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Application Of Vladimir Propp's Theory In *Burhi Aair Sadhu*: An Analysis

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Abstract

This paper has been carried out in the framework of Vladimir Propp's 'Theory of Folktales'. Vladimir Propp's theory has been used to find if the tales of *Burhi Aair Sadhu* by Laxminath Bezbarua have any narrative and cultural similarities with universal folktales as stipulated by Propp. This research investigates thematic similarities in the tales from a universal point of view; whether the tales' morphological functions are in the same manner as Propp presented or they have variations in narrative structure. The paper undertakes a case study of the text and examines three tales to show how the functions of folktales do not follow the exact morphological sequence and this variation takes place due to different cultural values. The author's choice of sequence is another reason for the variation. The case study demonstrates how Assamese folktales can be of value in understanding peripheral regional literature narrative structure from a cultural perspective. The intention of this research is not to establish a different set of functions for folktales or to segregate the text from mainstream folktale texts. This study shows how the author built a cultural utopia for children and how the translator transmitted it to another language.

Key Words: Folktale, Assamese folktales, morphology of folktales, children's text

Folklore and Folk Literature: An Introduction

Folklore is a new field of learning that emerged only in the 19th century, when the antiquaries in England as well as the philologists in Germany began to take a serious interest in the tales, songs and traditions of the lower classes of people. The German brothers Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm used the term 'Volkskunde' to denote this new branch of study. They published the first volume of *Kinder Und Hausmarchen* in 1812. In the late 18th century Herder used terms like 'Volkslied' (folk song), 'Volksseele' (folk soul) and 'Volks Glaube' (folk belief); but scholarly study of folklore in the true sense of the term was

initiated by the Grimm brothers. The English word 'folklore' was coined in 1846 by William John Thoms. Thoms in a letter to the *Athenaeum*, a journal popular among intellectuals, suggested that the term folklore should be used in place of popular antiquities. Since then the term 'folklore' has been used to denote a new field of learning and subject of inquiry about the folk.

In the 19th century the word 'Folk' meant an illiterate man in a literate society. Folk meant peasant or rural people. In *Essays in Folkloristics*, Alan Dundes defined the word as "Any group of people whatsoever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is; it could be a common occupation, language, or religion; but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions that it calls its own" (Dundes 79). Folklore is not an exact science but a branch of study. It covers a wide area, including within its periphery traditional songs, tales or narratives, beliefs and superstitions, institutions, customs, costumes and ornaments in use among the backward or less cultured people in an advanced society. The emergence of the term 'folklife' to supplement the word folklore has further widened its scope of study.

As outlined by Richard Dorson, the domains of folklore and folklife studies encompass oral literature or verbal art, physical folklife or material culture, social folk customs and performing folk arts. Oral literature or verbal art encompasses all forms of traditional sounds communicated orally. This encompasses folk narratives, tales and songs that are circulated through spoken communication (Dorson 29).

Folk literature, like other forms of folklore, emerged as a field of study in the 19th century, but that does not mean that there was no folk literature in the distant past. Folk literature has been the companion of man throughout the history of human evolution in different parts of the world. Folk literature is the literature of the illiterate and primitive people who invented tales, songs and poems with the help of their lush imagination. In *Folklore and the Study of Literature*, Archer Taylor defined folk literature as "Folklore expressed in words". He believes that "Folklore in many cultures is indistinguishable from literature" (Taylor 63). Moreover, literature contains elements borrowed from folklore. F.S. Utley, another folklorist, defined folk literature in *Folklore and Literature*, as the literature which is 'transmitted orally' (Utley 102).

Folk literature is handed down from one generation to another by word of mouth and preserved and transmitted by an endless chain. Folk Narratives, according to Dorson, as stated in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*, is one of the sectors comprising under its rubric "spoken, sung and voiced forms of traditional utterance that show repetitive patterns" (Dorson 79). Dorson also says that these circulate by word of mouth and without knowing authorship. Linda Degh says that "Folktale can be said about folk literature in general" (Degh 73). Works like Gian Battista Basile's collection of *Fifty Nea-Politan Tales*, *The Pentamerone*, Charles Perrault's *Contes de na mere L'oye* and the *Countess d' Aulnoy's Countess des Fees*, the oriental story books in translation like *The Panchatantra*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Asopean Fables* bear testimony to this. These collections of tales or narratives not only helped in the preservation of the narratives but also inspired folklore and literature. In 1812, the Grimm brothers pioneered the collection and publication of folktales and myths current among the Germans. Folk literature can be classified into different genres, i.e. folk songs, prose narratives, proverbs, riddles, folk epic and folk language or folk speech.

