institutional contexts, and forming personal identity. These characteristics also enable stability and solidarity to protect the togetherness of the culture and community. Nepali people consider themselves only Nepali, not any other ethnic people, and they are more deeply politically sensitive than generally recognized. This anthropological framework assesses how human contact with myths and folklore impacts cultures, traditions, ethics, politics, ecology, consumerism, and globalization.

The cultural perspective in Nepali folk tales is enormous because the rich and somewhat complex weave of the storylines entertains, educates, informs, and forms a basis for a people's ethos about morality, historical context, and social norms. The oral history passed through countless generations speaks volumes about Nepali culture, beliefs, and manners of everyday life. Tales such as "The Origin of Alcohol," "The Basket Used to Carry the Aged Father," and "The Brahmin and Mushroom" are

just but a few examples of wit and smartness relating to the importance attached to intelligence in Nepali society. Such stories, as in other folklore, often feature animals as characters portraying human attributes and teaching suitable lessons in a way that children can understand.

If Nepali folktales are viewed within the broader context of South Asian folklore, their typical cultural elements and some common themes can undoubtedly appear. South Asian folklore shares elements of indigenous traditions and historical interactions. Contact with Persian and Arabic, as well as with the settlements of colonial Europe, was necessary. Intersexual relationships between "The Legend of Mahabharata" and "The Jataka Tales" in Nepal demonstrate local adaptations and the shared cultural legacy. Stories of this nature form a cultural link that can connect different groups of people through stories of love, betrayal, and searches for wisdom.

We see global phenomena where oral traditions act as archives of communal wisdom and cultural identity when we compare Nepali folktales to those from other world regions. African folktales, like those about Anansi the spider, and European folktales, like the Brothers Grimm fairy tales, serve the same purpose of teaching societal norms through entertaining storytelling and conserving cultural legacy. Even if the settings and characters of Nepali folktales differ, they serve comparable purposes in enhancing the cultural fabric and promoting a feeling of continuity and identity. These parallels celebrate the distinctive contributions of Nepali folklore to the global story fabric while highlighting the universal appeal of folktales and their function in forming cultural consciousness.

### **Limits of Folktale: A Critique of Culture**

There is necessarily a limit to folklore in what can be criticized about certain aspects of culture. Folktales are, to be sure, important folk literature, but arguing for a

societal analysis through them could not cover the entire picture of answers due to their dissemination, origin, and fidelity to culture. Folktales have limitations and confinements as vehicles of cultural articulation and preservation. Folktales become sites for enacting tradition and collective memories yet often replicate explicitly dominant ideologies and social hierarchies.

When specific stories' voices overshadow others, they risk promoting prejudices, marginalizing groups, and reinforcing social hierarchies. Also, because folktales must consider changes and advancements in social and cultural paradigms, their immobility may have limited applications under modern-day circumstances. My point is that it becomes imperative to read folktales with a critical eye: to discuss their cultural significance vis-à-vis their limited ability to represent the robustness and diversity of today's society. With this view, folktales are no longer mere historical objects but living texts that require invention and reworking at all times.

Folktales are not buildings but created to serve the needs and express the desires of those who keep them. Just as knowledge of how buildings are constructed can help us to understand architecture, it can also help us to understand folk tales. Other concepts drawn from architecture can illuminate other problems of tale study, including the fundamental one of the relation of idealized types to variants. Comparative folk tale studies reveal that tales are constructed from elements of varied sizes and complexities, including motifs, episodes, larger chunks of tales, and even the entire tale topic itself.

European folk tales appropriate obstacles according to the demands of their geographical context. Southern Europe shows snakes, while Northern Europe uses them to show hardship. Two concepts were developed as devices to assist and explore the advancement of folktales; they are the premise of our exceptional capacity to be

very confident and comprehensible as to whether two variations speak to the "same" story. They are, of course, type and theme. Both reflect on the established social (and cosmic) order. Christine Goldberg appraises:

... the East European, Near Eastern one is quite physical and gruesome: many snakes crawl out of the body of the princess. In southern Europe, there is only a single snake. In northern Europe, three difficult tasks replace the snakes, making this episode more abstract and impersonal. Whether or not this guess at the series of evolving subtypes is correct, the subtypes are strikingly regional. They represent successful attempts at making the story better. And "better" is a matter of taste, tastes that were developed within the regional culture. (171)

Stories are not buildings but antiques planned to meet the wants and yearnings of those who keep up with them. Fair as information almost, development strategies can assist us in getting it designed; they can also assist us in getting folktales. Other structural concepts can clarify other problems in the tale, including the essential relationship between idealized sorts and variations. Folktales merit being drawn closer from numerous headings. Each approach is self-limiting: none can account for all conceivable information for any tale.

All we can hope for is a positive climate in which a significant amount of the historical concepts that underpin traditional tales will be accepted on a socio-cultural level if we aggregate all tales with a supernatural component. It was to realize that all the old traditions had not disappeared yet. Significant differences in "credibility" emerge; many are unrelated to old traditions, others kneel on them, others higher, and some even appear to the neck. As long as humanity exists on earth, myths will exist. In our shrinking world, new myths tend to spread around the world. Japan is supposed

to be a cultural reliance on China, where Confucianism was the State religion. Even though Confucianism was the philosophy in this world, concocted to form a compassionate society, it had no mythoclastic leanings.

Mahayana Buddhism contributed liberally to each nation regarding the now-existing pantheons. The centuries-old authority of Buddhism was succeeded by that of Confucianism in its triple forms, that is, classic Confucianism and Confucianism of the school of Chuhsi of the Sung, which of Wang Yangming of the Ming. This resulted in components of Confucian reasoning and morals being utilized in building up a Shinto religious philosophy by the advocates of a Shinto restoration movement.

Matthias Eder argues:

The Emperor is the true son of Heaven and as such entitled to reign over the four seas and the ten thousand countries. The statesmen of the soon to follow Meiji Restoration based the State on a mythological foundation. This was done in the Constitution promulgated in 1889, through the school education and in as many other ways as could be elaborated in detail. With the worship of the divine Emperor went together compulsory worship at numerous shrines of gods which were related to the Imperial lineage. In terms of industrialization, commercialization, general education, and military might, Japan became a world power. At the same time, the world of myth was kept intact and sacred as in no other century before and made the very cornerstone of the country's political structure. (19)

As expected, we can give chronic assumptions a positive idea to recognize most folk tales' essence religiously. Putting together all forms of the story with exceptional content, we can be confident that the legend will first appear in terms of the number and ubiquity of the published collections. Therefore, the legend is the true story in the

hearts of those who remember it and pass it on to another generation. Stories related to a particular region are told when an individual accepts them. The story is a legend with regionality, and it is expected that many stories without regionality are no different from the legend. They talk about a powerful event that may or may not have happened within the topographical boundaries of a particular town but was fair somewhere.

Folktales frequently address the link between tales and storytellers, a topic that can be approached from several angles. Storytellers frequently make cultural commentary based on their own experiences. The shared social foundation may be a prerequisite for an influential describing event. If this establishment is not at a fundamental level, the same is true for the storyteller and a gathering of people; the stories told by one can be expected to be "brutal" and different from the other. At most discernibly horrendous, they will be incomprehensible or unsavory; at the scarcest, they will constitute a mental challenge to the audience: the story ought to be reinterpreted since exceptionally clearly the narrator's world is not the audience's. To be close to a culture and a storyteller, in any case, takes more time than one can sensibly believe to be able to spend within the field. Erika Friedl examines folktales as a comment on culture:

The interrelationship between tales and storytellers is a theme in folklore and can be approached from various angles. The storytellers use tales of certain cultural features, especially those that are of relevance to them personally.

While narrating their tales, narrators evaluate the features and interpret them to their audience, who, by approving disapproving parts of the tales, accept and verify or reject the narrator contained in them. The notion utilized to analyze tales with the purpose to extract evaluative and comments about certain

cultural features made by exponents of the same culture, without using categories potentially alien to the studied and without having to ask questions that might prove too sensitive or annoying. (144)

When the question arises of commenting on the cultural aspects of folklore in various ways, it certainly digs out the positive and negative messages contained in folklore. Commentary on folklore is also a suitable medium for emphasizing the positivity within folklore and for guidance on reducing negativity. As a result, it helps to develop and modify a diverse social environment by neutrally analyzing it. Therefore, folklore can be considered as a bridge of social alliance.

