

**Textualizing the Difference of Gender, Age, Caste and Religion in Indian
Folktales
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I

When a folktale spreads from one area to another they retain certain of its elements in such a way that it does not lose its specific tale characteristics. This happens in two ways. One is by retaining the main frame of the story while allowing changes to some extent and these story-structures which retain the character of the specific narrative are called 'schemes'. These schemes may loosely be understood as the organisational narrative grid of a folktale¹. The second aspect of the folktale which reflects the context and different abilities and intentions of the teller is usually the non-schematic domain of tales². This non-schematic portion of tales changes rapidly when they travel from one place to another.

The non-schematic side of these folktales are usually easily susceptible to change and they show differences and other contextual influences depending upon cultures, areas, tellers, languages, castes, religions, ages etc. But there is an order among these changes effected due to influences. A combined study of both the schematic and non-schematic domains of tales and their versions are the aim of this paper.

In this context I would like to introduce an attempt made to collect all the folktales of a particular Kannada language speaking village of South India, in the state of Karnataka³. The total of 250 folktales collected from all the castes of this small village show that the division of folktales into schematic and non-schematic level is tenable, that is, the tales spread from one teller to another keeping the characteristic of story-schemes unaffected. If these main frames of story-schemes change from one teller to another it becomes another tale. So changes happen in such a way that the story-schemes of a specific tale bearing a particular AaTh number always keep them intact even if there are many versions. Different versions could happen and still the main scheme of a story is retained in the tale. Even if there are changes in these main story-schemes, the main character and the structure of the tale remains unchanged. That is, any one could identify that tale

with the 'original' tale. The original tale in such cases is the one which is supposed to have been told by the eldest of the living or a dead teller of the village⁴.

A study of different field methods for collecting folktales advocated by scholars of different schools of folktale research give us an idea of a folktale text. In a survey of these different methods, Elizabeth C. Fine maps out the various significances of these methods which recommend ways to improve field collection and text making. She comes to the conclusion that contemporary folklorists have expressed growing dissatisfaction with texts that ignore contextual and performance features⁵. These contextual details, needless to say, cover all the details of the oral delivery of the tellers of the tales as a communication device with the listeners of tales. In another paper, I have pointed out that there is one neglected aspect of this communicational contract with the listener or audience of these folktales, and that is the inner, invisible relation of narrative contract which in return makes a listener the teller⁶. What I emphasize here is that apart from external details of the different facial and other bodily expressions, there is another aspect of this teller-listener situation which both a teller and hearer of the tale establish through the accepting voice of 'um' (yes) of the hearer. One who is familiar with field of collection of folktale will know that many tellers do not proceed further if the listener does not reciprocate with 'um'⁷. Thus it is very clear that folktale telling is a literary event where both the teller and the listener enters in to a contract. This contract enables one to tell a story through the story-less voice the listener expresses. After sometime, this story-less voice 'um' assumes an energy as to become a story to another listener who becomes the next generation teller or a passive bearer of the tale.

Now it becomes clear that from the field collection experience of folktales of South India, I should give more importance to the special aspect of how tales are linked with other tales and motifs of tales of the area. Thus I will use the phrases of Linda Degh such as 'interconnectedness of tales', 'the lineage of tales' and tale - relationship' to explain how folktales should be studied not forgetting their connectedness in the Indian situation⁸. This will emphasize that tales in the Indian situation are more related to one another textually and the scholar who comes to study these tales have to give more attention to their intertextual character. One may note that this again gives emphasis to the text of the tale. But if a text has to

be understood in the proper perspective, the story orality of folktale has to be differentiated from the literacy of the tale to take cognizance of the two concepts orality and literacy developed by Walter J. Ong⁹.

Another important correction to a widely held view that folktales spread through tellers who go about telling tales, is necessary. In the South Indian situation we rarely see such folktale tellers as observed by Linda Degh. She says: "These storytellers become recognized because it was their personal need to practice their art. If no one came to their houses, they went to the people, the old folk's home, the soup kitchen, the market wherever people gathered, to seek an audience. Even an inexperienced, shy field worker has no difficulty finding narrators"¹⁰. But in the Indian situation many people know folktales and they know them as they know innumerable proverbs and other such customs and these tales come out when they are asked to tell a tale or there is a situation which warrants a telling. As the proverb comes out as a reply to another proverb the tale also comes out when there is a situation or there is a demand. In the South Indian context many folktales collections have come about through field collectors as mostly these have come out as part of their research projects. Here the tellers tell tales on request from a field collector, usually a student who happens to be a friend's son known to the teller. A unique story teller who could tell sixty two folktales went about telling tales only to children when they gather under a tree in his village¹¹. A collection of about 250 folktales from a small village as part of a dissertation show that tales have originally come from an elderly informant who had lived three generations before; he knew many tales and all those tales that spread to the whole village have come from that teller. So, what is found is that these tales display many intertextual linkages at various levels of the tales; at the level of motif or image-schemes of narration.

These tellers usually deposit these tales in their mind as they deposit a proverb in the mind unconsciously. When there is a situation these tales or proverbs come out involuntarily. When these tales are stored in the mind, at times not being told to any one for quiet sometime, say years together, there comes a field worker to collect these tales, or a grandchild who demands a tale at night before he or she goes to sleep.

