INDIGENEITY, TALES AND ALTERNATIVES

Revisiting Select Tribal Folktales

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Preface

My interest in folktales must have emerged from the narratives of my grandmother about a talking pumpkin, or , perhaps, an orphan king. Born and brought up in Jalpaiguri—a district that used to have two National forests with diverse indigenous communities inhabiting and taking care of them—I have never felt myself as an 'outsider', for whom the ethnic world is strange, or unknown. Later, after I joined the Southfield (formerly Loreto) college in Darjeeling, I was able to interact with a larger section of tribal people. I am thankful to the University Grants Commission, New Delhi, for sanctioning a major research project which helped me to identify and translate the folktales of the Toto, Rabha, Lepcha and Limbu communities. As a transgressor of 'mainstream' norms, it has been an immense delight for me to go through the fascinating folktales, time and again. Unlike the strictly codified and oppressive 'mainstream', the varied alternatives which I found in these tribal tales have offered me validation to justify my transgressive impulse. I thought of taking the alternatives seriously. I am thankful to the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, for granting me a two-year fellowship for writing this book.

The rise of majoritarianism, resulting in intolerance and subjugation of all that is 'different', makes a non-conformist like me—who, while being located within the 'mainstream', never really belonging *in* it—feel apprehensive. The oppressive statist regime that seems to enter even into the private domain for surveillance and censoring leaves hardly any room for cherishing alternatives. Even the tribal communities are the victims of the state-sponsored neo-colonial impositions. I hope that this endeavour of mine allows me to imagine an increasing intimacy between the 'wretched' of the

'mainstream' and the First Nations where the 'mainstream' non-conformists would choose to tribalise, with touches of indigenous wisdom and ethnic alternatives.

I thank all my colleagues of my college for having supported me in my endeavour. I am indebted to all my friends at IIAS for their suggestions and encouragement. Courteen Hall has served me well for contemplation, discussion and camaraderie. I also thank my publisher for all the cooperation and assistance.

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction to the Select Tribal Folktales

Indigeneity and the Non-indigenous Ally

North Bengal is the umbrella term that people use to refer to the northern part of West Bengal, a province within the Indian state. The six districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Alipurduar, Coochbehar, North Dinajpur, South Dinajpur and Malda constitute the area that is known as North Bengal. The tribal folktales that have been chosen for this study belong to the four tribal communities of North Bengal: Toto, Rabha, Limbu and Lepcha. The indigenous Toto community lives in a rural settlement called Totopara in Alipurduar district. Rabhas or the Koch-Rabhas hail from Coochbehar and Jalpaiguri, while Limbu (who consider themselves as the descendants of the eight Kirati/Kirata, Indo-Mongoloid, chiefs of Nepal who had migrated from Mongolia) and Lepcha (as a misnomer for the 'Rong' community) people reside in Darjeeling district. Rabhas inhabit a wide region in the Brahmaputra valley, besides North Bengal. The Lepchas and Limbus also live in Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and other regions of north-east India. This is an interpretative study of the folktales of the tribal communities residing in North Bengal, it does not deal with the history of migration and settlement of the different tribes of the region, nor does it attempt to draw comparisons between the folklore traditions of the same tribe in neighbouring regions.

My choice of reading these tribal folktales in search of alternatives, as opposed to the stereotyped 'mainstream' perspectives, can be