Moral relativism is the opinion that moral conceptions and principles are entirely subjective and that there is no actual source of public morality other than individual perspectives on what public morality entails. Folktales are a communal reflection of people's fearful perceptions of right and wrong. They do not belong to a specific person but to the community. Thus, they are reliable information sources regarding public morals, which is critical in a supposedly democratic society. They define excellent morals, as well as good faith and honesty. A folktale is imperative for recognizing positive law. This thought finds solid resistance in the prevailing legitimate philosophy of our world and the Far East. In law, this philosophy is called legitimate positivism. The selection of this ideology is driven by a few negative variables for the advancement of law, such as the alienation of law from common people, the inflexibility of law, and its low viability in nations like China and Thailand. Law has become a mechanism of outside coercion rather than an instrument of people's self-governance. Legitimate positivism is responsible for the separation of law from morals, which debilitates the ethical constraints of law. Folktales and other

forms of society's shrewdness are rich sources of ethical thoughts. They are not fair, unimportant stories. Alexander Shytov argues sources of law through folktales:

It is important to emphasize that the function of folktales in the identification of positive law is not to provide legislators and law enforcement bodies with the rules of law; rather, their function is to clarify the spirit of the law. In this capacity, the study of folktales and other embodiments of folk wisdom in their relationship to the law is important for educating future lawyers. We live in a world where the abundance of legal materials makes it extremely difficult to see the spirit of the law. Therefore, communicating the spirit of the law to all those on whom the enforcement of the law depends is crucial for the well-being of the whole society. The literal application of the law without reference and understanding its spirit is extremely dangerous. A lawyer who knows well a letter of law but is ignorant of its spirit is not only foolish; he is a dangerous lawyer because an automatic application of the law without understanding it can ruin lives. In this aspect, the study of folktales can be one way to communicate the spirit of the law. (329)

Folktales contain guidelines for good ethics and measures of good confidence and trustworthiness. They not only explain the spirit of the law and its moral establishments but also offer ways to shape the law in a democratic society.

This means that the monster has complete control over every aspect of human existence since Western law protects society's flexibility from the parasitic practices and manipulations of a small group of legal experts who work towards the noble goals of love, happiness, and peace. The pursuit of those objectives demands not so much legal expertise as it does a good heart and a genuine cherishing of ideals, qualities that

appear to be sorely lacking in educational institutions and the courts, which purport to be the seats of justice.

Folktales may have evolved from reality to fiction and from history to imagination. Incorporating the current into folktales gives rise, in addition to historical realities, to a third sort of reality called projected reality. Changes in the same story told by many narrators, each of whom projects their own culture, socioeconomic status, and psychological makeup into the folktale's fictive realities, show how this projected reality is manifested. Material culture has been central to cultural geographers' research goals for quite some time. Despite the prevalent belief that folktales are the product of imagination, there is a significant link between reality and folklore.

The narrative imagination generates a fictional reality that is guided by genre-specific standards. This fictive reality is displayed in the folktale as separated from the narrator's world. However, distant from being simply imaginative, fictive reality can be a part of transformed chronicled reality. Traditions, convictions, and social connections survive as fictive realities in folktales. However, to the storytellers, they may have ceased to be either chronicled or are part of the current social reality. Thus, they may have experienced a transformation from history into fiction, from reality into a daydream. Lily Kong and Elaine Goh inspect the Chinese social reality of the construction of race via folk stories:

In ancient Chinese mythology, barbarians living beyond the realm of Chinese civilization were dehumanized so much so that there were one-eyed people, three-headed barbarians, and, in general, many half-men half-animals. This reflects how cultural superiority and intolerance are manifested in the belief in the physical discontinuity between those thought to be superior and those

thought to be inferior, an association that finds parallels in other civilizations as well, such as the early Roman Empire. Skin colour was also often used as the marker of civilization or animality. Thus, as portrayed in the early myths, foreigners may have been portrayed with a human face, but were black and hence akin to the animal kingdom.(264)

Folktales are considered daydream, kitsch, or children's fare; geographers have paid minor consideration to them and in the same way, the match of the well-known culture has been marginalized. Chinese individuals, especially in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, are not simply fictive constructs; instead, they have genuine traditions, convictions, spatial and social associations, and relations inside their narrative imagination. They thus represent fictively, chronicled, and anticipated realities. The settings of this specific set of tales and the display investigation have outlined the esteem of folktales in portraying the demeanors of prejudice and ethnocentrism among the Chinese.

Examining Nepali folktales via the prism of cultural poetics requires considering the stories' multifaceted nature and their roles in reflecting and influencing societal ideals. Numerous folktales from Nepal are imbued with ingrained cultural beliefs and customs that symbolize the continuity and identity of the community. But the same stories can also serve to reinforce outmoded prejudices and societal hierarchies, especially those related to gender roles and caste divisions. As a result, there is a conflict between the need for and the protection of cultural assets.

Since Nepali folktales are the study of cultural production and consumption within their social context, cultural poetics provides a paradigm that is highly important for critical analyses of these stories. Folktales have traditionally been viewed as mainly static artifacts from the past. However, cultural poetics sees them as

dynamic texts open to new interpretations reflecting changing cultural values. This not only makes it possible to comprehend folktales in a much more sophisticated way within this particular civilization, but it also makes it possible for them to act as agents of reinforcement or change at specific times. The ability to repurpose these stories in order to discover the ideological frameworks and hidden power dynamics that lay behind them, and hence the culture itself, is what allows this to happen.

Therefore, rich as they are, Nepali folktales are pretty limiting in that their precise mechanism can be said to reject and conserve civilization. While they are essential for maintaining people's legacy and sense of continuity, they also need to be critically examined and changed to avoid supporting negative stereotypes or standing in the way of constructive social change. When it comes to interacting with Nepali folktales, cultural poetics is a method that advocates for change in terms of understanding contemporary values and social justice in the status quo while also criticizing the stories for cultural preservation.

### **Chapter III. Folktales in Quest of New Culture**

Nepali folktales are regarded as a cultural reservoir enriched with various poetic components that have reflected the nation's desires for rebirth and a new cultural identity via images. Nepali folktales are rich in metaphor, allegory, and rhythmic storytelling. As a result, they offer a one-of-a-kind perspective on changes in Nepal's cultural environment. These stories embody traditional rituals, beliefs, and values, but they do so in a more accessible and memorable way. This poetic dimension, driven by folktales, serves as a cultural anchor, anchoring modern society to its rich roots and allowing for the smooth assimilation of new ideas as they become acceptable and deliverable through modernization and globalization. Thus, this combination of tradition and modernity ensures the preservation of identity and fundamental values. These oral traditions are particularly effective because of their poetic quality, which facilitates their cross-generational transmission and adds significantly to the type of modern cultural identity being formed. Nepali folktales exemplify how traditional narratives can uphold cultural knowledge and wisdom while encouraging innovation and cultural continuity due to their enduring appeal.

Folktales are a conduit for pursuing a new culture since they are rich poetic cultural legacies. The stories, rooted in Nepal's customs and ideals, provide a window into the country's prevailing values, beliefs, and collective awareness. A few of the potent instruments Nepal employs in their folklore to preserve the history and traditions of their past while allowing for cultural progress are metaphors, similes, and rhythmic storytelling. Folktales are a means of bridging generations; they convey knowledge and intrigue while imparting moral precepts and wisdom fundamental to Nepali culture.

They are essential to combining the ancient with the modern in the quest for a new culture. These stories' lyrical prose and symbolic imagery, which are characteristics of folktales, weave a lovely tapestry of cultural continuity and change. In order to keep up with the times, traditional narratives can feasibly incorporate current themes and sensibilities in addition to their inherent cultural importance. In addition to reviving the folktales, this dynamic interaction between tradition and innovation gives Nepal a sense of solidarity and cultural pride. It maintains its rich history relevant in a world that is constantly changing.

### **Folktales: Images of Religion, Culture, and Political History**

Folktales from Nepal serve as a sophisticated means of expressing this nation's religious, cultural, and political history. They are a prime illustration of what cultural poet Stephen Greenblatt called the "strong bond between texts and the socio-historical context in which they are formed." People actually "entertain to educate," realizing and reiterating a whole gamut of intricate Buddhist and Hindu traditions and the moral principles embodied in them. The legend of "The Owl and the Elephant," a mythical person of the highest virtue and piety, illustrates, for example, the respect this society gives to dharma, moral obligation, and spiritual foundations that serve as rules for daily life in Nepal.

The folktales also contain subtle commentary on social hierarchy and historical events that highlight the political dynamics of various eras. However, the same tale of this cunning peasant who makes little attempt to outwit an unscrupulous king can also be interpreted as a subversive assault against feudal oppression, demonstrating the tenaciousness of people and their desire for justice throughout history. Thus, seen from the viewpoint of Greenblatt's cultural poetics, Nepali folktales are more than just stories; they are, in fact, dynamic texts that radically

reveal the complexities of their society of origin and offer a glimpse into the political sentiment and cultural practices, and religious beliefs that the Nepali people have illogically quoted throughout history.

In Tulsi Divas' "The Owl and the Elephant," the folktale talks about how religion, culture, and the totality of political history are connected with society's cultural practices and the time. This solid relationship between the owl and the elephant is also a significant theme since, culturally, friendship and loyalty are considered very important (4). This friendship signifies mutual support for one another, so if any community member gets into trouble, other members must support him. Another aspect of the folktale that aligns with society's ideal is that true friendship involves sharing joys and hardships. The story lets us know that these ties must be strong enough to overcome adversity, reinforcing the cultural value placed on interpersonal relationships.