These tales and their versions which could be identified with AaTh numbers

follow a particular rule of retaining certain main story elements which we termed in the beginning of this paper as 'schemes' and allowing certain other changes at the fringe level of the story. If the main story elements of these tales resemble each other they are treated as versions of the main folktale bearing one particular AaTh number. If the main story shows dissimilarity these tales could be treated as separate tales for which another AaTh number will to be assigned.

At the same time we know that these tales are transmitted from one person to another through speech. As they largely do not have any idea of writing, the oral images formed in the mind of the teller and hearer is almost the same. These orally transformed images have both a relation with narrative linearity and a temporal sequence. This is a very important area of mental activity of the folk where the story touches upon many layers of representation. These layers of narratological representations of different domains of human life is imbued with lot of energy which the critic Walter Benjamin attributes to stories¹². Thus this storehouse of energy is represented through narrative structures of time-bound sequences. A folktale thus could be characterized as a cultural codification of a mental storehouse of history in terms of time. This difficult domain is represented in folklore as devices of redundancies, repetitions, alliterations and such other formulaic manifestations. Here the oral thought need not be separated from orthographic thought as both are intertwined and are inseparable.

When a particular teller of a folktale transmits certain narrative schemes which are always bound together according to the generic signal, he or she transmits past memories, formed and unformed images of daily life which sometimes are substituted forms, narrative linkages and orally formed mental and sexual stimuli. These meaningful narrative schemes are stores by both the teller and listener. As ingeniously stated by Richard Bauman, the teller, who is a performer, elicits the participative attention and energy of his audience and to the extent that they (the hearers) value his performance, they will allow themselves to be caught up in it¹³.

As the hearers of these tales go to work together or wait for a bus to reach the work place, they receive or internalize the narrative force of the tale. Thus, the proximity of the teller to the listener enables both of them to share a common

literary and cultural aura as they share a common language; here one may be a passive hearer and another an active hearer of these tales. Some tellers from whom we have collected tales have said that they have not so far told tales to others and they only listen to others. These listeners, we know, are potential story-tellers and we cannot predict at what point of time they will start telling stories.

As Marie Maclean says, the narrative text *I meet You* is a struggle which may be co-operative or may be combative;¹⁴ there happens in the evocative domain of this narrative ambience a silent dialogue. This dialogue, as elaborately theorized by Bakhtin in his book '*The Dialogic Imaginations*', may not be so explicit and eloquent, but may be mute¹⁵.

A study of different versions of a folktale may throw some light as to how the different tellers and hearers share a common mute domain of different narrative clusters of motifs.

At this stage we will have to explain the relation a tale has with another tale. One tale which is considered to be told to a younger age group gives birth to a different versions of the earlier tale. So an original tale is the one which is told by the eldest teller or the teller remembered to have existed to tell stories to many of the village people. This is amply proved in the above mentioned field collection of folktales of a village. But the problem is that even the original tale told by this elder teller is, we know, another version of his informant's tale. Thus, in one way, all the original tales are versions of another tale, if field collection of today is the only criterion by which we go about studying folktales.

Now what we have to consider is the narrative aura created by the relation of two people, one a teller and another the hearer of the tale. At times we will have to understand that the first teller's specific tale has given birth to many versions of the tale. We can call these tales versions, since they display permissible difference with the earlier tale, retaining the core story. AS to how far the version differs from the earlier or original story is a point which no one can determine as every teller uses his narrative competence to differ from the tale which he listens to. Thus relation between the 'original' and the 'version' points to an ambiguous area where the rules are never rigid as the teller of a version can narrate innumerable versions modifying

certain aspects while retaining the core. The 'same' elements of the original story and the 'foreign' elements each teller brings in to tell a version calls for study. Bakhtin is of the view that 'in the realm of culture, outsidership is the most powerful factor'¹⁶.

So the character of orality of interconnectedness of folktales, when encounters another listener who either becomes a teller to another person of a different language, area, culture, caste, religion and age brings to the narrative domain a contesting or co-operating attitude. It is common knowledge that the non-schematic story elements which are prone to change in new contexts represent the foreign culture or contextual ethos.

II

In this background we have to study the different tale versions which represent the difference of gender, age, caste and religion. This will explain how differences are accommodated in the space of folk narration.

Male and Female Versions

Two versions of a folktale told by a female and a male explain that the gender differences are not explicitly indicated in these versions. For example, Karagayya, a male informant, who is 70 years old tells a Kannada language folktale, while another version of which is told by a woman of this language. These two informants belong to the same village, Paduvangere¹⁷. These tales are recorded without the knowledge of each other on different occasions. Karagayya, the male informant tells this version: "A village scavenger who in the Indian tradition is considered to carry carcass of dead animals is invited by the village headman (Gowda) to remove a dead cow. The next day, when the scavenger comes he finds that a fox has already entered the body of the dead cow. The scavenger goes to bring his wife and to their wonder they hear the voice of the fox from inside the cow's body; the fox tells them that it is the voice of the dead cow. Then the fox orders them to bring a pot full of castor oil to smear over the cow's body. The fox also wants them to bring a grinding stone, one cock and a rope. Then the fox asks him to tie the cock and the rope to the ear lobe of his wife. When he does as he is

instructed to, the fox escapes by coming out of the body of the cow. The village scavenger wants to catch and punish the fox. So he lies as if he is dead drawing three lines over his forehead, as it is the practice when someone dies. The fox, knowing that he is not dead, says that if he is dead his fingers should wiggle. To prove he is dead, he wiggles his fingers and the fox runs away to escape from punishment¹⁸.