In *The Folktale*, Stith Thompson says, "Although the term 'folktale' is often used in English to refer to the 'household tale' or 'fairy tale', such as 'Cinderella' or 'Snow White', it is also employed in a much broader sense to include all forms of prose narrative, written or oral, which have come to be handed down through the years. In this usage, the important fact is the traditional nature of the material" (Thompson 58).

Development of Various Folk Theories

Many theories have emerged to explain the thematic similarities in universal folktales such as the Indo-Germanic theory, the Dissemination theory, the Anthropological theory and the work of the Finnish school. The Indo-Germanic theory holds that myths are remnants of ancient Germanic myths, which the Grimm brothers related to the Indo-European continent. They tried to explain the similarities found in folktale variants on a linguistic basis, relating them to the topographical realm of the Indo-European continent. Folktales of the Indo-European continent have striking similarities; their stable elements, such as the basic plots, themes and characters of tales remain the same throughout the world. According to Wilhelm, the wording, names, subthemes, minor plot elements and individual motifs usually differ drastically from one culture to the next, while the folktale substance remains as it is. He defined folktale as “A folk narrative that was not bound to a geographical location or a definite time in history” (Wilhelm 36). He considered folktale as something that belonged to the entire nation and ascribed to it a force capable of permeating through the boundaries of all nations.

In the 19th century, Max Muller took Grimm’s theory, one step further. Muller developed a theory that linked the origins of all the Indo-Germanic myths and folktales based on their slow transmission to India. Theodor Benfey, also a Hindu Sanskrit scholar, was the first to investigate the migration of folktales from one culture’s homeland to other societies. In the introduction of his addition to *The Panchatantra*, Benfey discussed the origins of the European and Asian folktales in India. As opposed to Muller, Benfey’s theory was strong as his theory was based on two key motifs; the thankfulness of animals and the unfaithfulness of women. Benfey’s theory was called the Dissemination theory as he used specific factual evidence.

The Anthropological or Ethnological theory by Andrew Lang challenged Muller and Benfey’s theories, contending that India was the sole origin of similarities found amongst world myths and that all folktales disseminated from one place of origin and that is India. Lang believed that peasants, the main bearers of folk culture, usually remained in one place, they would be less likely to absorb foreign tales. He formulated the theory of Polygenesis, that is, the idea that resemblances in universal stories arise independently because tales portray beliefs, customs and rituals that are common to all people at the same stage of culture. In his work *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, cultural anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski said that “myths and folktales are religiously coded” (Malinowski 72). He was defended by James Frazer, who was aware of the components of reality in folktales and saw the origins of myths and folktales in ancient rituals, customs and folk beliefs.

The theorists of the Finnish school Kaarle Krohn and Antti Aarne were attacked by Russian formalist Vladimir Propp, who offered a structuralist method to analyse the form of a folktale. He named it the ‘syntagmatic structural analysis of folktale’. Vladimir Propp wrote this study in opposition to the research of the Finnish school for two reasons. The folklorists of this school, Kaarle Krohn and Antti Aarne, recognized the fundamental structure of a particular tale is viable and that different variations are widely distributed geographically and historically. They wanted to construct a system of classification that would in some way resemble a biologist’s scientific method for the classification of listing and cataloging. They proposed a model for assembling and classifying folktales from around the world, known as the ‘historic-geographic method’. Using this approach they compiled a large index of tales from around the world and entitled *The Types of Folktales*. The index classifies each tale according to its motif and reduces the numerous variants of each narrative to certain basic types, such as animal tales, ordinary folktales, rubric tales of magic, religious tales, novellas and tales of stupid ogres, jokes and anecdotes. Vladimir Propp believed that by collecting and classifying the motifs of folktales, according to content, the original structure of the tale becomes invisible. This makes it difficult for the reader to determine when a theme begins and where the other ends.