The owl relies on "self-fashioning," to borrow a term introduced by Stephen Greenblatt. Self-fashioning is how people attain self-identity and social status through choices and actions that, per se, are deliberate. Quite simply, the owl fashions himself as a resourcefully clever character who relies on wit and brains to navigate and manipulate the situation with the demons. His is a keen logic that uses the logic of the demons against them, a helpful tool given to him by the culture in which the folktale was composed, but also one that illustrates that quick thinking is a positive trait that should be emulated practically. Thus, it is said that in that given community, a quality like intellect is valued when it can emerge victorious against a dreaded enemy. The narrative of Diwasa's consciousness develops in this way:

The owl pretended that he had just awakened from a deep sleep. He fluffed out his feathers and looked around with wide eyes at the assembled demons. Then

he said, "I've just had an amazing dream in which I married the queen of demons. So I really must marry her. Where is she?" But the demons protested loudly. They said, "You can't marry our queen just because you married her in some stupid dream. (4)

As the story illustrates, the folk fable is interested in the power structure and subversions. The more powerful and numerous demons now serve as the dominant power system. The comparatively weak owl and elephant once again subverted the dominant power through astuteness for which solidary shoulders were available. This is an example of a universal theme in folklore, the case of an underdog's victory over one deemed invincible. It does indicate, however, a cultural belief in the potential for power to be overturned through intelligence and union, which again supports the concept of power not being simply the function of physical strength or number.

Greenblatt's concept of texts as "symbolic goods" that circulate in culture is helpful in this respect. Folktales are the medium through which cultural values and norms are passed on. The community's values of friendship, loyalty, and cleverness are circulated - and established - by telling the story. A resolution of the folktale in which the owl and the elephant return home safely provides the moral lesson, which, in turn, re-enforces values espoused by the community, therefore reinforcing cohesion and social continuity. In this folktale, certain cultural practices are brought into play, more specifically, conflict resolution or negotiation. In that, the owl had to employ counter dreams whereby the demons "agreed to accept leave alone," thereby illustrating resolving a dispute through dialogue and wit rather than by confrontation (4). It is a policy that favors peaceful resolution and mental agility over physical.

Another folk tale by Divas, "The Orphan Boy and the Girl," is also illustrative of such themes of personal agency against oppressive social structures. By first being

helpless against the stepmother's tyranny, the brother and sister show their personal agency by running away. The sister's astuteness in using the gifts of the she-demon and her successful evasions when followed by the demon itself are strong examples of personal agencies overcoming social adversities. In this respect, the orphan girl's path can be read in the context of Greenblatt's self-fashioning and Lotman's semiosphere (Andreas Schönle 65). She constantly develops, changes her identity, and strategizes her acts in reaction to the threat brought by the position of the 'outside.' All the processes constitute the dynamics of self-fashioning. The narrative space of magic elements and transformations can be read as a semiosphere where different meanings and signs interact and develop the identity and acts of the characters.

The unnamed jungle of the story represents the unknown and the dangers that exist outside the secure shelter of home. As a symbol of hope and safety, fire is perverted in the story as it leads the woman to the demon's lair. The gentle she-demon brings forth a contoured character opposite the evil description widely linked with demons. This is part of a complex vision of the 'other' in which the 'other' is both benevolent and malevolent in this case, defying binary moralities that are part and parcel of cultural narratives (52). The act by the male demon to devour the boy is a literal and metaphorical act of devouring by the forces of evil present in human society. The help afforded by the she-demon is an unexpected one, an unforeseen alliance in this case, which indicates that succor may appear from the most unlikely source. The gifts she gives him - oil, ash, comb, and bamboo brush are prevalent things invested in magic powers that speak of resourcefulness and instrumentality of everyday objects in survival.

As in the cat and mouse chase folktale, the girl uses the devil's abilities to make hurdles. Each object morphs into a formidable barrier, illustrating the concept of

transformation and the triumph of intellect and magic over physical might. The demon's capacity to swallow the lake but eventually being denied by his body's limitations depicts the ultimate futility of greed and strength. This can be interpreted as a condemnation of overreaching ambition and the inherent limitations that even the most potent humans face. The red-stained beaks serve as a mythological explanation for natural phenomena, reflecting how folklore often incorporates explanations for the natural world. The demon's relentless pursuit and the girl's use of the comb and brush symbolize the ongoing struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor (53). Her final refuge inside the cow signifies a return to nature and a symbiotic relationship, ultimately aiding her survival.

It invests crocodiles with a mythic origin and natural history infused with folkloric elements and makes explicit how stories register and accommodate human interactions with the natural world:

Then, the orphan girl came out of her refuge and shouted at her adversary.  
'Demon grandpa, the eagles are coming to peck at you. Drive them away by saying, 'Ha! Ha!' The demon obeyed her in his desperate state. Then she instigated him to drive them away by clapping both hands. Thinking that the vultures had really come, he released the creeper that he was holding, to clap. But of course, this move sent him falling straight down into the raging torrent that carried him away to God knows where. It is said that the crocodiles that are found in large seas and oceans have sprung up from that demon's body.  
(54)

We reveal multiple levels of meaning that reflect and shape cultural beliefs and values. The orphan girl's cunning, the demon's symbolic function, and the mythological metamorphosis into crocodiles all add to a fascinating narrative

conveying tenacity, moral integrity, and the triumph of good over evil. Like many in folklore, this narrative entertains while reinforcing traditional norms and values, ensuring their transmission through generations.

Therefore, even though the orphan girl could not save her brother, she could still save her life (54). The story's final line affirms that survival is a bittersweet experience. The death of her brother casts a shadow on the girl's triumph, highlighting the topic of sacrifice and the harsh truths of life. This illustrates how cultures have come to recognize the nuanced and frequently sad aspects of survival and resiliency. The narrative expresses profound truths about society systems, the natural world, and human experiences through its fantasy components.

Karunakar Vaidya, a well-known folklorist in Nepali literature, discusses politics, cultural identity, and the legacy of the Nepali religion in his works "The Meeting with God of Death" and "Bhairab Dance; the Cultural Identity of Pokhara."

Even "The Meeting with God of Death" folktale profoundly undertakes the subject of fate versus free will. The prophecy shapes the entire journey of the protagonist, something he at first wishes to diminish but ultimately ends up living by. This structure of narration brings out the inevitability of fate, proffering that it does not matter how hard one tries to sidestep his or her fate but that destiny will always seek its course. The prophecy of the snake and platypus and the protagonist's futile efforts to try and escape his death bring out the deterministic view of one's life: it is all predetermined and unavoidable. The early sections of the story create a profound attachment between the two young men and stress friendship and bonhomie as the theme.

The tragic death of a friend early in the piece catapults the surviving friend into his journey and symbolizes the depth of loss and loneliness he experiences as a

result. Indeed, such a loss pushes the narrative forward by making the main character make specific decisions that catapult him into his tragic demise. There is much mutual betrayal among the thieves as they end up killing each other. That simply drives home the moralistic point of greed's potentially destructive nature, and the subplot of the robbers simply reinforces the overall fatalistic feeling of the human vices leading to people getting their undoing.

The folktales that are being presented make the political and cultural inconsistencies of Nepali society quite evident. The characters(s) farewell ceremony indicates the marks that the social aspect of culture has. Being part of it, communities' social rituals mark the critical stages in major individuals' life journeys; the community blesses the individual. Cultural parental care and predisposition for younger ones so that they can navigate the challenges awaiting them in the future come true when their families give money (65). The protagonist's later deeds and the survivor's predicament highlight the danger of exclusion and the cultural relevance of honor. The bull's transformation into a black snake is accompanied by a superstitious aspect that depicts a civilization that believes in transformation, portent, and mysticism. The snake, a mythical animal representing wisdom and peril, portends more trials and insights to come (66).

There is little question that when a community's system is limited to ritualistic religion and individuals place more trust in religious ideas, the society tends to deteriorate rather than improve. The folktale applies this fact to the realities of Nepali society in the following ways:

The man was awestruck; full of curiosity and amazement, he kept a close watch on the snake and followed it when the snake went on its way. The snake entered a wayside inn and the man, too, followed and found that the snake had

vanished from his sight. He was surprised to find four heaps of silver coins with no one inside. As he was gazing at the coins, he heard distinct noises of some men approaching the inn. He climbed over the rafters and concealed himself behind old mats so as not to be visible to anyone below. (66)

The encounter between the man and the snake is more akin to a poetic tale of amazement and astonishment mixed with tension, even though much of this occurs in a way that adds to the overall feeling of mystery and richness. He is first taken aback by the snake, frequently employed in cultural myths as a symbol of metamorphosis and secret knowledge. He then chases it with a kind of frantic curiosity. This leads him to a lonely roadside tavern where strange and enigmatic things happen in old folktales. For example, as the snake disappeared, four piles of silver coins appeared in its place, but to his amazement and good fortune, the sound of approaching footsteps could be heard. More than just a bright youngster, his instinctive decision to hide behind old mats and burrow beneath the rafters conjures up images of ancient riches stories concealed behind cunning and caution. The nature of this journey into the deeper, archetypal storylines of human experience is captured in the story of suspenseful cultural symbolism.

In the tale, the narrator advances with a logical argument to refute a forecast of the Lord of Death. The essence of that argument is the temporal and spatial impossibility of fulfilling the prophecy. He counts that even on foot, it would take a minimum of three days to reach that tree; it would logically contradict the fact that he will die by hanging from that very tree within one hour. This argument is based on the hand of reason and empirical evidence that went against the divine pronouncement, diminishing its authenticity. The narrator confidently concludes his rational deduction, "Thus the words of the God of Death are false." Such a passage incurs

humanity's instinct to uphold logic and observable reality to question and revoke any supernatural claim that seems to stand in its way outside man's control or even understanding (69). Thus, this discrepancy forms the premise for a better demonstration of the conflict between reason and faith in this work of fiction that has ever been put beyond the limits of time and territory, a unique characteristic of man.