The version of the tale told by Kempavva, aged 75, a female teller of this village, is short. This is the gist of her tale: A village scavenger carries the carcass of a cow and puts it underneath a tree. He goes home to bring a knife to cut open the dead cow. Meanwhile, a fox moves in to the dead body of the cow with a cock. When the scavenger comes back to cut open the carcass of the cow, the fox says that it is the voice of the cow and asks him to bring castor oil and smear it over its body and bring a cock to tie it nearby. Then the fox asks him to bring a dog to tie it with the ear-lobes of his wife and a grinding stone to tie at his waist. When the fox comes out of the body of the cow and runs away, the scavenger starts to chase and breaks his waist as the grinding stone is tied to it. His wife's ear lobes are torn away as the dog is tied with her ear-lobes.

These two versions show that certain elements of these tales are similar though certain other details are missing or modified. For example, the episode of village headman does not occur in the beginning of the story told by the female teller; likewise the end of the tale is also not the same. Besides, the descriptive details of these tales are different. While the male informant tells that the village headman invites the village scavenger to take away the dead cow, in the female teller's story the village scavenger without anybody inviting him, carries the carcass of the cow. The list of some items that the fox demands are different in both the tales.

The event of scavenger pretending to be dead is absent in the female teller's tale. Some specific details like three measures of oil meant to be smeared over the body of the fox is substituted to one measure in the male teller's story. While one version says that the grinding stone is tied to the ear-lobes of the scavenger's wife, the female version presents that a dog is tied to the ear-lobes.

If we look at the performance details and the features that characterize the orality of these tales, it will be clear that the question and answer style of the male informant which occurs in 7 instances of the text is absent in the oral delivery of the female informant. This recorded story told by a male could be segmented according to the pauses which are needed to take a breath and these segmentations may be marked as full stops when we write down this text. This kind of oral writing saves the orality character of this text and in total we have 17 such sentences in this tale. When we write down the text, we should know that these informants do not have any sense of writing as they are illiterates. Thus a oral writing almost retains all the orality features of a folktale, that is, all the repetitions, parallelisms, rhymes, alliterations etc., and the pauses and sounds that the informants produce when they give time to remember some events that do not come to their mind immediately. All these textual and extra-textual features have to be taken note of when we compare two versions of a tale, one told by a male and the other by a female. The version of the tale told by the male uses more number of linking sentences; the ending word of the previous sentence after a pause (or full stop) begins the succeeding sentence. Thus the same word is found at the end of the first sentence as well as the beginning of the succeeding sentence. Repetitions of words are found to be more in the case of male version of the tale, though both the versions use the purely spoken dialect of the area without allowing the influence of the written style. The parallelism that occur in the male version is absent in the simpler version of the female.

But it does not mean that the gender difference could be established by noting these performance differences between two sexes which we will take up later.

Child's and Elder's Versions

To understand the differences of age, we will compare two tales told by two tellers, one an elder and another a child. The difference between an elder's tale and a child's tale also display that the differences between the two versions pertain to the non-schematic area of the tales; that is, the differences occur in such a way that they don't erase the identity of the two versions. The tales which demonstrate this age differences are both titled 'Manchadamma' in Kannada, which means the

'Child given Birth by the Cot'. The elder's version gives more details of this tale: There is a King and he has seven daughters. The queen becomes pregnant for the eighth time. Then the king threatens her saying if she again gives birth to a girl baby, he will cut them to pieces. But she gives birth to a daughter and in order to escape the wrath of the king, the queen takes the child to a plantain tree and says if she were chaste enough the child would be fed by the plantain. Thus the child grows up there and after a few days, five parrots come to visit the child. The youngest parrot is a lame one. Then they take the child to a palace and lay her on a cot there and give her the name 'Manchadamma'. Manchadamma grows up. Then the parrots go in search of prey to feed the child. When they leave, they request Manchadamma to feed a dog living there. But she fails to feed the dog and the dog puts out the fire in the kitchen and she goes out in search of fire. There is a house and there lives an ogress. When she goes there, the daughter of the ogress plans to retain her there. So the ogress' daughter gives impossible tasks and Manchadamma accomplishes them and escapes; later the mother-ogress comes to the girl's house and calls her feigning the voice of parrots. She does not come out and the ogress fixes a tooth there and goes away.

When the parrots come she comes out to welcome them and the poisonous tooth pierces her and she lies dead. The parrots, taking pity on her put the body in a box and hangs it on the branch of a tree. A king and queen come there and on seeing this box they bring it down to see the dead body. They take away the tooth and she comes alive and she is married to the son of this king. She now remembers the kindness of the parrots and becomes sad. The parrots now come to the palace and they inquire who has killed her by planting a tooth and she tells about the ogress. The parrots bring her back to her mother. The king tests whether she is their own daughter by declaring that her mother's breast will ooze milk if she is their daughter. Her mother's breast gives milk and all agree that she is their own daughter and all lived happily¹⁹.