considered as the search of an interlocutor from 'outside', who is situated in the 'mainstream'. But this interlocutor is a non-conformist / deviant of 'mainstream' prescriptions; therefore, he is trying to adopt strategies to empower the Self by engaging with indigenous alternatives, which might be regarded as transgression of the 'mainstream' by tribal subjects as reflected in their folktales. Positioning as a 'non-indigenous ally' with a 'response-ability' (Venkateswar and Hughes, 2011:246), the contested 'mainstream' rebel can share the subjective struggle with that of the indigenous people against statist homogenising schemes. Tribal societies are not static. There are internal dynamics of tribal societies which are at the threshold of social transformation and the folktales, too, as part of their ongoing revisions through oral performances, hold a promise to be read not only as the reflection of the indigenous past, but also as the past-ness that continues to haunt the present of the communities, making them resist inclusive strategies imposed from above. I am not historicising, nor carrying out a historical analysis of the folktales[1]. Hence, I do not attempt an explanation of the historical and cultural reasons which sanction certain behaviours / ideologies as alternatives to that of the 'mainstream' in one type of tribal society, and forbid it in another. It is a known fact that the tribal communities have their customary laws; transgressing customary laws of a tribal society is a serious offence and severe punishment is often meted out by the traditional courts to transgressors of social customs and taboos. However, the diverse alternatives that are available in these indigenous alter-modernities are beneficial for the transgressor of the 'mainstream' to initiate a dialogic communication and establish a sense of belonging through 'tribalisation'[2] in his / her perusal of finding approval in order to overcome the anguish of otherisation. Moreover, in this study I have also sought to highlight—by focusing on some of the common themes which have emerged out of the folktales of these four tribal communities of North Bengal—the fact that despite the internal differences among them, there are certain commonalties in the indigenous knowledge or the ethno-philosophical, alternative-worldviews of the First Nations.

The word 'tribal' is a controversial one. Some of the anthropologists prefer the terms *adivasis* or *janajatis*, in order to overcome the

colonial association of the term 'tribal'. What these critics often fail to understand is that, for these indigenous people of North Bengal, along with other tribal communities of Northeast India, with no Sanskrit genealogy, both these vernacular terms symbolise a neo-colonial, state-centric Hindi hegemony while, at the same time, paving way for the Hindi-*Hindutva* term, '*vanvasi,*' to be imposed on tribal people who have traditionally never been part of the majoritarian 'mainstream' religion. For these tribal people, *adivasi* connotes a sense of remoteness and primitivism, unlike the modernity of the term tribal. Even the proponents of the term *adivasi* have recognised the limitation about the acceptability of the term among the tribal communities across India, and also the connotative vantage of the term tribal to signify *adivasi* or *janajati*.[3]

Method and Structure

Initially I wondered if I was really eligible to enter the domain of folklore analysis, being a student of literature with no training in sociology or ethnography. But the words of Allan Dundes were encouraging as well as reassuring. He had essentially rubbished the false binary created by folklorists between studying folklore in culture, and folklore in literature. Dundes believes that the methodology of studying folklore in both literature and culture is the same (Dundes, 1990:51). Fredric Jameson's definition of narrative as a "socially symbolic act" creates the possibility of treating literature as a dramatic manifestation of the complex intertwining of the historical, political and the psychological. He remarks, that "the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions" (Jameson, 1981:79).

The study of folklore includes identification / collection and interpretation. I have collected these folktales and translated them with the help of others. One might as well ask: how do we know that these are indigenous tales? For the sake of differentiating fake-tales from the folktales, I have only concentrated on those folktales which resemble the previously published folktales in translation. Moreover,

this endeavour is all about interpretation and not identification of folktales. Hence, I did not find it necessary to elaborate on the process of identification, such as information about the tellers and their audience, the time and mode of telling and so on. Also, this book is not about what the tribal people think about their tales, because I feel that they are competent enough to do on their own and do not need someone like me to play the proxy. This is all about my response as the censored *Other* of the 'mainstream', situated in the 'mainstream', trying to find alternatives, for a sense of intimacy and meaningful alliance, through these folktales. Treating folktales as literature, and inspired by the literary turn provided by Hayden White to history, the major focus here is content analysis under a varied, yet interconnected, lens like psychoanalysis, eco-criticism and gender theories, with an aim of reading these folktales 'globalectically'. According to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, reading 'globalectically' "involves declassifying theory in the sense of making it accessible—a tool for clarifying interactive connections and interconnections of social phenomena and their mutual impact in the local and global space, a means of illuminating the internal and the external, the local and the global dynamics of social being. This may also mean the act of reading becoming also a process of self-examination" (Thiong'o, 2012:61).