The protagonist's final realization and acceptance of the prophecy actually reinforce the cultural motif of the inevitable outcome of death. The fact that he acknowledges that the forecast was correct reflects his belief in fate and the surety of supernatural or heavenly decrees. At the end of the story, the traditionally held belief that fate is predestined and thus cannot be altered is reasserted (70). The tale analyses cultural themes, including friendship, familial acceptance, rites of passage, moral fairness, the supernatural, unpredictability of fate, and the reality of death through Greenblatt's Culture Theory. This indicates that the human experience and actions of human beings will always be intertwined with the beliefs and history of cultural context.

The folktale “Bhairab Dance: The Cultural Identity of Pokhara” by Karunakar Vaidya provides further evidence that folklore is a fundamental component of the identity of the people and groups in the area. The dance is part and parcel of Newar tradition; it is a religious ceremony honoring and invoking deities, not simply a performance. The rich features of the performing art masks, for example, the ceremonies performed before the dance itself and the portrayal of particular gods and goddesses, speak eloquently of the syncretism of Hindu and native Newar beliefs. This is obvious from the sacrifice rituals performed along with the dance and the invocation of *Nasadyo*, an incarnation of Shiva. This association with the divine

brings protection and other benefits to the community due to the underlining of the role of religion in day-to-day life and cultural identity.

The Bhairava dance is a story about cultural transmission, adaptation, political history, and power. This is how cultural practices are transmitted and adapted along a migration trajectory. To be sure, the Bhairab was transported to Pokhara by Newars fleeing the conquests of Prithvi Narayan Shah. This diaspora also led to the transplantation of Kathmandu Valley customs to new sites, which is evidence of the portability and adaptability of the culture. As for such adaptations as increasing the number of deities in the dance and many other unique mystic aspects, they are a hallmark of how cultural practices respond to new environments and circumstances. However, the historical origin of the dance is pegged on a momentous political upheaval of the conquest of the Newar kingdoms by Prithvi Narayan Shah. The mention of Ranajit Malla in the songs makes this cultural practice political. The fact that these songs of devotion bear the name of a former king represents an act of resistance, a way to remember and celebrate a lost kingdom and its rulers. This shows how cultural practices can reposit historical memory and political identity.

It also deals with other aspects of social structure and community, mysticism and superstition, and the decline or fall of faith and modern challenges. The Bhairab dance requires a proper social structure where the responsibilities are divided, and ownership is passed through generations. Forming a *guthi*, a trust, to run the dance manifests its communal character. It does not stop at that; it organizes the whole event and maintains daily rituals - a clear indication of a very structured approach to the preservation of clutches of cultural heritage. From this, one sees the importance of collective effort and social cohesion in sustaining the streams.

The story does not stop there; Mystical and superstitious elements are associated with the Bhairab dance. The mysterious natures of the supernatural events preceding the dance and the convulsive states as *khasi* of the dancers enhance these aspects further. Such factors indeed reiterate the belief in divine intervention and the power of rituals over aspects of the material world. The dread of misfortune caused by ritual impurity or disrespect certainly shows a deep-felt reverence for the sacred and the perceived consequences of failing to live up to religious norms. It also talks about the declining faith and dwindling of supernatural phenomena. Therefore, it shows the changing cultural and religious processes that may have been affected by modernization and different belief structures influenced by external factors. The community tries hard to continue the dance through structured institutions such as the *guthi*, which shows it struggles to keep up the tradition.

The story begins with its origin and the Newars' transportation to Pokhara. This elucidates Greenblatt's theory of cultural mobility, according to which practices are moved across borders and into new local settings. The reference to Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest and the ensuing modifications to how culture diffuses go hand in hand with Greenblatt's idea of diminishing or altering guarantees of cultural negotiation with fluctuating power. The narrative effectively illustrates how Nepal's monarchy was structured according to culture. The song sung during the dance references King Ranajit Malla, whose name highlights the relationship between governmental power and cultural customs (34). Understanding the way historical characters are incorporated into cultural narratives to preserve social order and continuity is made more accessible by Greenblatt's focus on cultural signifiers within texts.

Similarly, it acknowledges that the dominant cultural structure in one community location directly or indirectly affects the cultural features of another location. The Bhairab dance and the Bhaktapur Nava Durga dance are comparable, demonstrating how cultural traditions adapt and change throughout time. The creation of a foundation to oversee the occasion highlights the group's endeavor to maintain and conserve traditional customs (35). This is consistent with Greenblatt's theory that cultural communities and institutions serve as conduits for cultural continuity and adaptability to changing social contexts.

Highlight how training procedures, musical accompaniment, ritual preparation, practice, and performance contribute to the embodied transfer of cultural information. The following are some ways that the pre-dance ritual of animal sacrifice highlights the value of ceremonial purity in cultural performance:

The descendants of Santa Bir managed the entire event, and the family faced difficulties in fulfilling the requirements of this event. Now, they have formed a *guthi*, or a trust, to arrange and fix the date for the event to be held on a regular basis. This community is also responsible for other activities associated with this institution. Besides organizing the dance, the masks of the deities had to be worshipped daily, a ritual called *Nitya Puja*. At present, the trust performs the puja, organizes the dance performance and also does other works like selecting the dancers, teaching dance postures, etc. (37)

The dance performance's description highlights the event's systematic format, with distinct deities and symbolic themes in each phase. The performance's supernatural beliefs and events show how myth, superstition, and cultural practice intersect. The uncanny and mystical cultural texts make understanding how these components add to the attraction and significance of the performance more accessible.

The Bhairab dance allows us to understand how this ritual functions as a cultural text by demonstrating the processes of cultural transmission and transformation. It does this by reflecting the historical circumstances that gave rise to it and by embodying the Newar community's social and religious values. However, the play also discusses the power relationships within this group and how ritual maintains social cohesiveness. The Bhairab dance ultimately serves as a testament to cultural practices' loftiness, tenacity, and inventiveness for adaptation, negotiation, and movement with the eras and historical settings. It is one of the important and culturally rich rites that the Newar people from the Kathmandu valley brought to Pokhara. Twelve persons dressed in masks that symbolize various gods and goddesses do a dance. This ritual has persisted since Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha's conquest of the Kathmandu valley, during which many Newar people fled and settled in nearby Pokhara, bringing their traditions with them.

A close analysis of the Bhairab dance knowingly situates its politics, religion, history, and communal life within the framework and context for such knowledge. In other words, Greenblatt's Cultural Poetics can be used to study the dance and gain an in-depth understanding of its linkages. For instance, it sharply focuses on the fact that as a dynamic art, the dance readjusts under altered circumstances and challenges and has already framed all issues related to cultural identity, historical memory, and social cohesiveness.

Nepali folktales are deep containers of this country's religion, culture, and political history; hence, they provide a special prism through which the complexities of Nepal's societal fabric can be viewed. Rich with symbolic narratives and archetypal characters, these tales hold within themselves the intrinsic traditions that reveal the deep-seated spiritual ethos that permeates Nepali life. Cultural poetics of such

folktales weave the collective memory and identity of the Nepali people through preserving indigenous wisdom and moral values generation after generation. More than that, the political undercurrents embedded in them have assimilated the historical struggles and triumphs, subtly criticizing and chronicling the sociopolitical conditions of Nepal. The folktale, therefore, shows the vibrant Nepali spirit and perpetuation of cultural heritage that has been embedded since time immemorial amongst these people; hence, the folktale forms a land-crafted scheme inseparable from the literary and cultural identity of the nation.

### **Exploring Folktales: An Anthropological and Regional Analysis**

The abundance of cultural narratives in Nepali folktales allows a deeper understanding of the country's regional and anthropological variety. In light of this, the stories discussed in this study are evaluated and analyzed in terms of how much they contribute to upholding societal norms, customs, and values in this context. Ultimately, this analysis sheds light on the intricacy described as existing "between folklore and the socio-cultural fabric of Nepali society," emphasizing the regional differences and commonalities contributing to forming a distinct yet united national identity.

"The Basket Used to Carry the Aged Father," a folk tale very popular in Nepali society, compiled by Tulsi Diwas, presents the fact that it plays a vital role in expanding anthropological and regional awareness in the community. The story's scenario emphasizes the importance of intergenerational care and the conventional family structure from an anthropological standpoint. The old man's reliance on his son and daughter-in-law indicates a widespread cultural norm in many cultures, where caring for one's elderly is a family duty. "The Second Childhood" implies a cultural understanding of life's cyclical nature and dependence. The double load that the

daughter-in-law bears highlights the gendered expectations that are put on women, who are frequently the primary carers for both small children and elderly relatives.

The story illustrates the son and daughter-in-law's internal struggle about their duties to the elderly man. The son's severe consideration of patricide illustrates how pressures from the family and society can lead to extreme measures. This illustrates the conflicts between eldercare's practical demands and conventional filial devotion on a cultural level. "Sending him rolling down a precipice" sets up a narrative common in myth and folklore, where tough choices between life and death are frequently acted out. The wife's assent indicates a reluctant but shared conclusion, highlighting the pressure on family ties and the boundaries of tolerance and empathy.