The other version told by a child of 12 years which is collected from a school of Bangalore tries to give the main frame of this tale, though there are differences in details. The beginning of this tale and other rendering styles are different. As the teller is a child and as the tale is heard from elders, this tale shows a lot of gaps in between sentences and events. As a child the teller tells a tale with reference to an

elder's tale and as the incidents of elder's tale are referred in this tale leads to a faulty rendering with pauses. The event related to the eight daughter and the king's warning of punishing the wife if she gives birth to the next daughter is not mentioned here. Although the episode of parrots taking care of the girl-child occurs here also, the number of parrots are not the same. 'Seven parrots' of this child's tale is substituted to 'five' of the elder's tale. The cat of the child's tale is substituted to the dog of elder's tale which is also noteworthy. Another point is that the specific details of different characters and events are not given in the child's tale. For example, the dead body of the girl hung on a tree is seen by a king and queen according to the elder teller; but in the child's tale it is a wanderer who sees the dead body. At the end also the child teller leaves out the details of events of the elder's tale related to the question of who planted the poisoned tooth and events related to the test by the father etc.

Even the performance aspect of child's story telling reveals that there is much textual inconsistency and each event is selected by the child against another motif available in its mind. Thus the mistakes show that the child develops a competency to tell tales. For example a look at the text will show that this tale starts with an event of the king who sets out to leave the country to kill a lion and the wife requests him not to go. This event has no link with the subsequent event of the tale where the queen abandons the girl-child. The third sentence of this child's tale gives the details of the parrots whereas the event of the parrots occur in the middle of elder's story. The innumerable repetitions with childish voice gaps given by the child to take another breath are absent in the elder's method of narration. Thus the physiological difference of oral delivery of a child's tale shares with the thematic manifestation. This, of course, has a bearing on the semantic significance of the text of the tale.

Versions of Different Castes

The next example is the tales told by different tellers belonging to different castes. This will explain how the caste difference is textualized in folktales. Two female tale-tellers, one belonging to a hierarchically higher caste and another belonging to an untouchable caste narrate two versions of a tale. Krishnamma of seventy five years old who has no education, belonging to Idiga caste tells this

tale²⁰. There live a husband and wife. They have no children and so the wife brings up a cat and it gives birth to many young ones. Then she wants to bring up a dog. The dog and she become pregnant simultaneously. The dog gives birth to two female children and she gives birth to two puppies. The woman takes the dog's daughters to her house, now and then, to give them milk. So the dog takes away the girls to a cave in the forest which is in the middle of seven seas. The dog used to come to the city to take food to feed the children. They grow up and at that time the son of a king comes near the cave for hunting. He is tired and he wants to take rest and so he sends his soldiers away and he alone remains there. He sees the two daughters and comes to the cave. He calls them and as the elder agrees to go with him the younger daughter also follows them. Then the dog comes to visit the elder daughter and she pours hot gruel on the dog and the dog runs to the younger daughter's house and dies. She covers the body of the dead dog and preserves the body out of love for her mother and the carcass turns into gold. Her husband is told that she has got gold from her mother's house. He wants to visit such generous mother-in-law. As she has told a lie to her husband and she cannot take her husband to her mother she puts her hand in a snake pit out of helplessness. The snake god advises her to go to the place of the snake-city of the underworld and take gold and ornaments and spend sometime there and later come out of the city. When she looks back the palace will be in flames. As she is advised she shows the palace in flames to her husband and says that her father's house is on fire. Afterwards her husband does not compel her to take him to the mother-in-law's house. She comes back with all the wealth and the elder sister knows how her sister gets the wealth. She also takes her husband and goes to put her hand in a snake-pit as the younger sister has told her. But the snake-god bites her and she dies.

The other version is told by another woman informant who comes from an untouchable case which is according to caste-hierarchical system, lower to the caste of the first woman informant.

Her tale gives the same main story line keeping the deviations at the fringe as this is only a version of the first tale. But the changes pertain to the non-schematic domain of the tale as this domain sometimes functions through substitutions of characters, names qualities and events. Certain changes, not

affecting the main story line are allowed in this domain. This story told by Jayamma of forty years old and has no education as the earlier informant ²¹. This tale starts with the introduction of a king and queen who have no children and thus the man and woman of the earlier tale is substituted for king and queen. Then the next event of the queen is related to the innumerable young ones of the fish living in water and thinks of her fate of not having even a single child. This event is absent in the earlier tale. Then they come home and the worrying wife wants the king to bring at least a puppy to bring up. He brings a puppy and the puppy grows up as a dog and becomes pregnant. The queen is also now pregnant.