This book aims to interpret tribal folk literature as a projective system (Bascom, 1965:292). Projection, in psychology, is referred to the tendency of attributing taboo tendencies lying within the self on to another individual or environment (Dundes, 1980:37). This projection can be deconstructed by interpreting symbols used in folktales. Though the connotation of symbols may vary and is not universal, yet, as Dundes observes, "symbol employed in any one given folkloristic (con)text may be related to a general system of symbols" (Dundes, 1980:37). My focus here is on symbols and customs of the four tribal communities reflected in their folktales, which are relevant from the perspective of providing 'alternatives' to the 'mainstream' non-conformists. Thus, interpreting the projection in folktales must take into cognisance the customs which lie cloaked in symbolic and fantastic dimensions of these folktales, for which the popular method of structural analysis is of no help. Dundes

has found semiotics an overused, but inadequate, tool for studying folklore. He writes,

> In short, however useful semiotics may be for honing tools of description and classification in folkloristics, it has yet to prove itself in the study of the meaning of folklore (Dundes, 1980:35).

I have opted for combining anthropological,and psychoanalytical interpretation with ethno-poetics. Ethno-poetic interpretation helps in exploring the literary devices that even the non-literary societies use in their art. Psychoanalytic interpretation would help to deconstruct the elements of fantasy, symbolic-metaphorical expressions in terms of mainly Freudian or Jungian ideas to reveal the ambivalent take on the queer emotions and customs resulting from transitory confrontations. The anthropological interpretation of the folktales would direct the ethno-poetic and psychoanalytic interpretations towards understanding "family tensions, unconscious wishes, and interpersonal dynamics that often stand in direct contrast to observed behaviour" (Dundes, 2005:264). Thereby they provide clues about the inner mindscape of alter-mainstream indigeneity, despite the pressures of 'governmentality', to conform, through transformation.

The common accusation against psychological analysis of tribal folktales is that it is reductionist. But reductionism, as the hallmark of most natural sciences, cannot be estimated as good or bad. Without trying to understand the merit of the proposed psychological pattern that would contribute to fresh revelations, it is unfair to dismiss this approach as reductionist. For, even the non-psychoanalyst researchers of folktales have ended up producing tale-types, motif numbers or structural slots which are equally reductionistic (Dundes, 1897: x).

The most crucial question is whether the use of Western theories is valid in understanding the indigenous scenario. Study of indigeneity, or nativism, cannot but exist within an interdisciplinary mode. Nativism today is a deconstruction of the so-called 'Aboriginalism'[4] that had resulted in distancing the first nation from the rest, and for such deconstruction of 'Aboriginalism', one needs to link the study of indigeneity with Western perspectives, often to challenge them, rather than maintaining the segregation which might produce "an oddly parochial formulation of the discipline" of Tribal /

Indigenous Study (Andersen, 2009:81). The Indigenous study must be founded upon the consciousness of "Indigenous *density* (rather than difference)" (Andersen, 2009:82). As Robin Kelley claims, that once the wrapping of the commodified indigeneity in the difference in "the surface, the skin, the viscosity, the mask" is unpacked, only then the indigenous people can discover in the 'density' of their indigenous being, "a more profound complexity, greater clarity and the potential for emancipation" (Kelley, 2005:10). In order to counter the hegemonic representations of indigeneity which marginalise the density of the indigenous people, Indigenous studies, following the arguments of Moreton-Robinson, must use all the available epistemologies, and not those alone which distance Western perspectives from the study of indigeneity. Maintaining a conscious gap between Western epistemologies and Indigeneity, which is apparently protective, is actually grounded on a notion of inferiority.

> Buried within this assumption is the idea that we are incapable of change or developing strategies for survival that enable us to extend on the multiple subject positions we have created through kinship and community politics (Moreton-Robinson, 2004:87).