Through the innocence of the grandchild's voice, the yarn builds tension within the story and a turning point of realization. A cultural artifact, the bamboo basket, shows the potential for dehumanization and a person being 'thrown away' with its functional value. A cruel irony is added when the old man thinks of being brought to a temple because temples are a place of regard and spiritual care, not abandonment. The observation of the grandson brings to the forefront the fundamental element in moral and ethical teaching across cultures: generations and their relationships in the cycle of actions and consequences (41). The innocent but very observant remark of the little child is a moral mirror reflecting the question upon the son, forcing him to look into the far-reaching consequences of his actions.

His child's unintentional moral lesson spurs the mature man's shift in attitude in the story. Furthermore, this period of introspection and remorse emphasizes the significance of moral education and children's duty to preserve cultural values:

Hearing the announcement of his own similar fate through the lips of the innocent child, the young man felt a stab of guilt. He changed his mind about

throwing his father and returned home, where he and his wife began to serve the old man unselfishly. (41)

A folktale demonstrates how a moral lesson accidentally learned from his own child changes the young man's perspective. The incident serves as an example of reflection and guilt, demonstrating the significance of moral teaching in general and the ongoing role that children play in upholding cultural values.

The son's actions to return home and care for his father later serve as a reminder of one's ethical and filial obligations to respect and honor one's elders. Thus, this development of events is better seen as a cultural requirement for preserving the traditional family values of compassion, selflessness, and human connection. Towards the end of the story, the family has come to terms with a less self-centered approach to caring for one another, which enables them to reconcile moral development and personal growth.

Similar to this, the folktales "The Fall of Simraungadh" and "The Origin of Alcohol," which were collected by well-known Nepali folk writer Keshar Lal, objectively portray the anthropological and local realities of folklore. These beautiful stories represent rich Nepali cultures and spiritual beliefs, showing the dynamic tension between human ambition and divine forces. Anthropological perspectives inform us about the societal values and moral lessons acquired through folklore, whereas cultural poetic approaches help us seek deep symbolism and aesthetic elements in the narrative.

The story of "The Fall of Simraungadh," which takes place during King Shivasimha's reign, is an exemplary example of a tremendous cultural poetic narrative that combines historical allegory, spiritual beliefs, and folklore. In this story, a Brahmin skilled in Tantra lives in isolation and uses his mystical powers to

accomplish amazing things, including plowing his fields with lions. Intrigued by the Brahmin's supposed abilities, the monarch assigns him progressively tricky assignments, which ends with a deadly order to call forth the formidable goddess *Kali Mai*. The city is destroyed due to the king's arrogance, despite the Brahmin's dire predictions. This tale highlights the dangers of disobeying natural and heavenly laws. However, it also touches on deeper cultural and spiritual themes, showing the intricate relationship between human ambition, religious obligation, and the ethereal forces that control existence. Seeing the story via this lens reveals the story's great reverence for Tantra, the omnipresence of divine justice, and the final futility of human arrogance against the unchangeable rules of spirituality and nature. It also functions as a potent cultural artifact.

This folktale also expresses an appreciation of natural forces and cultural homogeneity. It also springs a trap for a moral conflict, a common feature of the folklore nature of spiritual laws against human impulses. The ominous forecasts by the Brahmins of the terrible consequences of the king's request only make it tenser. The king does not believe or take earnest heed of such prophecies, a trend typical of human pride and a tendency to suspect and undermine superstitious and magical powers. The Brahmin's supplication, in lore, stands as a metaphor for the voice of prudence and sage counsel often ignored by those invested with power, with disastrous consequences (84). This interplay best illustrates the anthropological concept of tension between spiritual insight and human power.

This invests the spirituality and deep cultural weight of the occurrence when such divine powers are called upon. The turnover that such deterrents keep creating creates a literary device for suspense and serves as an omen for something horrible

that is about to happen. This reinforces the belief, culturally speaking, to regard such supernatural entities as one fears them. The instance from its narration in the tale is:

After a while, he announced: 'Now she is only one hundred miles away. For kindness' sake, I'll stop now.' 'I don't want to hear you again,' cried the king. 'Bring her here quickly.' Helplessly, the Brahmin resumed his call and the dreadful Kali Mai came relentlessly towards Simraungadh. She arrived soon enough but the Master of Tantra had no place for her stay. The poor man offered his own head to her to step on. (85)

This is what the Brahmin did, making a complete sacrifice in this very way, which acted as one and showed altogether how strongly revered and feared the deities are within Hindu cosmology. His begging for such mercy is very much in contrast with the pride-filled demands of the king, showing the struggle between human strength and religious devotion. Anthropologically speaking, the conflict between the roles of caste and the conflict of religious duty is then presented in the story. Brahmin ultimately chooses cosmic harmony over his life, thus being the epitome of self-sacrifice for the sake of all. The three-time dismissal of warning by the king in this folkloric motif correction takes the route of tragic downfall due to pride or hubris: then came the destruction of Simraungadh through Kali's Death and destruction as God's. This story serves simultaneously as a didactic and cultural artifact to boldly represent what happened when the designs of the sacred order were defied.

This supernatural climax is one of change and desolation; it serves to lay a firmer hold on the mystical and moral aspects of the folktale. The vivid illustration of the light and the hands that come forth embodies the goddess's highest power and divine force. The startling immediacy with which the place of Simraungadh is

destroyed and turned into stone brings to mind the binding factors between most cultural myths: what happens when human pride and disobedience to divine commands are allowed to go uncorrected? What lingers in the wake of the destruction of Simraungadh is nature reclaiming, and the emphasis placed upon it speaks volumes on the fact that all human endeavors are so fleeting in the face of the Divine. Therefore, *Kali Mai's* wandering across the forest symbolizes this particular feature of wild and capricious character that celestial energies would seem to have (85). Such a conclusion is in place within an existing poetic tradition of the culture in which nature has been used as an image to represent the restorative, cyclical features of life and spirit.

Keshar Lall's other noteworthy folktale has also made a symbolic addition to the anthropological reality of Nepali culture; "The Origin of Alcohol." The narrative demonstrated that, in the past, people freely acknowledged and incorporated death as a necessary aspect of life. The tale of the blacksmith attempting to elude death reveals a profound awareness of human mortality and the shared desire to avoid it in anthropology. The blacksmith's intricate design of seven iron-clad chambers and lockable tunnels represents the extent to which humans will go to take charge of their fate.

This mythic story effectively depicts the conflict between human creativity and the cosmic order, which is ingrained in cultural poetics. The intervention of deities like Shiva and Parvati and Parvati's deft use of drink to foil the blacksmith's plot highlight death's cultural significance and inevitable existence. Thus, temptation, vulnerability, and the inevitable or, ultimately, inescapable death are all reflected in the myth of Parvati as the lady who entices men with alcohol. The historian can interpret this myth as a component of a cultural artifact that symbolizes acceptance,

given that this culture understood death as a natural part of life, or at the very least, as something that must be released once it has been contained and captured in order to maintain equilibrium. Through this story, we can understand the anthropological and cultural origins of death and human condition rituals.

This folktale portrays the different dimensions of the Nepali civilization in an anthropological approach, from the inevitability of death and human ingenuity to divine intervention. In the story's very beginning, death is identified as a fact and thus acknowledged as inevitable by everybody in the given society. It symbolizes human inventiveness for permanent existence beyond the domain of death and a desire for it that the blacksmith built a series of chambers lined with iron to escape death. This tale structure testifies to great attention within the community to resourcefulness and cunning. Moreover, the interference of gods like Shiva and Parvati signifies the deeply rooted belief in the deeds of gods' intervention in human matters. Shiva's concern and Parvati's use of all her resources to find a solution demonstrate the gods' direct involvement as well as their function as cosmic police and their moral police apparatus. The blending of sacred and profane states points out some kind of system of thought in which spirituality and mundane life travel hand in hand; this allows us to get an insight into these people's religious and philosophical firm convictions.

The regional context is necessary to understand the folktale in terms of themes and motifs. The blacksmith is a familiar, much-esteemed character of many traditional Nepali societies and exemplifies the work ethic of the working classes and their grit. Setting death behind the seven locked doors reveals the respect and appreciation of craftsmanship and practical acumen. Further, Parvati, as a mortal female outsmarting Death, is very much in line with women's roles in bringing balance and harmony to society. Wine The didactic and drunken merry-making tale has many allusions to

intermingling within society and perhaps the vices of the present society. The use of wine to get the secret from the blacksmith shows that drinking was probably part of their culture, and the result is well depicted in society.

The story's beginning places it in a time when dying was normal and lovely. This effectively indicated a culture typified by an almost ritualistic approach to death, in which this event in life was not regarded as a severing one. Anthropologically speaking, it is a critique of a society in which the cycle of life and death takes on a collective realism in terms of acceptance. The blacksmith's endeavor to outwit death exemplifies how the human order seeks to undermine the natural one, a common folklore trope. For the anthropological, the blacksmith represents the imaginative humanity attempting to master its fate (39). According to Greenblatt's cultural poetics, they are expressions of human will made by an actor using the constrained freedom that culture provides. Seven is a particularly significant number in many cultures, and it can sometimes be used as a hint of more profound cultural or spiritual importance.