From here the story is almost the same except certain changes in the details and certain specificities. When there is no mention of maid in the earlier story, here the character of maid is instrumental in advising the queen to take away the dog's children. The forest at the middle of the seven seas as the hiding place of the earlier version is substituted here as a far-off forest. The dog goes to bring *mudde*, a food very frequently used in Karnataka state from where this tale is collected. Though the earlier version also is collected from this area, it does not mention this food. The dog that takes away the clothes from the houses of the cities to handover to the girls is another detail of the story which does not occur in the earlier version. In this version the elder and younger sisters are given names Doddahonni and Chikkahonni respectively which are absent in the earlier version. In this version the husband first sees the bag full of gold being kept in the upper portion of the house and wants to visit his wife's father. The rest of the folktale is the same. But the snake that lives in the pit is not a snake god in this version and just an ordinary snake and this snake comes out as she does a favor by bursting the pimple from which the snake is suffering. Here the snake takes her to the city of the snake which is in the shape of a needle-hole. The description is absent in the earlier tale. The rest of the story again largely resembles the earlier version²². If we look at the characteristics of oral delivery of these two tales there are link sentences in between full stops of sentences, in both the tales. As we have seen earlier, these link sentences give a connection by starting by the same word with which the previous sentence ends. As the orally delivered sentences have no full stops as it is the case with written sentences, we may consider continuity of a speech till the teller takes another breath. Certain other usual oral delivery devices like pauses in between sentences, end -rhymes, and a few parallelisms are found in these two

tales equally. The dialect of this area of collection of tales are also found in these two tales.

What is noteworthy here is that the external performance devices do not differentiate these two versions told by two different caste members. There are many versions of this tale in Kannada language and there are versions which end with the motif of rewarding the young sister. But these two tales end with another final motif where the stepmother meets with punishment. This is the ending of another type of folktale which is usually known in Kannada language as 'stepmother tales'. Here a tale takes a portion from another popular tale of the area. So the internal textual performance gives way to certain changes by which textual space is open to coalesce with another tale ending. Here we know that the texts are in perpetual movement and there is no fixed norm for textual performance. This may be reason why there is not much difference in external oral performance in this tale.

Versions from Different Religions

Now we shall compare the tales of two tellers, one of them Hindu and the other a Muslim. The difference in the Hindu informant's tale displays that these two tales keep an intertextual dialogue in between them. This dialogue, if it has anything to signify, shows that this dialogical relationship is displayed in genders, caste and in the difference of age and religion. The Muslim's version starts with the event of two people, a father and a mother and the Hindu's version starts after the death of the first wife who leaves a girl-child and the father has married another woman. The stepmother is cruel to her step-daughter. A king who has no children prays for a child and his wife gives birth to a tiger-cub. This tiger-cub born to the king grows up and the king wants to marry the tiger-son and the stepmother gives her step-daughter in marriage. Fearing to go near her tiger-husband, the step-daughter sheds tears and God Shiva and Goddess Parvati tell her to throw three lime fruits at the tiger one after another. She follows this advice and the tiger becomes a handsome prince. Then the step-daughter becomes pregnant and her stepmother comes to take her home and becomes jealous of the wealthy life of her step-daughter. Then the pregnant step-daughter goes to a well along with her sister to take water, and on the way she tells her how the tiger-cub changed in to a

human being. Out of jealousy her sister pushes her into the well after she getting the ornaments and dress from her sister. But the step-sister forgets that her husband will remember an identification mark on her body. When pushed the step-sister falls on a snake which was suffering from a incurable pimple. When she falls on it the pimple bursts, the snake is cured of this pimple and becomes healthy and looks after the step-daughter well.

When the step-mother's own daughter goes to the tiger-turned prince he asks for the identification mark and when she fails to show it to him, he ties her on a tree and subjects her to ill-treatment by people. Her mother passes that way and knows what has happened to her daughter. Meanwhile, there is golden rain in the tiger-prince's kingdom and thinking that his wife has given birth to a male child he starts searching for her. He is helped by snakes and they take him to their snake-world. He wants to find his wife and so goes about in the guise of a bangle-seller. When she calls this bangle-seller to buy bangles he finds that she has birth-mark on her hand, and identifies her as his wife. The stepmother is forgiven by her step-daughter who goes to live with her husband again.

A comparison of this tale with its version told by a Muslim informant shows that though there are differences the main frame of the tale is the same. The differences mainly pertain to the Hindu gods, Shiva and Parvati. These Hindu gods are substituted by an angel in the Muslims tale. The titles of these tales are also different. The Hindu informant's tale is 'Tiger Story' whereas the other story is titled "Fish story" and the tiger of the Hindu tale is substituted by a fish by the Muslim teller. There is a slight difference in the beginning of the Muslim's tale as the queen of the latter's tale goes to complain to the king of fishes stating that she has no children and later a fish is born to her whereas the Hindu's tale starts with the stepmother episode. The place of occurrence of the stepmother episode of these two tales are different. The queen leaves the fish-son to grow in the well and again this episode does not come in the Hindu's tale as the tiger does not live in water. Many other features related to the main frame of the story that the fish marrying the step-daughter, the turning of the fish into a prince, the attempt to kill the step-daughter by her sister, the snake's pimple being removed by the step-daughter, the prince going to the world of snakes in the guise of a bangle-seller etc., are the same in both the Hindu and Muslim tales. The number of lime fruits are different

too, while the Muslim version has two lines, the Hindu version has three. Another important difference in the Muslim tale is that the sister of step-daughter when kicked by the prince tells him that she has killed his wife; but in the other tale she does not tell the prince of her crime. Thus a dialogic character is established in between two tales through different religious identities; this is brought about through substitution of character, numbers, events, and tales²³.

As far as the inter personal communication through the orality of these tales in between two persons are concerned, the teller belonging to the Hindu community shares with the Muslim teller almost all the body behaviors like giving pauses taking deep breath in between sentences etc. So the gestural difference of orality is limited to their physical behavior and the textual orality shows much performance scope.