Vladimir Propp first published *Morphology of the Folktale* in 1928 although it was not translated into English until 1958. In the *Morphology of the Folktale* Propp presented the results of a pioneering study of the

plot structures of Russian fairy tales collected by Afanas'ev (1855). According to Vladimir Propp, structures of the various folklore genres are universal, they have similar characteristics. There are two distinct types of structural analysis in folklore, namely 'syntagmatic structural analysis' and 'paradigmatic structural analysis'; the latter one was made well-known by Claude Levi-Strauss. According to A.J. Greimas, the term 'syntagmatic structural analysis' had been borrowed from the notion of syntax in the study of language; it is the structure or formal organization of a folkloristic text that follows the chronological order of the linear sequences of elements (Greimas 27). On the other hand, paradigmatic structural analysis, as Lucien Sebag said, was borrowed from the notion of paradigms in the study of language. The paradigmatic analysis seeks to describe the pattern in folklore and this pattern is not the same as the sequential structure (Sebag 43). The syntagmatic approach is liable to be both empirical and inductive, and its reluctant analyses can be repeated; in contrast, paradigmatic analyses are speculative and deductive and not easily repeated. Vladimir Propp's syntagmatic approach deals with the structure of the text alone, isolating the text from social and cultural context; whereas Claude Levi-Strauss relates the paradigms of myth to other aspects of culture, such as cosmology and worldview.

At the core of the morphology is Vladimir Propp's concept of function is "An act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of action" (Propp 27). The character is called the *Dramatis personae*. The functions are the constant elements, but *Dramatis personae* change. Therefore, functions are important as they are the components that form the basis of the morphology of the tales. Propp exclusively read Afanas'ev's classic collection of *Russian Folktales* to extract all the functions of folktales and he discovered thirty-one functions in Afanas'ev materials.

According to Propp, a folktale is constituted by a structure, which is constant and invariable and a variable content. In this sense, Propp defines morphology in *Morphology of the Folktale* as, "A description of a folktale according to its parts and the relationship of these components to each other and the whole" (Propp 12). To accomplish this, Propp devised a new basic unit called 'function', which becomes the basic unit of the plot action of the folktale. The number of functions in a folktale is thirty-one which are spread out over seven types of plot of actions. The tales of *Burhi Aair Sadhu*, though distinct from those of Western folktales for cultural differences; are rich with striking motifs and this research studies how far they follow the universal pattern of folktales.

Vladimir Propp's Functions of Folktales: An In-Depth Analysis

Vladimir Propp examined folktales by dividing their fundamental components and assessing how these components interact both internally and within the larger narrative framework. He referred to the recurring and unchanging themes present in folktales as 'Functions'. These functions represent actions performed by characters and are interpreted in terms of their significance within the overall story. Propp asserted that the number of functions remains constant, totaling thirty-one. He identified specific connecting elements that establish a communication system among the characters. This system ensures that characters are informed about earlier events that should influence their actions. These connecting elements manifest through actions like announcing, hearing, seeing, bringing, arriving, inviting, arranging and ordering. Their structural importance is relatively limited. A distinct form of connection arises through the repetition of various structural elements three times, known as 'trebling'. Elements that are trebled serve their structural purpose only once, referred to as repetitions, which are not viewed as individual structural components. Propp also recognized motivations as a fourth structural element alongside functions, notifications and trebling. He considered motivations to be the most erratic and unstable aspects of folktales.

Vladimir Propp identified eight fundamental character archetypes present in the folktales he examined. He referred to these character archetypes as 'dramatis personae'. These archetypes consist of the villain (an

adversary who opposes the hero), the dispatcher (a character initiating the hero's quest), the helper (provides aid during the quest, often at crucial junctures), the princess or prize, her father (bestows tasks upon the hero, discerns false heroes and in some cases, the princess weds the hero; she may also be a sought-after object or reward), the donor (bestows enchanted items upon the hero, frequently of supernatural origin), the hero or victim (the main character, who may take on either a heroic or victimized role) and the false hero (a contender who wrongfully claims credit for the hero's deeds or aspires to marry the princess).

Vladimir Propp's framework consists of the following stages:

Firstly, the initial scenario that provides context for the story. The focus then shifts to the introduction, around the first sphere. Within this introduction (functions one to seven), the narrative introduces the situation and most characters, including elements like absence, prohibition, violation of the prohibition, reconnaissance, liberation, cunning and collusion. Following the seventh function, the folk narrative transitions into the core of the story, where the main tale commences and the protagonist embarks on their journey (functions eight to eleven), covering aspects such as antagonism, deficiency, mediation, opposition and departure. Later, the folk narrative enters the third sphere (functions twelve to nineteen), where the hero seeks a means to attain the solution (which can also be a stand-alone narrative), involving stages like testing, reaction, acquisition, guidance, struggle, identification, triumph and resolution. Following the resolution, the fourth and often discretionary sphere emerges, in which the hero returns home (functions twenty to thirty-one). This phase includes elements like return, pursuit, rescue, arrival, assertion, undertaking, resolution, revelation, transformation, retribution and marriage.