As Greenblatt argued, the futility of human efforts to resist some specific cosmic or natural forces is the main topic that the narration brings up, something that can be found deep within many ancient stories. As he says, it is simply a general cultural viewpoint on the limits fixed by heavenly will or nature upon human beings that exhibits the following features:

'Come,' said death to the man. 'You have lived long enough.' 'Oh, sure,' replied the smith. 'But could you please wait just a moment right here, I'll return at once.' With these words, the smith left the room. As he walked out, he locked the rooms one after another until death was imprisoned in the tunnel behind seven locked doors. (39-40)

The successful imprisonment of death by the blacksmith depicts a transient victory of the resourceful human over an all-powerful force. This can be read anthropologically as a statement of the condition of human agency. Greenblatt would counter thus; it would also emphasize cultural static produced by personal predilection as distinct from orders either of a social or cosmic nature, focusing on the ephemeral and illusory nature of human triumphs over fate.

The justification of alcohol drinking as a divine act places a cultural custom inside a mythological framework. From the anthropologist's perspective, this provides an etiological explanation for a critical cultural practice. According to Greenblatt's *Cultural Poetics*, this is woven across historical accounts and social identities, where cultural norms and practices are interwoven. On the other hand, when the same story is viewed under the prism of Greenblatt's *Cultural Poetics*, it becomes clear how human choice, supernatural power, and cultural values intermingled. It draws attention to how cultures incorporate historical, cultural, and pedagogic practices and teachings into their myths, which reveal a great deal about their worldview and sense of self.

Similarly, the collections of folktales compiled by Rishiram Adhikari, Tek Bahadur Karki, and Ramesh Kumar Limbu are somewhat contemporary. The story's setting is new despite the theme's age. In 'Folktales from Nepal Himalaya *Namsami-Kesami* Myth and Other Folktale,' which they compiled, 'The Brahmin and Mushroom' articulate the suffering of the Nepali socioeconomic structure. The tale highlights the importance of agriculture in rural Nepal, where paddy is grown as a staple diet and is a significant economic activity. The Brahmin's wife decides to hide and not immediately announce her husband's death, "an efficient response to the immediate urgency of the rice-planting season." The concealment of the death just so

that the needed work in the agricultural fields is not stalled acknowledges how critical the timely farming cycles are for the community's survival. The harsh, though morally questionable, pragmatism in this approach is illustrative of the lives that an agrarian community faces because the loss of one crop spells starvation and economic disaster.

The story highlights aspects of gender roles and family responsibilities in Nepali society. The Brahmin's wife takes on the role of protector and provider when she makes the hard decision to secure her son's future. As shown by her actions, Nepali women are expected by society to run both domestic and farm responsibilities, most of the time under terrible circumstances. This story counterclaims the conventional and passive image of the woman in the folktale tradition. Instead, the wife is presented here as a woman who can thwart the socioeconomic challenges that may come to her immediate society (53). Cultural poetics are rich in this story.

Concealing the dead body inside an oil pot, which is a container used conventionally to preserve, emphasizes the notion of survival. The growth of mushrooms on the corpse is a metaphorical clock of the past, thus, as it connects the natural with human activities. The image of such a natural cycle of life and death does not simply set up the mood but functions didactically: the story acquires specific forms of moral and cultural teaching. These reasons, however, did not affect subsequent official reactions by the community as the completion of the funeral rites followed rebuke; again, this shows that death rituals were significant in the culture and must be completed no matter the personal or practical challenges.

Folktales also have an eternal impact on food habits and belief systems. This aversion can easily be attributed to the story's depiction of the mushroom as linked with dead bodies and putrefaction. Such beliefs evidence the capability of folklore for influencing and sustaining taboos and cultural norms within a community, including:

The wife of the Brahmin said that he had died twenty days ago when the paddy plantation had just started. At that time, she feared the loss of critical farm work to secure their survival and hid the painful truth for the sake of her son's future. If she broke out the death news, all the plantation activities would have been stopped, and that would cause starvation in the coming years, and others would die of hunger. So, she hid the dead body and cheated all the people, keeping the Brahmin's death secret. (54)

Therefore, the oil pot hiding the body is both literal and figurative containment and preservation. Cultural poetics read the oil pot as both a literal and a figurative symbol of containment that holds in the pain and secrets of the family, sparing society from an upheaval of this critical turn. Thus, this confinement act becomes a literary allegory for the necessity of using personal grief to aid in the survival of the group and guarantee increased community resilience in the face of adversity. In its aftermath, when the reality is finally made known to the villagers, their reaction exhibits the moral code that underpins the village's social structure. The wife's initial mourning phase now becomes a sort of communal interrogation that elicits her confession. This shift in sentiment from empathy to condemnation exposes the social mechanisms that uphold integrity and collective accountability. The severity of condemnation by the villagers attests to how far society will go in enforcing social norms and the ethical implications for breaching them, not even under the most extreme circumstances.

The performance of the funeral rites per the ritualistic prescriptions further underlines that religious and cultural traditions are taken seriously in Nepali society. It is this point of the pressure of societal expectations while agricultural cycles occur that the story satirizes, a point underlined in the satire that the month of paddy

plantation became synonymous with the concealment of death. The association of mushrooms with the decaying body makes Brahmins avoid eating mushrooms, which shows how folklore shapes dietetics and cultural taboos (55). The mushroom, sprouting from death, represents life's continuation and the interconnection of death and its product, repeating themes of renewal and ruin in agrarian societies.

This Nepali folktale skillfully analyzes rural life and brings out deep interconnections between social norms, agricultural practice, and community values. In this manner, communities can uphold a sense of resilience and continuity in the face of cyclic challenges by preserving and passing such stories on. It depicts the economic circumstances, gender roles, religious convictions, and fluid cultural customs that define Nepali culture. Examining this tale from a different angle teaches us a lot about how folktales function globally as cultural information carriers, passing along the values and experiences of a group to future generations.

Social dynamics and a cultural identity alloy are produced through an anthropological and regional study of Nepali folktales enhanced by Stephen Greenblatt's cultural poetics. Such an analytical framework aids in demonstrating how stories of this kind are not narratives but components of the cultural fabric and historical setting. Greenblatt's approach offers rich possibilities of nuanced knowledge by utilizing the performative and circulatory nature of cultural artifacts and demonstrating how it is done in Nepali folktales functioning as vehicles for societal ideals, collective memory, and regional diversities. The drama in Nepali society is represented through multiple storylines that explore the balance of power, tradition, and modernization, both on a societal and personal level. These stories play a crucial role in shaping and preserving the cultural identity of the Nepali people. This study demonstrates the ongoing relevance of Greenblatt's cultural poetics in the field of

folklore studies, highlighting the dynamic nature of folktales as cultural texts that reflect and influence Nepali society's experiences.

### **Reconstruction of the Socio-Political Judgements**

Nepali folktales offer a wealth of cultural paradigms, making them a valuable tool for applying cultural materialism to the analysis of socio-political evaluations. The theoretical framework known as "cultural materialism," established and put into practice by Raymond Williams and several other cultural critics, maintains that the social interactions and material circumstances that influence a work of literature should be considered while analyzing it. Applying cultural materialism to Nepali folktales allows a more thorough analysis of the economy and power systems that shape the stories' moral conclusions about morality, fairness, and hierarchy. Most Nepali folktales, in particular, tell stories about justice through the eyes of many individuals in agrarian communities dominated by feudalism and castes. The repeating themes of monarchs, landlords, and peasants and the moral lessons drawn from their interactions can be interpreted as reflections of Nepal's historical social structure and power dynamics.

"My Baby is Crying to Death," another catchy folktale gathered by Dulsi Diwas, promotes the necessity of changing the social, cultural, and political decisions that make up the Nepali social order. The fact that, in Tuhuri's story, she lives the life of an orphan placed in the care of her aunt and uncle brings forth the material conditions that define her existence. The rice husk bread is a metaphor for social deprivation and marginalization. This economic exploitation is highlighted by the vivid contrast between her treatment and that of her cousin- which puts into perspective the class and power dynamics within her family. It is in some way against

this very order that the fortunes of Tuhuri turned by the magical intervention of the she-goat, Singari.

The simple act of giving Tuhuri good food carved a body for her out of a skeleton. It endowed her with more than mere nourishment; it was a force that led to social mobility and consequent changes in material conditions. However, the persistence of the resentment and exploitation by her aunt and uncle show the continuity of class struggles as far as the extent to which those in power will go to maintain theirs. Tuhuri and Singari are full of the symbolism of meanings. The magical intervention of Singari transforming the marginalization of orphan Tuhuri into a beautiful and desirable woman may be seen as a critique or even ridicule of the conventional order of society. The she-goat itself serves as a meta-symbol of nurturing and power that suggests a subversive potential with regard to conventional home arrangements, in contrast to that provided by the oppressive and patriarchal household.

Morality attributed to the falling cousin of Tuhuri, who aims to replace him, becomes the moral heart of the story presented. The story's emphasis on justice stems from Tuhuri's irreversible usurpation and the ensuing retaliation, which demonstrate that virtue and honesty are always superior to deceit and wickedness (87). The fact that Tuhuri's ghost continued to look after her child after she went away is a testament to the enduring power of maternal love and the unbreakable tie between a mother and her child. This element is paranormal, spotlighting the solid moral fiber that runs through families and cultural respect for them.