The mention of Shiva and Parvati by the Hindu teller and an angel by the Muslim may enable one to question whether there is any scope for difference in these kinds of tales. This also does not indicate the difference of religious symbols as this could be a substitution of Shiva and Parvati by the angel.

Jean Francois Lyotard, in his influential work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, says that 'narrative knowledge makes a resurgence in the west as a way of solving the problem of legitimating the new authorities²⁴. It is familiar to many now that Lyotard uses the fairy tale scholarship to arrive at his formulation of narrative knowledge as an alternate system of knowledge against scientific knowledge with which he says, States become intimately intertwined²⁵. The narrative knowledge of the people of India as it is revealed in textualizing the difference of gender, age, caste and religion, will throw light on the present social condition or its mobilizing factors.

In order to understand how differences are textualized, we will gather the result of the study of the four versions – the versions related to difference of gender, age, caste and religion – and know how differences are accommodated in narratives. Even a cursory look at the four pairs of tales do not show any difference of theme compared to their respective versions; but there are differences when we look at the non-schematic levels of the four versions of tales. The first version of the

tale told by a male and its version told by a woman, though share the main story, there are some differences at the fringe level (i.e. the non-schematic area) of the tales. We say it is the fringe, as these changes do not affect the main theme or frame of the tale. So is the case with other tales, that is, tales told by an elder teller and a child, tales told by a higher caste informant and lower-caste story teller and tales told by a Hindu and a Muslim. All these four pairs have four common story-lines and there are certain changes in the fringes.

Four Patterns of Change

If we make a study of the differences there is a pattern or order in the changes. Even the chaotic domain of change has an order. These changes could be grouped as follows:

1. Some changes pertain to supplying specificity to events, names, things or characters. For example, in the tale relating to gender difference, the male informant says that there is a village headman and he invites the scavenger to inform him of the dead cow. While the female informant says that the scavenger brings the dead cow. Another instance is that the fox which enters the body of the cow wants the scavenger to bring three measures in one version and one measure in the other version.

If we read the original of the second tale, which is used to study the difference of age, it gives certain specific details. For instance, the five parrots meet the child and ask the child its name. These narrative details of asking the child its name is not useful to find out the gender difference of the two tellers. The version told by the untouchable woman gives specific details of the names of dog's daughters as *Doddahonni* for the elder, and *Chikkahonni* for the younger (the Kannada names themselves denote that they are elder and younger respectively). The tale narrated by a Muslim informant, gives the specific details of the fear that overcomes the king who hears about the fish-son's wish to marry a human being. This fear does not occur to the king of the other teller.

Such specific details of narratives are present in one version or absent in the other version. There are such innumerable details; these changes cannot be easily

categorized.

2. Another change one often notices is the presence or absence of a particular event or motif or a part of a story. As we have noted above, when we analyzed the four categories of tales that pertain to difference of gender, age, caste and religion, all the four categories display such changes. If one listens to the tale told by the male informant the village headman says that a cow is dead, not that day, but the next day. This specific information that the scavenger is told the next day does not occur in the female teller's tale. Such examples are many in all the sections of tales. These changes of elements of stories happen either in small sections which folklorist call a motif, or in larger sections. We have to understand the position of such changes also; that is, a particular element of story, in one version will be present in the initial position whereas it will occur in the middle or last part of the tale in another version. Thusm this change of narrative pattern of tale either happens in narrative linearity or in its position. The changes occur in narration related to characters, events, details, description of places, men, animal, fauna, super natural beings etc.. So, a large number of modifications of narration could be included in this section.
3. Another characterization of change that occurs in the different versions of the tales that indicate difference of gender, age, caste and religion could be labeled substitution. This substitution could be the substitution of numbers three to one as in the case of the tales of gender difference, or adjectival characterization as in the tales told to show difference of age which substitutes golden door to wooden door or substitution of dog to cat. The places of fixing the poisonous tooth are substituted in two tales; the poisonous tooth fixed at the top of the door in one tale is substituted to the lower part of the door in the other tale. In the tale which informs the difference of gender there takes place substitution relating to the specific detail of tying the grinding stone; in the tale told by the male informant, the fox wants the scavenger to tie the grinding stone to his wife's ear-lobes whereas the female informant says that the grinding stone is tied to the scavenger's waist. Thus the male character's waist is substituted to his wife's ear-lobes. Even in the tales pertain to the religious difference there

are lots of substitutions; one such merits mention as it is the main character of the tale. The Hindu says that the main character is a tiger whereas the Muslim says that the main character is a fish. So the Hindu's tale is titled 'The Tale of a Tiger' while the Muslim gives the title as 'The Tale of a Fish'.

Such substitutions between different tales of gender, age, caste and religion show that a parallel characterization happens through substitution. Substitution brings a kind of equality between different things, events, names, character, details, specifications, adjectival characterizations, titles etc.

This shows that the substitution is a device, which can occur in any part of a narration either on the linguistic level or narrative level. Another point to be noted is that substitution brings an equalizing effect on that which is substituted. So the versions differ largely through an equalizing effect and not much due to difference.

