


Folktales in the Folder of Human Mind: An Analytical Overview

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ABSTRACT

Folktales – is one of the traditional sources of entertainment and is a true reflection of society. The study of Folktales remains incomplete without its psychological interpretations. Psychoanalysis is a tool by which we can highlight the significance of folktale interpretation for understanding the human mind and its associated problem. Every society has its own norms and values and folktales represent those social boundaries and phenomena. Ritamoni Das (2014), stated that the Study of folktale in the light of psychoanalytical theory proves to be useful in understanding human behavior and social problem. This study emphasizes the Folktale analysis based on some of the major psychological and sociological approaches like Freudian method, Jungian analysis of folktales, Karl Abraham's pointing out of the similarities between the fantasies materials in folktales and dreams. The assumptions of this study are twofold, Firstly, because of social control sometimes people cannot fulfill their own personal needs and desire, and Secondly, the psychological analysis of the folktale's materials is inevitably subjective because each individual is going to come up with his own interpretation of the stories. This study aims at understanding the impact of various characters of folktales on the human psyche and analyzing the unconscious desire and the use of ego defenses mechanism in coping up with societal norms and values.

1. Introduction

Folktale - one of the traditional sources of entertainment is as old as mankind. The folklores and folktales have been an eternal part of every culture for ages. Folktales are stories passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth either in oral form or in written form. Folktales seek to explain the world around us by telling stories of real people and events. Folktales is the expressive body of culture shared by a particular group of people, it encompasses the traditions common to that culture, subculture, or group. These include short stories, tales, proverbs, myths, prose, narratives, etc. "The characters in the Marchen are mainly anonymous. Secondly, there is no note of time and place and lastly, the story has a definite theme and a plot worked up to its natural conclusion" (Burne, 1914). All cultures in the world have their folktales. There is no known culture in the world where there is no folktale. Folktale is found everywhere (Thompson 1949). Unlike the other narratives, folktales are very transmissible. "People who do not assimilate each other customs may assimilate each other tales" (Burne 1914). Folktales usually undergo a process of adaptation when they are borrowed from foreign cultures. Such adaptation is called familiarization. Lauri Honko, (1981) is one of the eminent folklorists of the world discussed four forms of adaptation of tradition.

When it comes to Indian folk tales, the country of diverse religions, languages, and cultures has a complete range of tales and short stories. Indian folklore has a wide range of stories and mythological legends, which emerge from all walks of life. Not only this, the great Indian epics like 'Ramayana', 'Mahabharata' and 'Bhagavat Gita' are full of didactic stories inspired from real lives and society All these ancient stories have been passed from generation to generation, creating bondage of traditional values with present-day generation.

With the publication of the Grimm brothers "Kinder-und- Hausmarchen" in 1812, folktales became a subject of serious study. Modern-day research gives more emphasis on the psychological interpretation of folktales material because it is useful to the extent that it helps us to interpret the symbolic elements which are found in the myths, legends, and folktales. Folklore is artistic communication in a small group and some message underlying such communication can be known by the psychoanalytical interpretation of the various items of folklore (Islam 1985: Thompson 1951). Psychoanalysis is defined as a set of psychological theories and therapeutic techniques that have their origin in the work and theories of Sigmund Freud. The core idea at the center of psychoanalysis is the belief that all people possess unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories. In the light of psychoanalysis interpretation, we need to first understand the 'folk' – the people and their unconscious desires, needs, conflicts and it remains incomplete without interpreting the 'lore' - the body of traditions and knowledge.

The study on folktales greatly influenced by the theories proposed by Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Karl Abraham, and many more. This current study emphasizes the Folktale analysis based on some of the major psychological and sociological approaches like Freudian method, Jungian analysis of folktales, Karl Abraham's pointing out of the similarities between the fantasy materials in folktales and dreams.

1.2. Objectives

1. To understand the impact of various characters of folktales on the human psyche.
2. To analyze the effect of folktales materials on unconscious desire and the use of ego defenses mechanism in coping up with societal norms and values.
3. To highlight the need and importance of folktale for maintaining the wellbeing of society.

1.3. Methodology

The present study is based on library work. Secondary data have been collected from various books, journals, etc.

2. Folktales and Psychoanalysis

The term 'psychoanalysis' has two accepted meanings. Firstly, it means a method of treating mentally disordered people. Secondly, it also goes to mean the theories on the human mind and its various complexities. This psychoanalytical school is also known as depth psychology on the ground that it goes into the deep region of the unconscious mind (Chauhan 1978).

2.1. Freudian Method

Sigmund Freud (1856 to 1939) was the founding father of psychoanalysis, a method for treating mental illness and also a theory that explains human behavior. Freud's theory of Unconscious, Preconscious, and Conscious mind, Dream analysis, and ego defense mechanism gave the analysis of folktales a new incentive. The unconscious mind is a reservoir of feelings, thoughts, urges, and memories that are outside of our conscious awareness. The unconscious contains contents that are unacceptable or unpleasant, such as feelings of pain, anxiety, or conflict. Freud compared the human mind to an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg that is actually visible above the water represents just a tiny portion of the mind, while the huge expanse of ice hidden underneath the water represents the much larger unconscious. Dreams to some extent may be considered as a royal road to the unconscious mind. The contents of the dream are usually a symbolic representation material of the unconscious and a proper interpretation of those symbols may provide valuable clues to repressed desires and conflicts of the human mind. Dream helps the human mind in obtaining fulfillment in the imagination of those unconscious wishes which cannot be obtained in reality. Like dreams represents repressed needs, conflict, and desire of the human mind, various characters of folktale items also reveal psychic repressions of the community. Due to this reason, psychoanalysts consider folktales as the projection of the human mind and society.