At a crucial juncture, Tuhuri's agency and resilience became apparent with the appearance of the golden tree, symbolizing her ability to overcome hardship. Tuhuri's

agency triumphs over her attempts to assert her new wealth, amply illustrating the cultural critique of exploitation and greed as follows:

Her aunt and uncle thought to themselves. "Why should Tuhuri have the gold," and took the golden tree away from her. After some time, a son was born to Tuhuri, whereas the aunt's daughter had no suitors and thus became an old maid. The aunt and uncle were filled with anxiety. The aunt said to her daughter. "Go to Tuhuri's house and marry your cousin's husband, by any means because we could not find a match for you." (88)

This is evident in how the story criticizes exploitation and power structures, a legacy of cultural materialism. The exploiting class, represented by Tuhuri's aunt and uncle, feels endangered by him because of the affluence he has attained thanks to Singari's involvement. This highlights the need for capitalism to seize things for one's benefit, as demonstrated by Tuhuri's extended family members, who are appropriating everything advantageous to Singari. However, since they could not see the more profound link between Tuhuri and Singari, their greed would be their undoing. The transformation of Singari into a golden tree is comparable to cultural poetics, in which nature becomes a center of resistance and rebirth. For Singari, self-sacrifice and rebirth highlight the connection between life cycles and the healing powers of nature in opposition to human exploitation and greed.

The dark side of human nature is personified by Tuhuri's cousin, who is prepared to sell away his family for his gain. Because of the cousin's betrayal, Tuhuri's death is purportedly staged; nevertheless, Tuhuri's spectral reappearance upends the cousin's scheme when she returns in search of her kid and animals, exposing a more sinister reality. In this way, the supernatural aspects of the narrative, such as Tuhuri's spirit tending to her kid and the animals, further emphasize the

mystique present throughout. In this way, it is coupled with concerns about protective instinct and motherhood to suggest a deeper relationship between the realm of spirits and humans (89). The narrative of Tuhuri is a blend of cultural materialism and cultural poetics, challenging social order and recognizing fortitude in the face of hardship. It illustrates that people may only reclaim agency and justice by uniting in solidarity with one another and the supernatural and natural world to oppose an oppressive system that directly harms them.

The folk stories “The Prince and the Demon's Daughter” and “The Ghost and His Son” under Ghost and Demons from West Nepal, which were collected in the Himalayan Folklore by Tara Dutta Gairola and E.S. Okaley, served as the foundation for reconstructing the socio-political and cultural assessments of the true diversity of Nepali society. Demons and ghosts are prevalent themes in both folktales. They are also used to prepare social, political, and cultural commentary. “The Prince and the Demon's Daughter” describes the physical and geographical difficulties a prince must overcome to reach his goal. The long voyage demonstrates the significant effort, struggle, and strong will required; it emphasizes the sociopolitical structure governing a prince's activities and goals. By contrasting the demon's physical prowess with the beauty of his daughter, who is also an enchantress, they represent both sides of the coin: power and beauty. It is characteristic of folklore, reflecting societal gender norms and power dynamics.

Similarly, “The Ghost and His Son” sets the narrative in a traditional community that values familial responsibilities and customs highly. The boy's insistence on going to his father's funeral underscores the significance of filial piety in culture and the emotional connection that exists between parent and child. His mother and others' prevention highlights the community's protective instincts, which may

reflect social standards around preventing youngsters from dying and from participating in funeral rites.

The themes of loneliness and greed are reflected in the wealth and desolation of the Demon City. The demon's wealth accumulation serves as proof against materialism and its adverse effects on oneself. His exiled daughter, who warns the prince, offers a unique voice of reason and warning, her dual positions as a proactive warner and a helpless victim complicating things. Socio-politically, much criticism is leveled at the despotic power that eats away at the subject/citizen and leaves immense desolation in its wake. The prince's proclamation extols bravery and love, two universally recognized virtues. In contrast to the devil, his willingness to die out of love demonstrates the bravery and selflessness inherent in human nature (9). The discovery of parrots and gourds, crucial to his abilities, introduced aspects of cultural poetics: they were symbolic of metaphysics. The gourd symbolizes elemental elements, while the parrot represents the fragility concealed beneath an outward strength. Thus, interactions like this reflect within them a complex structure and clear relationship that holds knowledge, power, and vulnerability together in cultural narratives.

A common element in many cultures is the conflict between good and evil, symbolized by the gourd breaking scene and the demon's never-ending struggle. The gourds' barriers symbolize the heroes' natural and supernatural hardships. The demon's persistence, despite his limited strength, emphasizes the persistent nature of evil as follows:

No sooner had the prince taken the four gourds, then the devil felt giddy.

Realizing that an attempt was being made against his life, he ran home. The prince broke the mist gourd which created darkness on the devil's way. Then

he broke the gourds with the thorn, the water and the mountain spells one after the other. All these brought up obstacles and blocked his way home. In spite of all these hindrances, he kept running home. When he reached near home, the prince severed the parrot's two legs and the demon became lame. Yet, he dragged his body along to face the enemy. As the demon was close to the prince, he killed the parrot and the demon fell dead. (11)

The tale of the prince who, in the end, marries the demon's daughter and goes back home solidifies ideas about social order reconstruction and resolution. A conclusion like this reflects societal standards and expectations on marriage, bravery, and reestablishing peace. Along with returning triumphantly, he and his bride also uphold social norms and successfully reintegrate the demon's daughter into human society.

Thus, this final deed can represent establishing a new system based on love and bravery or the reconciliation of opposing forces. As a result, folk tales explore sociopolitical and cultural judgments in greater detail and offer insights into gender roles, power dynamics, and the age-old conflicts between good and evil. On the other hand, the boy's actions reveal a cultural belief that death is closely associated with a specific body part. Thus, his frequent calls and trips to his father represent a belief in the ongoing presence of the deceased, which is consistent with a cultural materialism that values the tangible remnants of life. This behavior considers the challenges a child faces in understanding death, a universal human experience with a range of culturally unique expressions.

The ghostly figure symbolizes the boy's need for protection and nurturing from his father and his longing. This moment might be seen as the realization of his long-standing wants and concerns, with the supernatural aspect emphasizing the line that his society perceives as separating the living from the dead (41). The boy's cry for

food highlights the socioeconomic realities of his circumstances, while the ghost's presence emphasizes the culture's belief in spirits and the afterlife.

It is materialistic in its resolution of the boy's predicament, represented by the ghost's instructions to find the hidden treasure. A ruined house and a hidden jar of gold coins symbolize lost wealth and possible restoration. This act of digging and treasure-hunting indicates how the boy's socioeconomic status has changed:

Hearing this, the ghost pointed out to the ruined house in the neighborhood and told him that he should dig a floor there and take the riches. He accordingly dug the floor of the ruined house and found a jar of gold coins.

The ghost never appeared to the boy again. (42)

Given that the ghost provided the boy's response, the boy's transition from helplessness to independence was completed when the ghost helped him reconcile cultural values with financial needs. Thus, the ending of the story combines monetary success with the end of divine involvement. Cultural materialism would interpret the ghosts leading to the hidden treasures as a form of social critique against injustices and the outrageous distribution of riches. From this perspective, the boy's finding of the gold coins represents the restoration of socioeconomic balance, even if by paranormal means.

Cultural poetics would retain the thematic resolution in the boy's movement from hopelessness to optimism, establishing a definite correlation between monetary success and emotional wellbeing. In keeping with cultural poetics, this conclusion emphasizes the transformational power of love and courage. It expresses a positive outlook on societal advancement from a sociopolitical standpoint by implying that subduing repressive forces can result in harmony and unity.

Another folktale collected by Ramesh Kumar Limbu, “Destiny,” is a story that reveals the reality of how fate is resorted to determine cultural and political decisions within the Nepali social setup. The story verbalizes an incredibly intimate society that abides by all cultural norms and values. This is a scenario typical of rural Nepal, where extended families live under one roof and where roles set by society are famous. It starts with an older woman, her son, daughter-in-law, and a newly born baby, going on to bring out what family bonding is about and the joy that new life brings. In that context, the older woman's authority and the daughter-in-law's recent childbirth emphasize matriarchal influence and communal involvement in personal high spots or milestones.

In light of the contrast with the family's hospitality, this stands for the underprivileged and marginalized. The old woman does not want to take him into the house, indicating that people lived with limited material possessions at the time. The interaction between this character and the beggar shows a societal hierarchy where hospitality and social responsibility concerns are the first in schedule, even when resources are scarce. The beggar, who becomes an active participant in the developing destiny, reflects a hint of the unsuspected forces shaping human lives (72). His interests in fate and further engagement back up the irony between human curiosity and divine intervention. Fate's existence and the process of writing the child's destiny reflect predestined portions of life deep-rooted in Nepali tradition about fate and destiny.

By constantly pleading to know the child's fate before allowing the Fates to enter, the beggar proposes that it is doable for man to either understand or resist the divine order in that particular discourse, with fate introducing the issue of predestination against free will. However, story development reveals the inevitability

of the written fate, which enhances the cultural notion of the inevitability of some occurrences in life (73). Each cultural model holds the notion, and from the point of this folktale, inhabitants of Nepal reason that fate is an omnipotent, unchangeable force that renders an individual's fate corresponding with actions only.