As per Propp's principle, not every narrative incorporates all the outlined functions. A tale can omit any function and the presence or absence of these functions determines whether a story is rich in villainous elements or lacks them. The responsibility for determining the functions within a tale rests with the author, who might choose to exclude or spare certain functions. Once the functions are designated, the author then assigns the characters to carry them out. These chosen functions state the essential roles and actions that each character must fulfill. Despite adhering to the functions and character roles, the author has the creative freedom to devise numerous pathways leading to the story's conclusion. The absence of a specific function does not disrupt the sequence or parallels and the inclusion of one function does not preclude the presence of another.

The present study illustrates that the narratives of *Burhi Aair Sadhu* can also be interpreted as folktales that align with Vladimir Propp's framework. The analysis employs Propp's methodology to examine three distinct stories from the text: *Tejimola*, *The Kite's Daughter*, and *Tula and Teja*. Although these stories share identical functions, their manifestation can diverge based on the characters involved. Functions are intricately tied to characters; characters autonomously carry them out and the author determines the approach and manner of their execution. The significance attributed to a particular function within the narrative progression is what lends it its purpose and role.

Objectives of the Research

This study aims to determine whether traditional folktales from the Northeastern region of India share the same fundamental structure as other ones. From ancient times, folktales about heroes and villains and the struggle between good and bad are familiar to us. In each tale, the characters and the environment vary with the imagination of the author as the limit. However, the narrative structure has turned out to be similar in folktales from all corners of the world. This interesting fact provokes this research to examine the organization of a traditional folktale to verify this assertion. The structure of the tales is analysed by using the

method presented in *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp, which is considered to be one of the fundamental tools to analyse the narrative structure.

Literature Review

Universal Fairy Tales and Folktales: A Cross-cultural Analysis of the Animal Suitor Motif in the Grimm's Fairy Tales and the North American Indian Folktales is a research thesis by Nicole S. Reiss, where he emphasizes the importance of the functions of folktales of Native Americans and tries to find the similarities and differences between American and European folktales. The research is done within the framework of Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson and Vladimir Propp. This study is influential for any comparative research of native folktales with the universal; it provides scope for the researcher to undertake the various theories of folktales in the study of Children's Literature.

The term 'folktale' is often associated with children's stories. Stith Thompson, in his *The Folktale*, has talked about the various forms of folktale. *Fairyland Remains the Same: A Porppian Analysis of Harry Potter and Sorcerer's Stone* is another fascinating article on the usage of Propp's folktale theory in Children's Literature. The text is analysed by marking the relevant elements of the story, according to Propp's method. *The Hero* by Lord Raglan is another influential text on the function of folktales. The term myth is often confused with folktale and Claude Levi-Strauss's *Myth and Meaning* offers an understandable concept for both terms.

Analysis of *Tejimola, the Kite's Daughter and Tula and Teja* within Propp's Framework

The story *Tejimola* begins with the initial situation of introducing the main character of the story, Tejimola, whose mother died at an early age and who is brought up by her stepmother. It also introduces Tejimola's merchant father, his two marriages and long business trips, and how he dotes on Tejimola. The story's first turning point comes when Tejimola's father leaves for business for a long period and this action denotes the first function that is one of the members of a family absents him from home and it is named absention. Her father's absence is the main cause of Tejimola's death; her stepmother finds his absence as a great opportunity to get rid of the stepdaughter. The second function; an interdiction addressed to the hero, takes place when her stepmother asks Tejimola not to open the set of clothes that she packs for Tejimola until she reaches her friend's house. The third function; the interdiction is violated, takes place when curious Tejimola opens the bundle to see the clothes before she arrives at her friend's place. Her violation of the stepmother's rule proves to be fatal when Tejimola finds a burning ember and a mouse from the bundles of clothes; which are kept by the stepmother intentionally.

The stepmother's action of keeping ember and mouse inside clothes represents the sixth action; the villain attempts to deceive his victim to take possession of him or his belongings; the stepmother wants to find fault with Tejimola so that she can kill her and take possession over her husband's money. Tejimola is taken forcefully to stir paddy in the pound-shed by stepmother and this denotes the seventh function; the victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy. She does not say anything against her stepmother or try not to run away from the pound-shed. She follows dutifully whatever the stepmother is asking her to do. Tejimola's submission to deception comes earlier when she takes the pack of clothes from her stepmother's hands without even asking to see it once before she leaves for marriage. Poor Tejimola is crushed by the pestle of the pound shed until she dies and this action shows the eighth function; the villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family. This murder has a connection with the subdivided function of eighth, one member of a family either lacks something or desires to have something; the stepmother wants to possess her husband's wealth by getting rid of Tejimola permanently. Function nine; misfortune or lack is

made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched and this comes with Tejimola's rebirth in the form gourd plant, citrus plant and a lotus. Even death cannot stop her spirit from coming back to life in various other forms. The stepmother's desire is fulfilled with Tejimola's death and as in function eleventh; the hero leaves home. Tejimola's death makes her leave home, though it is temporary.

