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## Literary Tropes in The Folktales of Bengal

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**Abstract**

Bengal (or the Bengal Presidency, which comprises modern-day Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal) is renowned for its folk writing. It has a plethora of folktales, ballads, melodies, proverbs, and riddles. The joys and tragedies, smiles and tears of everyday life, as well as many ancient stories, fables, fairy, and moral tales, have found their way into various branches of our folk-literature. Bengal's folktales are natural riches of the land. The heartaches of its people, their hopes and frustrations, their faith and disillusionment have all contributed to the creation of this region's folktales. The eastern half of old Bengal (the Bengal Presidency), now free and independent Bangladesh, is the richest region of Bengal in terms of folk literature. Folktales from a certain territory disclose numerous traditions, beliefs, usages, rituals, rites, and myths from that region, but as a genre they have a universality, with many points of constant contact and similarity with folktales from all over the world.In this paper, I am interested in literary tropes in folktales, which are classic prose narratives passed down from generation to generation largely through word of mouth, but also occasionally through writing. The customary nature of the stories is what matters here.

## Introduction

Bengali folklore is a vibrant and thriving area of Bengali literature. Folklore is a collection of legends, proverbs, myths, riddles, superstitions, and rites passed down from generation to generation. Bangladeshi folklore can reveal a lot about the country's social and ethnic history, as well as people's views, values, customs, and logic. Despite being created by illiterate communities and passed down verbally from generation to generation, Bengali folk literature has survived.

When ships from Portugal, France, and England docked in the harbours of Bengal, leaving not only their belongings but also their heritage behind. Each

nationality has left a physical as well as a cultural footprint, which has been merged to form the foundation of present society. Folklore is primarily oral; thus, it frequently requires memory skills with language and stylistic patterns. Many countries have had a significant influence on Bangladeshi folklore. As a result, Bangladeshi folklore has various characteristics that can be explained in part by historical circumstances.

The word English Folk Tales refers to almost all kinds of folk tales. In Bengali it is called *Lokkotha*  or *Upokotha* but in English, it is known as fairy tales. Fairy tales are based on the story of fairy's attributes like beauty, magic, highness, and so on. But fairy may not remain in all fairy tales. Demonstration of heroism by the prince or emperor by going to the unfamiliar city of *Rakkhosh-Khokkosh* impossible accomplishments, rescue and marriage of princesses or princesses of different countries, magical powers, divine help, etc. are some of the features.

Folklore is destined to live on in the womb of time. There has been much research into folk language and folklore in other languages. Bengali folklore is an established and flourishing branch of Bengali literature. Even though numerous branches of Bengali language have been studied, it is thought that little work has been done on Bengali folklore. Although there has been work on folk literature and folk stories in a variety of languages, it is unlikely to be found in Bengali.

## History Of the Folktales of Bengal

Folktales from a specific region reveal many customs, beliefs, usages, rituals, and myths from that region, but as a genre they have a universal quality and many points of contact and similarity with folktales from all over the world. This universality is evident even in the matter of form. Throughout history, the oral narrative has taken on various structural forms, including the hero tale, the explanatory legend, the animal anecdote, and the joke. And, of course, there is a great deal of content similarity among the various peoples of the world. The story types and narrative motifs can be found all over the world in the most perplexing ways.

The main characters in Bengali folktales are humans, typically Kings and Queens, Princes and the sons of Prime Ministers and Police Chiefs, and at times common people such as farmers, fisherman, and woodcutters, although they are not the only ones. Several of our folktales contain animals, particularly the tiger, fox, and snake. In addition to conventional animals, we frequently have mythical creatures, such as the winged horse  and the imaginary bird-couple, *Bengama-Bengamee* also called *Behangama-Behangam* which comes from the word, meaning Bird. Characters such as unhappy ducks, starving crows, chatty *Tuntuni* birds, foolish tigers, and animals and birds that express themselves like humans are common in Bengali folktales. It represents the hamlet's ingenuity and innovation. The story of the poor crow who plunged into the fire to make a sparrow for his companion laments socioeconomic class inequities. The moral of the story is to be content with what you have. These stories are true not because they happened, but because they frequently include truth or wisdom.

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Bengal's folktales are natural riches of the land. With the local indigenous influences passed down through generations, various influences imbibed from Muslim tales and legends brought over from Arabia, Morocco, Turkey, Iran, and other Islamic countries became mixed over time. As Bengal was conquered by Muslims in the early 13th century, the Muslim influence became clear in many aspects of daily life. Arabic and Persian legends made their way into Bengal, where they became inextricably mixed with local tales in many cases, enriching local folklore with a distinct flavour of their own. While there are many folktales that reflect the ways of life and culture of the Muslim people, there are also many that present a mixed picture of the lives of various communities in a free and unrestricted manner. In fact, the latter type of story is more common. There is a reason for this. The tales from Arabia, Iran, and Turkey blended intimately with the air, water, and earth of Bengal, but because many of these tales were of a greater creative level, they had a significant influence on the Bengali people. Many of these tales were intrinsically of a higher creative order, they had a huge influence on the direction of the particularly local tales and helped change and modify the character.