Their expression of the prophesied fate reflects Nepali society, marked by collective action and community solidarity. The diffusion of information from the older woman's beggar to that of the villager, protecting the child against impending danger, conveys its attitude as a community:

The beggar told the old woman what fate had written for the child twelve years ago. As he wished to alert her, the old woman spread the word to everyone in the village. The neighbors, including the police, gathered there with guns, and they guarded the child keeping within a circle of people. They were all sitting awake till late at night. At midnight, they all began to feel sleepy all of a sudden. They started snoozing. The boy had felt urinating. When he was about to piss at the house-yard, a tiger caught him all at once and took him away. (73-74)

This group effort symbolizes the virtues of shared responsibility and mutual support. Their eventual inability to stop the ill-fated child, even despite their vigilante efforts, reinforces this fatalistic viewpoint. This is a heartbreaking reminder of how futile any effort against fate truly is. The saying "that which Fate writes as destiny, is not avoidable" holds within it a very profound cultural thought about fate.

This story entertains and simultaneously provides the moral lesson of the limitation of human intervention in altering destiny. The story of rural Nepal, seen from the prism of cultural materialism, symbolizes material circumstances and social structures while deepening our comprehension of cultural poetics' symbolic and

thematic aspects. These two approaches help in understanding the collective psychology and cultural ethos of Nepali society, bringing to the fore both the broadness and depth of socio-political and cultural judgments that rest hidden beneath the corpus of a folktale.

Cultural poetics need to be urgently summoned to aid in the rebuilding of socio-political and cultural evaluation of Nepali folktales for such a rich legacy upheld by them to be conserved and revitalized. The different folk tales need to be revised for their deep cultural values and socio-political criticism, which are hidden or misunderstood throughout the times. A course like that would provide Nepali past and culture with a sense of identity and continuity while furthering respect for the conflicting voices and wide range of experiences that go into its making as a history. More specifically, communities can be pointed down the path of lowering into their cultural roots and dealing with and transforming dominant discourses within the intercalation of the discourse's cultural poetics—one that can balance traditional wisdom with modern socio-political dynamics. Ultimately, this epistemological enterprise furthers cultural literacy, opens up space for social cohesiveness, and accelerates transformation in Nepali society in the globalizing modernizing world.

#### **Chapter IV. Critique of Folktale as Contour of Culture**

Folk tales are the most vivid contours of culture that both reflect and shape social norms, values, and collective consciousness. They are a lens to critically review cultural poetics, the interplay of cultural elements, and narrative structures. Folktales contain the ethos of communities, giving moral lessons, societal expectations, and cultural identity. They are not primarily stories of entertainment but are woven into the fabric of culture itself, shaping and getting shaped by the unified worldview of a people. From this vantage, any critique of folktales as cultural contours would require a deep understanding of their dual role in reflecting and shaping cultural values. Most often, folktales are obtained from a community's lived experiences that are embedded within the historical, social, and moral contexts in which they are brought into being. They are the holders of collective wisdom with regard to the perpetuation of cultural values and their transmission down the generations. It means that all this cultural transmission by folk tales is the poetics of culture, wherein the structures of narration and themes used are interlocked with and reflect the dynamics of culture.

This rich and intricate function of Nepali folktales clearly demonstrates their role in shaping and reflecting the moral fabric of society when viewed through the lens of cultural poetics. Folk stories from Nepal, like those from other nations, have historically served as a storehouse of ethics and common sense, preserving the ancient values and collective awareness of the relevant community. These tales are not only enjoyable to read, but they also impart moral and ethical principles to humanity, which have a profound effect on society as a whole.

First and foremost, folktales are used to inculcate moral lessons and societal values. They normally enshrine a sense of justice, compassion, and integrity, giving man a moral direction. For instance, in the Nepali cases, stories that stress the ultimate

victory of good over evil, honesty, and the success of hard work demonstrate the priorities in culture and the standards of ethics in society. These stories, however, are an informal way of educating young generations about the values relevant to their culture.

Folktales can be used to educate the consciences of those who form and apply the law through an intuitive and rational grasp of the moral principles of folktales. In this respect, the moral principles articulated in folktales can provide a clearer image of a reasonable man. Shytov further explains that folktales can be used to construct the morality of an ordinary, reasonable man (324). The need to draw on folktales is simply that the standard of 'reasonable man' is too abstract and hypothetical, while folktales display reasonable man in action.

In addition to fulfilling this particular need to clarify the general content of concepts such as good morals, good faith, etc., it is essential to emphasize that the function of folklore in identifying positive law is not to provide rules to legislatures and law enforcement agencies. Laws, instead, argue in order to clarify the spirit of their working law:

Capacity, the study of folktales, and other embodiments of folk wisdom in their relationship to law, is essential for educating future lawyers. We live in a world where the abundance of legal materials makes it extremely difficult to see the spirit of the law. Therefore, communicating the spirit of the law to all those on whom the law is enforced is crucial for the well-being of society as a whole. (329)

Folktales and wisdom about the law form an essential part of education for future lawyers since they provide a lens of examination into some basic tenets and values that the laws should reflect and uphold. At a time when the sheer bulk of legal

materials may obscure the essential essence or "spirit" of the law, there is all the more need for clarity in communication to the persons responsible for its enforcement.

Understanding the moral and cultural narratives in folk tales will help the future legal professional appreciate the humanistic and ethical dimensions of legal systems and will also help him maintain sight of justice, fairness, and the larger good amidst dense legal texts and precedents. Only this holistic approach will foster legal practice for the wellbeing of society. Further, Nepali folktales form the backbone for the preservation of cultural heritage. They ensure that the customs, values, and ways of doing things passed down from the ancestors remain relevant and continue influencing contemporary society. Partly, continuity preserves the sense of identity and belonging of the people. Stories are a generational link in the foreground because they often allude to historical events, regional traditions, and conventional wisdom. They thus support community continuity and cultural coherence in this manner.

Especially remarkable is the application of folktales to morals and the law. Folktales represent the spirit of the law in many cultures, including Nepali culture. They give narrative forms to moral and legal concepts that are otherwise abstract, thus enabling the general public to understand and relate to them. For example, stories that emphasize the importance of justice and fairness can contribute to helping their intended audience acquire these virtues and thus aid in serving the purpose of the judiciary system. The stories uphold societal expectations, the backbone of the legal system, by highlighting the repercussions of immoral and moral actions. Nepali folktales could also be looked at in the light of cultural poetics, which means the study of literature and cultural works more generally to understand the particular social and cultural conditions in which they are produced. It is possible to see those stories as complex artifacts of cultural discourses that reflect and effectuate societal values,

ideologies, and hierarchies rather than just simple fiction. Through the lens of cultural poetics, we can highlight how folktales either support or contradict our age's prevailing social structure and convention, contributing to the dynamic process of the Cultural Revolution.

It can be stated immediately that if a folktale is told and recorded correctly, there is never any question about its essential meaning. Despite contemporary writers' sophisticated ambiguities and creative restraints, these unassuming people are entirely innocent. However, many folktales, at least among intelligent and quick-witted people, have deeper meanings than the story's obvious surface meaning. These more profound meanings, which we might refer to as allegorical or symbolic, are often found in less explicit but valuable general myths that have some connection to human nature and experience.

Thus, one of the vital elements that characterize folk tales of Nepal is that, despite bleak originality, they are adaptive and assiduous. Handed down orally, they undergo constant modification and updating to enfold contemporary issues and concerns. This guarantees that folktales stay relevant and current for every generation. This further enables them to take up new social and ethical problems, thus remaining a font of moral guidance in a world of change. In this way, their dynamic nature underlines folktales as active traditions that grow together and change in the society to which they belong. The folktales' communal nature also brings out their role in enhancing social cohesion. These stories are often retold in communal contexts like family reunions or village meetings to create a sense of community and shared identity. In this way, this practice reinforces social bonds in terms of the collective experience of listeners and tellers and shares in understanding cultural values and norms. This communal aspect of the folk tales is essential for social harmony and

cohesion, especially in traditional societies where oral traditions form a central part of community life.

This critique of Nepali folktales also underlines their role in focusing on and addressing societal problems. Most of the folktales deal with themes related to social justice, gender roles, and the battle between tradition and modernity; therefore, in so doing, folktales can provide a social critique that mirrors societal fears and aspirations. For example, stories about gods and goddesses defying gender roles or complaining about social justice could raise questions addressing social changes. In this view, folk tales can be regarded as an emphasis on value in society, inside out, and therefore serve as an avenue for social change. On the level of cultural poetics, these folktales are a rich source of symbolic and allegorical meanings. They often use metaphors and symbols to project deeper truths of human and social nature. This dimension gives several layers of meaning to stories that become open to interpretations based on the person listening and other contexts. In this symbolic dimension, folktales may uncover hidden meanings in the collective psyche, thus revealing irrational beliefs, deep fears, and powerful aspirations of the society concerned. It is precisely this symbolic richness that aids folktales in steering researchers toward insight into cultural and psychological life.

Folktales direct the children's attention to acquaintances, social relationships, and local traditions. This type of informal education is attained through formal education and a complete educational experience that unites practical, moral, and intellectual knowledge. The educational value of folktales underlines their significance in the overall development of people and society. When contrasted with the cultural poetics point of view, Nepali folktales expose their complex function in forming and reflecting the country's culture. They work as a storehouse of general

knowledge, act as the source of moral and ethical instruction, and are the vehicle capable of transmitting and preserving intangible cultural legacy. They remain a crucial part of the cultural landscape due to their adaptability, communality, and texture, symbolic in folktales. They support social cohesion, cultural continuance, and individual education. Their critique of cultural forms demonstrates that these tales will always be relevant and functional in a fast-changing world.

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