4. The fourth point regarding the changes that take place in between two versions of tales told by two informants belonging to different gender, ages, castes and religions is the addition and deletion of characters. This specific point of appearance or absence of a character of a tale could be included as a sub-division of the first point explained here that there are differences in specific events, names, things etc. The male story teller introduces the event where the scavenger pretends to be dead to punish the fox. This end sequence is absent in the tale told by the female teller. Likewise in the tale told by the elder teller the story starts with the details that the king and queen have seven daughters. These daughters are not mentioned by the child who tells the version of this tale. The tale told by the lower-caste story – teller gives the details of a maid coming and suggesting to the queen who has given birth to two puppies to exchange these puppies with the two girls that the dog has given birth to. In the tale told by the Hindu informant, there is the mention of a new character, the washer-woman who gives the advice that the daughter of the step-mother should be washed like washer-women washing their clothes.

These are some instances where new characters occur in the four different versions. Here there is no indication to show that versions told by a particular teller alone introduces a new character. So the introduction of new character is not an indicator of a particular trait in these tales. Hence here also the difference is not textualized according to either the presence or absence of a character.

Orality and the Difference of Gender, Age, Caste and Religion

Though certain oral delivery devices are not indicative of the difference of themes, the intertextual relation between the different versions of each category of the above tales, is sometimes intertwined with the style of orality. The occurrence of more repetition in tales by males does not point to difference of gender directly. But, an analysis of the different textual delivery devices used in these tales as we have seen, shows that the physical aspect of oral delivery devices such as taking deep breath in between sentences and stopping in between utterances have a connection with the exterior style of telling stories with regard to children. The tale told by the child is important in this respect. The occurrence of many gaps in between sentences and the inconsistency or hesitation to introduce succeeding events show that the unpolished text has lot of possibilities; the child who tells the tale can use her imagination freely here. In the tale cited here the initial unwanted motif, the king who sets out to the forest to kill a lion is not necessary in the child's tale. Still the child is free to use this sequence. This shows that the physical characteristics of the oral delivery style of being inconsistent and leaving gaps etc., has a connection to the textual competency. But the theme of the child's tale is not differentiated from the elder's tale as the main story line is the same in both the tales. So the concept of difference has to be treated in a different way.

If the comparison of a child's oral delivery with an elder's tale shows that the child's oral presentation has a direct link with the content of the texts, the comparison of themes of versions of tales with regard to differences of gender, castes and religions show that there is not much difference. Here we must be careful to point out that the child's rough tale text is the result of its slow understanding of narration. A study of children's folktales specially undertaken by a research scholar shows that the children above the age of seven only are able to grasp the full structure of folktales²⁶. So the folk narration of a child is related to its

cognizing ability to grasp a narration. If the child tells tales with more hesitation and more numbers of pauses it means that the process of narrative cognition of a child is different. Even in the case of children, once the tale takes its shape and settles in their memory then the tale resembles all the features of an adult tale. The tale of the child selected here illustrates all the main story elements of the elder's tale.

Though this aspect of tale formation in the minds of children and adult merits careful study, our argument that the difference of gender, age, caste and religion is not marked on the surface of the text of tales is not proved wrong as the child's tale also follows the elder's main storyline. So we have to differentiate between the area of text which is vulnerable to the influence of orality and that area which is not influenced by orality. Besides the schematic domain, as we have seen, is not influenced by any type of oral delivery. Here schematic domain denotes a bare minimum story line to identify one story with its version.

The orality of tales that we cite here reveals that certain oral delivery devices such as repetitions and parallelism are found to be more in tales told by males. But this does not form a general trend²⁷. So we cannot establish that there is difference between female orality and male orality in the tale's relation to main storyline except certain biologically related movements, gestures and facial expressions.

Another important aspect of the influence of orality on the text is brought out in the example of the versions of the tale we have selected to study caste difference. These two tales we have selected to study caste difference. These two tales usually end with the dead dog changing into gold which sometimes is shared with the other sister. But here as have seen the narration of step-mother overlaps as both these tales deal with step-mother's daughter and here the step-daughters are rivals. As the step-mother stories overlap here, the ending is borrowed from that genre of tales. This overlapping happens as the space of orality paves way for this in general by loosening the sentences. So we have to understand that orality can affect the tale structure to the extent of not affecting its generic tale identity. If this identity is affected then a new tale is born but of a different genre. This calls for further study although we can say the difference of gender, age, caste and religion does not affect at the deeper level before the tale takes its shape.

COMMON FEATURES OF ORALITY

These common features of orality or non-schematic domain may be summarized as:

1. The orality aspect of all the tales, whether they show differentiations of gender, caste age or religion, share certain common features. The effect of physical features such as voice and movement of body-parts do exert an influence on the text of the tale.
2. Most of these tales particularly those narrated orally by both the lower and higher castes and female teller of a particular tale as well as the tale of the male show certain common features. All of them do not care to stop where a grammatical sentence stops. They link in one breath another word of another sentence or a part of another sentence. Here too there is no difference between two tales.
3. Another common aspect of orality is repetition of words and sentences. A male teller as against the female teller of a particular tale displays a lot of repetitive patterns. While we compare the oral delivery of an aged person against child teller, the aged informant uses more patterns of repetitions.

Still there are scarcely any oppositions between a tale and its version told by two opposing members of genders, age, caste and religion.