In the twelfth function; the hero is tested, interrogated and attacked which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper, which comes along with Tejimola's various forms. When she grows as a gourd and citrus plant, at first she is interrogated by a beggar woman and later by a few cowherds and each time Tejimola pleads in lament what has happened to her. When it comes to the notice of the stepmother, she chops the gourd and the citrus plants and is thrown in the river. Tejimola's transformation in plants is magical but the author does not provide any magician to help her. Finally, Tejimola happens to meet her father and turns back into a girl once again. While transforming into a plants, Tejimola saves her and it gives rise to the thirteenth function, the hero reacts to the actions of the future donor. Tejimola uses the tactics of remaining alive in different forms and ensures that she meets her father. When her father offers her (the lotus) to eat chewed betel nut, she changes to a myna and eats. The function fourteenth is obvious in the tale; the hero acquires the use of a magical agent. Tejimola's possession of magic is not by any magical agent but comes to her after death.

Tejimola's father comes home with the myna and inquires about Tejimola to his wife. Though she tells lies at first, he makes her confess the truth and thus, the function eighteenth; the villain is defeated is fulfilled. The myna changes to Tejimola and this represents the function twentieth; the hero returns. The story ends with the function thirtieth; the villain is punished and gives a happy ending. The merchant sends his wife away from his home and lives happily with his daughter.

The story *The Kite's Daughter* begins with an initial situation with the introduction of the potter and his wife. When the potter's wife gives birth to a girl child she becomes petrified as the potter warns her not to have a daughter again. She abandons the baby in an earthen tub and lets the vessel float away in the river. The action of the potter's wife gives rise to the first function; one of the members of a family absents him from home, but the absence is intentioned by a mother unlike the story Tejimola, where the merchant leaves for trade. The girl is brought up by a kite and when she becomes young, the kite gives her hand to a merchant. Function four; the villain attempts reconnaissance, takes place when the kite's daughter's co-wives try hard to find the magical agent who helps her every time. They come to know that it is a kite that comes and rescues the girl and it denotes function five; the villain receives information about his victim. When the merchant goes for trade, the co-wives sell the kite's daughter away and their action fulfills the sixth function; deceive the victim to have possession of him or his belongings. The kite's daughter cannot do anything against persuasion and surrenders to her co-wives and goes away with the trader. This leads to the function seventh; the victim submits to deception and unwittingly helps the enemy. Function nine; Misfortune or lack is made known to the kite's daughter when the trader asks her to watch over his dried fish. Meanwhile, her husband, while returning from his voyage sees her crying and brings her back home and this action represents function twenty; the hero returns. Function twenty-eighth; the villain is exposed, occurs when the merchant comes to know what his other wives have done to the kite's daughter and they are punished to death by him and his action creates function thirty; the villain is punished.

The story of *Tula and Teja* begins with the initial situation of introducing the family of a rich farmer, who has two wives and children. The first wife is aware of the jealousy of the second wife, yet she goes out with her for fishing and this is a kind of interdiction (function two) to her and she violated it (function three). Though she is not physically presented as a human throughout the tale, her role is the most important. The second wife turns the first wife into a tortoise with her magical power. Teja and Kanai come to know about their mother when the tortoise interrogates them. They are fed rice pudding from Water Princess by the tortoise and it improves their health. The stepmother tries to find the reason behind the sudden brightness of

the complexion and sends her daughter Tula, one day along with Teja and Kanai to graze cows. The stepmother's action represents the fourth function; the villain attempts reconnaissance. Tula informs her mother how the tortoise brings food for Teja and Kanai every day and here villain receives information about his victim (fifth function). The stepmother cannot bear well being of her stepchildren and plans to kill the tortoise. It denotes function six; the villain attempts to deceive his victim to take possession of him or his belongings. According to her plan, she says to her husband that her poor health can be improved if she eats the big tortoise of the pond. When Teja and Kanai hear how stepmother has planned to kill the tortoise, they go and inform everything to the tortoise. The tortoise tells them that no one can catch her until Kanai comes fishing and also asks them not to eat the meat. The tortoise is caught and thus, the victim submits to deception and unwittingly helps the enemy (function seventh). Though turned into a tortoise, it is the elder wife of the farmer; but the tortoise is killed and eaten up by everyone. The stepmother causes harm to a member of a family (eighth function) and her villainy stops her from thinking about other things. Teja and Kanai have buried the front paws of the tortoise and now they are grown into a citrus tree and a hibiscus plant and this is the return of the hero (function twentieth).

