



Original Article

Folk Literature and Aesop's Tales

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Abstract

Oral literature is a kind of literature which is also known as folk literature. It is also known as orature the term which is coined by Zirimu which means oral literature. It is a kind of literature which is found in the form of songs which are sung by its members and in this way, it is passed from the older generation to the next generation. In this process of passing from older to the next generation the literature or the works like poetry, stories are somewhat changed partially or totally. Some material may be added or in some cases something is omitted from the original one. The modern literature is different from the folklore particularly in case of its means of presentation. Most of the folk literature is in spoken form and sung by the respective members of that society to which the folk literature belongs, whereas the modern literatures which may in some cases imitate totally or partially the folklore in the written form. So, the folk literature can also be translated into many national and international languages which depend upon the quality and popularity of that folklore. One cannot have a sole definition that encompasses the whole meaning of the folklore and which is acceptable to all.

Keywords: Culture, fable, folklore, language, literature, oral, people, popular and tradition etc.

Introduction

The etymology of the word folk can be seen in the Proto- Germanic language which is developed between 5th century BC and 25th century AD. The language is divided into four branches which are known as West Germanic, East Germanic, South Germanic and North Germanic. The West Germanic compared to the other three Germanic languages is spoken by the majority of the then Germanics. This language is further divided into Ingvaenoic, English, Low German languages, Frisian languages which encompasses Dutch and Irminonic languages of modern Europe. From this Germanic language; the modern word folk is derived from *fulka*. The German words like *volk*, Dutch word *Volk*, Swedish word *folk* and the Danish word *folk* resemble the Germanic word. In old English the word *folk* is spelt as *folk* which means the common people. In the primitive period the word *folk* also denotes the country, nationality, race, people or group. The Germanic word *fulka* also refers to the group of people or community. The English word *folk* means a community or people of a particular region which further becomes a part and parcel of a larger nation or country. It also denotes a group or gathering of multiple persons irrespective of their lineage. The word *folk* also mean troops or armed forces.

Objectives of the Study:

The focus of the research is folklore and the primary aim of the research is to study the folkloristic traditions in Aesop's tales.

1. To analyze the characteristics of folk traditions.
2. To examine the effects of Aesop's fables on other literary works.
3. To show how oral literature plays crucial role in the transmission of culture from one generation to the next one.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this research paper is the elaborated study of the chosen texts. The methodology is interpretative, analytical and sociological in nature. The method of library research is followed for the present research paper.

Many anthropologists have given multiple definitions of the folk literature of which neither definition can claim universality in terms of its acceptance.

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Oral literature or folk literature is a literature which is handed over or transmitted through the medium of mouth or oral form and which is free from the fixed form. This literature consists of legends, stories, songs and tales transmitted through mouth from one generation to the next. Folklore, the folktales or folk literature is the literary genre that is commonly shared by the members of a particular social group, community people or persons inhabiting a particular region or land. It has various types like jokes, poems and tales. A tale is a narrative or story which depicts the experiences presented by the narrator. It can be real or fictional one. The tale consists of a travelogue which means travel literature which represents the experiences or encounters of a tourist or traveler. It is also called as outdoor literature, memoir or nature writing. The earliest work of this genre is *Periplus of the Erythraean sea*. The author of this work is not known. This work is composed in Koine Greek. It tells about ancient Roman and Egyptian maritime commerce.

Fable is a story of the plants and animals which are able to speak like human beings. These kinds of objects are given or provided human attributes like emotions. Personification is the main literary tool used in these kinds of fables which are intended for conveying a moral lesson. It is one of the effective tools for storytelling and the well-known cultures of ancient times use this literary tool in which the main characters are plants and animals that express emotions like human beings. The human behaviour is reflected in the inanimate and natural objects like plants and animals. The art of attributing human traits to animals and plants is called anthromorphization. The word anthromorphize is derived from the Greek word anthropos which means human beings and morphoe means a form. The fable whether it is fictional one or real always ends in the moral lesson and that moral lesson is compressed in the maxim. A maxim is meant for the purpose of motivation or is intended for a didactic purpose. There is difference between a parable and fable; a fable uses animate and inanimate objects like plants animals and forces of nature to which the human traits are attributed, whereas parable is a story intended for instruction and dissemination of information. Didacticism plays major role in parable. The New Testament presents the stories of Jesus Christ.

A fabulist is a person who writes fables. Fable is one of the well-known ingredients of the folkloristic traditions. It is widespread almost all the oral literature of the human kind and has the glimpse of fables. Fables occupy the major space in the folk literature of all the primitive community. Not a single culture or the nationality is found which is devoid of the the fables. One of the well-known fables which are largely popular in majority of world languages of this planet are Aesop's fables which are also called as Aesopic fables. These fables are ascribed to the ancient Aesop whose lifespan is between 620 to 564 BCE. He was a well-known and popular Greek fable writer and is gifted with the art of amazing to storytelling from which the listener or the reader never allows himself or herself away while going through the fables. Aesop has number of fables which are now called as Aesop's fables. He is an effective storyteller of whom there is no unanimity among the researchers about his time and even authorship. The original stories have been lost but the fables largely believed to be of Aesop's were collected by the researchers.

The art of storytelling has a long past and it has its presence in every culture irrespective of language, nationality and region.. Most of the Aesop's tales are marked with the presence of animal characters which can speak and behave like human beings. They are attributed human traits. The great Greek masters like Aristotle, the well-known historians like Herodotus and Plutarch also mention Aesop in their works. They authenticate the existence of the fabulous fabulist Aesop and his works. His existence can be attested through *The Aesop Romance* which is a fictional biography of the fabulist Aesop, probably it has been written in second century. This work gives detailed description of the physical traits of the Aesop who was a Greek slave and comparatively unattractive and hideous. In spite of his negative physical features he possesses an excellent art of storytelling which ultimately helps in winning the favor of the then monarch who by getting impressed with the slave's stories frees him from the lifetime bondage and promotes him as a counselor. The biography is in the form of episodes which imitates and borrows romantic traditions of the other contemporary cultures.

Aristotle, one of the great Greek philosophers ascribes Aesop's birth to the year 620 BCE in Mesembria which was one of the prominent places in ancient times. Homer's Iliad also mentions the place Thrace of which the people have fought in the Trojan War. There is no unanimity regarding the birthplace of Aesop.. As Aristotle denotes Mesembria as birthplace of Aesop, another well-known writer of the ancient Roman civilization called Phaedrus who is known as Gaius Julius Phaedrus or Phaedrus says that Aesop was born in Phaedrus. Phaedrus belongs to the first century AD whose time is considered as 15 BC to 15 AD. He is also a notable fabulist and whose medium of composition of fables is Latin. After his death he went into oblivion as none of his works survived until The Renaissance period he was research by the scholars and restored him to his prominent literary position. Most of the sources of his works are *Codex Pithoeanus* which is known by the ownership of this work by Pierrie Pithou. This book has 94 fables which are believed to be written by Phaedrus. These fables are classified into four books and titled as *Liber Monstrorum*.

Conclusion:

In this way Aesop's tales play a major role in the folkloristic traditions, they not only follow all the major characteristics of the literary genre fable but also provide the roadmap for the future development of the fables in the modern literary traditions of all the languages of the human race irrespective of culture, race and nationalities.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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