The orality features, as we have seen retain the human creative energy of imagination which are related to the physical potentialities of tale telling. This orality is full of impulses, charged by inter-relational signals which are rigidly codified and arranged, and, when subjected to dispersion they disintegrate in combinations. This area of orality is a source of both a deconstructive and constructive energy.

CONCLUSION:

Thus these two domains of narrative schematic and non-schematic sequences and energy, together signify the deep level of narrative knowledge which is always ready to give birth to other narratives. Thus the narrated folktale is always the secondary text of a folktale which takes shape along with the formation

of language in a child. What is important is that the differentiating codes or impulses of different or opposing tales of gender, age, caste and religion are absent in this loose formulation we have arrived at and the creative energy lies with the physically determined oral delivery of the tale.

This understanding enables us to know that the process of narrative knowledge has two levels; one pertains to narrative combinations and the second is the fact that there is a store house of energy which is sealed in the orality. What we arrive at is to open up the textual surface to get access to its inner space to know the different components which go to make folktale versions which is both energy and narrative knowledge. So what we try to say is that the opening up demonstrates that the textual play is not differential but inter-narrative which means a combination of integration, repetition, overlapping and such other non-oppositional, textual operations which are always charged with human energy. The Levi-Straussian understanding of finding binary oppositions in narratives is reversed here to emphasize that the opposition is undone to pave way for a plural perspective²⁸. This narrative plurality is established in the inner textual organization of folktales through the logic of play which is also found in other literary genres of folklore such as riddles and proverbs²⁹.

NOTES

1. Anna Leena Sikala summarizes different theories related to schemes of folktales in *Interpreting oral Narrative*, 1990. P.18
2. For the application and study of schematic and non-schematic domains of folktales, see Carlos Sabarimuthu, *Grimms' Tales in the Indian Narrative Situation*, 2000 Fabula.
3. This village, Paduvenagere is 50 kilometers from Bengaluru, the capital city of Karnataka, India. A complete field collection of all the tales of 25 tellers belonging to all castes is carried out here. This village has the population of about 3500, both male and female.

4. Ramakrishnayya, who carried out the collection of folktales of this village with my consultation has found out that a man who lived three generations ago and now dead has predominantly spread the tales of this village.
5. See Elizabeth C. Fine *The Folklore text from Performance to Print* 1984, P.55
6. See my paper, Grimms' Tale in Indian Narrative Situation Fabula, 2000
7. Even when Indian Folk singers sing, there is a second singer who keeps on saying "UM" after every line
8. See Linda Degh's *Narrative in Society*, 1995, P.23
9. See Walter J.Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 1982
10. See Linda Degh's *Narrative in Society*, 1995, P.10
11. Ningaiah, the male informer of the village mentioned earlier who died in March 2001 was an expert narrator
12. See Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1979
13. See Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 1977, P.43
14. See Marie Maclean, *The Narrative as Performance*, P.XII
15. See Bakhtin, M.M. *The Dialogic Imaginations*
16. See Bakhtin, M.M. *Speech Genres and other Late Essays*, 1993 P.7
17. See foot note No.3
18. This tale comes under AaTh 68. But here the animal which is trapped is not a jackal but a fox. We may also refer another type AaTh 66B which covers

tales where one animal is sham-dead and in another the animal says that the dead animals wiggle their tail. But the Kannada male version has taken the theme of these two tales together where as the female versions is similar to AaTh 68 alone. The second part of AaTh 68 speaks of the items to be brought as sacrifice to the pretending animal

19. One can compare this Kannada tale with tale-type AaTh 709A. Here a baby girl is abandoned and reared by storks. She is left in a tree and when the fire goes out and she goes in search of fire. There she meets an ogress. The Ogress trails and puts poisoned nails by the door. The girl falls into lifeless swoon as the nail scratches her. A prince finds her and removes the nail. The Kannada versions largely follow this theme given in the type index.

20. This tale is collected by Ramakrishnayya from the village, Paduvenagere. The caste, Idiga, although does not occupy a high position in the caste hierarchy it is certainly considered to be higher to the untouchable caste.

21. This tale also is collected from Paduvenagere village by Ramakrishnayya with my guidance and consultation.

22. A section of the first part of this tale resembles AaTh 409A, where a woman gives birth to an animal. The step-mother motif along with the details of a competing real daughter and step-daughter occurs in at 402.

23. AaTh 433B speaks of a childless queen who bears a boy who stays in animal (serpent) form, later he grows to demand a wife. In AaTh 433C, the boy becomes handsome and demands a wife. The Kannada tale also includes the AaTh 402 where the jealous step-mother's daughter kills her sister to marry the step-daughter's husband.

24. See Lyotard, Jean-Francois, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, 1993

25. *Ibid* P.31

26. A field collection of tales of children of different ages was carried out and it was found that children largely above the age of seven are able to narrate complete tales while those below that age were able to tell partial tales, though there were a few exceptions. See the M.Phil thesis of Jayalalitha submitted to Bangalore University under my guidance.
27. Three other versions of male and female tales are also subjected to study occurrence of more number of repetitions and parallelisms are found in female tales there.
28. See the introduction of Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorthy, Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, London, 1976, P.XXIX
29. I thank my students Ramakrishnaiah, Ashok and Latha for their help in preparing this paper. I thank Vijayalakshmi for typing this paper neatly.

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