What is important today in the study of indigeneity is the recognition of the 'Cultural Interface' as "the intersection of the Western and Indigenous domains" (Nakata, 2002:285). As Jace Weaver has rightly observed, "In dealing with the totalizing systems that we know as Native cultures, each view from traditional disciplines is limited and partial" (Weaver, 2007:235). Therefore, an interdisciplinarity of all western as well as endogenous methodologies and epistemologies need to be used in indigenous studies, in order to appreciate the indigenous density, rather than difference.

Western theories are often seen as barriers for the de-colonising efforts of the indigenous scholars. However, it must be understood that *decoloniality* actually implies a resurrection of 'decolonial knowledge-making', which is possible only when the Indigenous Studies "reasserts and draws in concepts and meanings from Indigenous knowledge and systems of thought and experience of the colonial" (Nakata, et al, 2012:124). Works have already been done

where the emancipatory component of Western Critical theory has been used for indigenous studies (e.g., Freire, 1972; Horkheimer, 1993). Thus, rather than Mignolo's call for 'epistemic disobedience' (Mignolo, 2009) of delinking indigenous studies from Western epistemologies, I repose more faith in Wiredu's recommendation for an 'epistemic awakening' (Wiredu, 1995) as a way to link the lens of Western theory with the perspectives emerging out of the lived indigenous experiences. Ultimately, it is the 'middle voice'[5] that helps any researcher / reader to be aware of the limitation of any individual understanding with the acceptance that there always remains a middle space between one's limited way of comprehension and the other possible alter-ways of perception.

The book is divided into five main chapters. The tribal men have most of the time been imagined by the 'mainstream' as the hypermasculine hunters with a macho 'ethic of daring' that celebrates violence, power, domination, consumption and competition with least concern for an 'ethic of caring' for the ecology. In Chapter two, *Eco(alternative)masculinity and the Indigenous Man*, there is an attempt to illustrate how, through their intimacies with the non-human elements of nature, along with a preference for caring and nurturing, the heroes of some of the tribal folktales help to formulate a non-'mainstream' alternative eco-masculinity, where the indigenous male protagonists appear to borrow the markers of feminisation as a counter-normative mode of resisting the patriarchal masculinity portrayed in the 'mainstream'.

In Chapter 3, *Martial to the Musical: De-stereotyping the Skills*, the polemic of nature / culture is reconsidered. Seen from the stereotyped binary of savage vs. civilised, tribal people always get labelled as the martial figures of corporeal skills and, therefore, without any other delicate endowments. The folktales of the indigenous communities, however, prove that more than the physical, it is the musical skill which facilitates means of enablement for tribal men. By associating ethno-music with the tribal male, this chapter shows how these folktales seem to combat with the stereotypical notion—of tribalism being merely martial—besides challenging the stereotyping of music which is often labelled as an effeminate / emasculated art.

Chapter four, *The Lesser One, the Trickster: Subverting the*

'Mainstream' Ethos, is a search for alternative indigenous knowledge and ethno-philosophy that one obtains from tribal folktales through their alternative use of the younger / 'lesser' ones as trickster, confronting the 'mainstream' notion of the character. It shows how certain folktales of the tribal communities provide alternatives, which violate the dominant ethos in two major ways: firstly, giving importance to the younger / 'lesser' one, as against the predominant obsession with the eldest, among the royals and; secondly, giving an alternative reading of the 'trickster' as a model for emancipation through which indigeneity seems to subvert all the attempts to impose majoritarian values and statist cultural standards on them. This reading seeks to validate the point that the notion of 'evil' in the form of a 'criminal trickster' is a rather motivated construct of the 'mainstream', in order to ostracise the non-conformists who are situated in, and rebelling against it.

In Chapter five, *Memories of Transgenderism*, the Toto folktales with transgressive agencies illustrate the process of subtle suppression of the undocumented time and the-then prevalent uncensored desire as non-historical by the present-day governmentality, since the criterion of being included as a historical society is usually fulfilled at the cost of the suppression of the archaic. Toto society, with the vigilant statist regimes struggling to link tribal indigeneity with the complex maze of desire, market and welfare / well-being that constitutes the 'mainstream', is compelled to narrow down its traditional perception of sexuality as an unbounded potential of human possibility towards the prescriptive / normatised image of human functioning. Even then, a psychological reading of fantasy and projection in the Toto folk literature, through a transgender lens, would reveal the tension resulting from distinctive survival of 'objects-in-thought' and 'objects-in-reality', which becomes the essential ground for the transgender counter-normative impulse.