Teja gets married to the king and her stepmother cannot tolerate it; she is green with envy that her daughter could not become a queen. She calls Teja to come home saying how much her father misses her. When Teja comes home, the stepmother pretends to feed and look after her and waits for a good opportunity to harm Teja. One day she takes up an iron spike and hits Teja's head and turns her into a myna bird. Now she sends her daughter Tula to the king's palace in Teja's clothes and ornaments. The king finds not much difference as both sisters almost look alike. But soon Tula's identity is revealed by the myna; the hero is recognized and the villain is exposed (function twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh). The king pulls out the spike from Myna's head and instantly Myna turns into Teja once again; the hero is given a new appearance (function twenty-ninth). The king orders his guards to put Tula to death and send her meat to the stepmother; the villain is punished (thirtieth function). There exists a set of logical relationships between the events of the tale and each event has a role to play in the tale as a whole and each event is eloquent precisely with the other events in the tale. Finally, the structural relationships in the tale reveal the moral order encoded in the tale.

Findings of the Analysis of the Tales

Vladimir Propp's morphology emerges as a highly promising framework for representing narratives of folktales. The elements within the morphology offer insights into the various levels of narrative structure. The structure of a folk narrative plays a pivotal role in the development of unifying events, settings, characters, motivations, causes, effects and other elements into a consistent whole. Propp's morphology accommodates both straightforward narrative structures and intricately interwoven ones. Tales such as *Tejimola*, *The Kite's Daughter* and *Tula and Teja* mark concise narratives characterized by a clear beginning, middle and end. These narratives are thoughtfully composed with a limited number of folktale functions, arranged linearly in a sequence. However, these stories lack the complexity that could come from employing numerous functions, intricate sequencing, intertwining plots, elaborate character roles, motivations, connectives and other multifaceted elements.

The morphological functions in these tales offer a straightforward and comprehensible narrative pathway for children to explore the Assamese society and culture engagingly, thereby enriching their learning experience. Chrystal Patrick suggested in *A Modern Fairy Tale: Gender and Power in Roald Dahl*, that "the structure of fairy tales mirrors a child's experiential framework with its interplay of prohibitions, missions, challenges, tests, magical interventions, allies and adversaries" (Patrick 42).

Despite being rooted in abstract narrative concepts, Propp's morphology remains invaluable for illustrating the latent influential features of narratives, including hidden cultural facets in Assamese folktales. The narrative structure present in *Tejimola*, *The Kite's Daughter*, and *Tula and Teja* encapsulate cultural nuances. The narrative pattern of these tales is apt for children, allowing them to not only deconstruct and analyse the narratives but also construct their own original stories that exhibit the same logical, aesthetic and ethical cause seen in classical Assamese folktales. This analysis further underscores that Vladimir Propp's assertion about a shared structure in folktales applies to both less prominent and mainstream folktales.

Limitation of the Study

The study restricts itself to excavating other strategies of folktales since the chosen text is comprised of only thirty stories. The theory of folktales covers a wide range of different aspects provided by various folklorists, such as Antti Aarne, Stith Thompson and Claude Levi-Strauss. This research discusses only one sub-category of prose narrative and that is folktale, whereas myth and legends are overlooked for lack of time and space.

Conclusion

Beginning with an introduction to folklore and folk literature, the research examines three tales of *Burhi Aair Sadhu* from the perspective of narrative perception by using Vladimir Propp's method. The examination suggests that the tales cannot be considered 'structured folktales' since they do not have the same fundamental structure provided by Propp. The plot structures of *Tejimola*, *The Kite's Daughter* and *Tula and Teja* are similar to those in fairy tales, where the princess loses her mother at an early age and suffers from the brutality of her stepmother. She is often thrown away from the kingdom to take away her journey.

Scope for Further Study

Folklore and folk literature are leading areas of research; the folk literature of diverse ethnic groups from the Northeast has not yet been fully developed. Many other narratives based on folk culture may be taken up for study.

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