In psychoanalytic theory, a defense mechanism is an unconscious psychological mechanism that reduces anxiety arising from unacceptable or potentially harmful stimuli. Defense mechanisms may result in healthy or unhealthy consequences depending on the circumstances and frequency with which the mechanism is used. Repression is a type of psychological defense mechanism that involves keeping certain thoughts, feelings, or urges out of conscious awareness. This process involves pushing painful or disturbing thoughts into the unconscious in order to remain unaware of them. Projection is also a type of ego defense mechanism which involves individuals attributing their own unacceptable repressed thoughts, needs, and desires to another person as if the thoughts belong to them, not to oneself. Various items of folktales project the repressed hopes and desires of a society. It is a medium through which a community reveal their repressed feelings. Thus, we can define folktale as a defense mechanism of the society, through which a society maintains its wellbeing. It also reflects the unconscious needs and demands of the members of society. Folktales are the products of the human mind. What instigates a tale is a wish and the fulfillment of that wish is the content of the tale. Due to this reason, the folktale is the most popular of all the narratives. People find pleasure in it since it satisfies a wish. Generally, all tales have a happy ending and the child identifies itself to a varying extent with the young hero of the story. The child obtains a fulfillment of those unconscious wishes which it cannot yet obtain in reality. Folktale is a medium through which people project their emotional life into a safe, externalized, socially sanctioned form (Islam 1985). All folktales reflect the

need and hopes of a society symbolically. In folktales, we find many symbolic figures and "properly understood and logically arranged symbol figures told a story of sexual hunger, guilt, and shame. Beneath the manifest content lurks a latent fantasy of masturbation, castration, body destruction, penisenvy, incest" (Dorson 1972).

2.2. Jungian Psychology

Carl Jung (1875 – 1961), founder of analytical psychology agreed with the concept of Freud that a person's past and childhood experiences determined their future behavior, but he also believed that the human mind and behavior are shaped by their future too. According to Jung, the human psyche is made up of a number of separate but interacting systems, the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious. Jung explained from his experience with psychotic patients that he discovered fragments of ancient myths and stories that they possibly have not known about in their lives. His many years of study of dreams and fantasies of his patients eventually led him to a long and intensive study of mythology and symbolism. According to Jung, it was not only in the delusions of psychotic patients the symbolic modification of myth and folktales are present but also in the dreams and fantasies of everyone (Carlos C. Drake, 1969).

According to Jung's theory, there is usually a connection present between our unconscious complexes and archetypes, a primitive mental image inherited from the earliest human ancestors and supposed to be present in the collective unconscious. The shadow, one type of archetype which Jung defines as the negative side of our personality, the dark side, the side which we may be ashamed of and do not like to think about it. In myths and folktales, it is possible to often spot shadow figures and situations similar to those found in dreams and fantasies but they devoid of any personal details, they represent a kind of archetypal framework. In folktales since 'witch' in the culture is generally regarded as a wholly negative figure and unacceptable to the society thus in a way it projects all the negativity of the society.

2.3. Othe Approaches

In the twentieth century re rapprochement of psychology and anthropology, the earliest development was the use of folkloristic materials by a psychologist. Representatives of early analytic use of myth and folktales materials are the work of Karl Abraham, Otto Rank, Ernest Jones, and others. Abrahams pointing out of the similarity of fantasy material in folktales and myths and in dreams has been a clue of permanent value and Rank's early studies still remain a useful collection of relevant materials (Weston La Barre, 1948)

Abou Zeid shows that the telling of folktales is one guide of disguised satisfaction of repressed desires in Egypt and M.M. ElSayed, had made an interesting approach to folk psychology through the study of Egyptian folk songs (Abou Zeid, 1946: M.M. ElSayed, (1945). Berenise. S. Engle in a series of careful studies has been singularly successful in showing how analytics knowledge illuminates classical Greek mythology (Berenise. S. Engle, 1936). J.S Lincoln, examined American Indian dreams in their relation to folklore and specific native cultures, in his pioneering works on dreams (J.S Lincoln, 1935). Karlson early wrote a paper and R.R. Marrett wrote a book, summering studies which was specifically on folktales and psychology (1914: 1920).

3. Conclusion

For a proper understanding of society and the human mind, psychoanalytical studies of folktales materials may be considered essential. Every society has its own norms and values and folktales represent those social boundaries and phenomena. Various characters of folktales, folksongs, myths, and mythology project the societal norms and values of a community. Folktales if properly interpreted may reveal that it contains valuable documents not only to understand the specificity of culture but also to grasp the general psychological pattern of those who share it. Thus, in the end, we may consider folktales as the 'projective system', a psychological construct of the society involved. These projective systems contain psychological meaning for the individuals and for the society and the content depends on what people need them to be, that is they are guided by the societal expectancies and subjected to the stereotyped techniques of socializing individuals to the cultures. As these socializing techniques vary culturally so the character, the structure, and the projective systems.

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