**Literary Tropes in The Folktales of Bengal**

The eastern half of old Bangladesh (now free and independent Bangladesh) is Bengal's richest region in terms of folk literature. Folktales from Bengal is sometimes informative. They have inherent worth all by themselves. Reading such tales provides true joy to people of all ages, classes, and creeds.

Folktales are broad and diversified in certain ways: there are conventional legends and fairy tales, animal fables, and depictions of everyday human life and society. Whilst these stories generally belong to the fantasy and romantic realms, they are not entirely free of transient images of contemporary life and culture. Several of these stories bestow birds, beasts, trees, and plants with human characteristics; here, nature, civilization, and fantasy are all blended to create something delightful, both particular and universal.

There are multitude of folktales distributed throughout Bengal. There is currently no thorough and systematic motif index for folktales. Nonetheless, several attempts have been made to establish the type and motif of Bengali folktales. Some ideas about the themes of these stories may be-

Death of a mother in childhood or infancy.
Second marriage by the father.
Cruel behaviour of the step-mother.
Miraculous birth.
The childless father.
Faith in magic.
Miraculous deeds.
Ogre or Giant.
Pledge or Oath.
Punishment of the wicked.

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Speech in the mouth of birds and beasts.
Curse of the savant.
Rebirth and Reincarnation.
Imaginary birds like *Bengama-Bengamee* (ব্যাঙ্গমা-ব্যাঙ্গমী).
Mythical animals like the winged horse (পক্ষীরাজ ঘোড়া).
Wandering all over the world.
Hero: Common Man.
Hero: Prince/Princess.

The literary motifs not only provide a window into Bengal's cultural history, but also aid in the transmission of significant social and moral values. The use of animals as anthropomorphic characters is a prevalent literary theme in Bengali folktales. Animals such as tigers, monkeys, and snakes are frequently endowed with human-like characteristics such as intelligence, cunning, and even emotions. These anthropomorphic animals are frequently used to express significant moral teachings, such as the dangers of greed and the value of kindness. In the folktale *The Tiger and the Brahmin* for example, a tiger traps a brahmin into thinking he is going to eat him, but eventually releases him after the brahmin convinces the tiger that he is too bony to eat. The story uses the tiger's cunning to show the dangers of being overly trusting, and it warns readers to be aware of individuals with ulterior motivations.

The usage of magical elements is another literary cliché found in Bengali folktales. These magical elements can be enchanted things like lamps or carpets, or magical creatures like genies or witches. These elements are frequently used to assist the protagonist in overcoming challenges and achieving their goals. In the folktale *Aladdin and the Magic Lam* for example, a poor kid named Aladdin discovers a magical lamp containing a genie who can grant him wishes. Aladdin utilises the genie's abilities to become wealthy and powerful, but he soon realises that his deeds have repercussions. The story employs the supernatural element of the genie to illustrate the evils of greed and to advise readers to be cautious about what they ask for.

The usage of trickster figures is a third prominent literary theme in Bengali folktales. These tricksters are frequently portrayed as cunning and crafty, using their wits to outwit more powerful individuals. These tricksters frequently represent significant cultural characteristics like creativity and resourcefulness. In the folktale *The Cunning Fox* for example, a fox outwits a bunch of farmers who have been mistreating him by deceiving them into feeding him. The story emphasises the necessity of utilising one's wits to overcome difficulties, and it encourages readers to be innovative and inventive in their problem-solving.

In many folktales, characters effortlessly overcome various social barriers that ordinary people in real life could find incredibly difficult to cross, if not completely impossible. Man's imagination has no limits or constraints; it is free and unrestricted. We see the same quality of endless freedom and uncontrolled ease in

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folktales, which are the outcome of that unconstrained and creative imagination. Class barriers are also broken down in these stories. As a result, the Royal Princess marries the Minister's son, while the Hunter's son marries the noble Zamindar's daughter.

## Conclusion

Folktales from across the world frequently display a mingling of many qualities that may appear unreal or artificial, illogical, or inconsistent when viewed within the constraints of a specific area, people, or time. These characteristics can also be found in contemporary works. Folktales may indicate a non-communal perspective towards life, or they may belong to a time when the outward representations or implications of religious rituals were vague and hazy.

Folktales have a strong connection to nature and natural events. All of nature's powers and manifestations, all its potential, appear to seek expression in folktales; they prefer to be reflected in tales. The primitive man acquired his confidence in magic from his sense of terrorand mystery about nature, and we note that certain common aspects of magic and miracles are virtually always present in all folktales around the world. All of them are descended from primitive human man's ancient belief in magic.

The narrators of the folktales are all people of the soil who are inextricably tied with the unsophisticated life and nature of the places to which they belong, and as a result, the stories have acquired a flavourful redolent with the aroma of rural Bengal. These tales are, within one hand, are made of the very components of rural Bengal, while, on the other hand, they supply secondary resources for researchers in the field of folk-literature all over the world.

Overall, literary motifs in Bengali folktales contribute significantly to the region's cultural history. They give useful lessons for readers of all ages while providing a window into the social and moral norms of Bengali culture. These literary motifs continue to play an essential role in Bengali literary heritage, whether through the usage of anthropomorphic animals, mystical components, or trickster personalities.

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