The chapter, *Alternatives for 'Mainstream' Nonconformists* concludes with the hope that the 'mainstream' non-conformists who are similarly suffering from the common internal colonialism of the state, like that of the indigenous people of the First Nations—who are generally viewed as the Other of the 'mainstream'—can possibly get a more liberal space for a dialogic relationship in a mode of

'plural culturality' with the tribal communities. The indigenous ethos of alternatives is not opposed to the atypical ideologies of the 'mainstream' rebel.

Chapter seven contains my translated version of select tribal folktales. I strongly feel that these tribal folktales, clearly an important part of indigenous oral tradition, are worth reading and sharing.

NOTES

1. As a critique of historicism, Benjamin feels that the method of guaranteeing objectivity turns out to be an interpretation founded on "absolutism of method" and missing out the "richness of layers" in history (Benjamin, 1972:VI, 95). Entrapped by an 'interest in its historical object' (Benjamin, 1972:V, 494), historicity results in legitimating a constancy of oppression and a political history of power. Reviving a 'memory of the nameless' is important over the documentation of the remembered ones, because heritage is indebted "not only to the efforts of the great minds and talents who created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries. For Benjamin, thus, history has mostly been historicised by those who have inherited the mode of oppression.
2. 'Tribalisation', as conceptualised by S.L. Kalia, suggests the practice of adopting aspects of tribal living by the people of non-tribal origin (Kalia, 1959).
3. "The Adivasi concept has gained widespread resonance and currency in contemporary India, but it has yet to supercede the concept of the 'tribe' in national arenas" (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011:7).
4. Bain Attwood, 'Introduction' in Attwood and Arnold (1992: i–xvi).
5. Middle voice', according to Hayden White, indicates a "posture that is neither subjective not objective, neither that of social scientist with a methodology and a theory nor that of the poet intent upon expressing a personal reaction" (White, 1999:37).

CHAPTER TWO

Eco(alternative) Masculinity and the Indigenous Man

> Reality is not the world as it is perceived directly by the senses; reality is the world as it is perceived by the *mind* through the medium of the senses. Thus reality in nature is not just what we see, but what we have *learned* to see. —Nelson, 1983: 239).

Masculinity and the Environment

Eco-feminism, under its intersectional lens, studies how women, the non-human species and and the earth get victimised, interchangeably, by the exploitative mechanisms of the hegemonic 'mainstream' masculinity through a schematic obliteration of the feminine principle. Eco-feminism exposes how violence against women gets interconnected with the cruelty against all other elements of nature, which are seen as the inferior / weak, and thereby feminine, *other* of the dominant / powerful patriarchal masculinity. It is an inter-subjective attempt to provide resistance against the "hierarchy in which men have power over women, (feminised) men, *and* (feminised) animals" (Adams, 1995: 80) along with all other (feminised) elements of the environment. However, eco-feminism, in its associating of ecology exclusively with the feminine, as a detour, rests the onus of environmental care on the women's struggle, as an added responsibility.[1] Paul Pule considers a possible 'ecological masculinism', aimed at contributing to "a shift away from hegemonic masculinities and towards a long-term ecological

sustainability" (Gaard, 2014: 232) by substituting a macho 'ethic of daring' that celebrates violence, power, domination, consumption and competition with a concerned 'ethic of caring' for the environs through inculcating the ethos of compassion, love, empathy and support which have been conventionally projected as non-masculine. As opposed to the dominant androcentric masculinity, an alternative eco-friendly masculinity, that takes care and is concerned about the issues related to gender, societal power equations and ecology, can be induced on the basis of a performative androgyny by "simply flowing between the opposites" (Singer, 1977: 332) of the compartmentalised gender categories. In a stereotyped manner, tribal communities have always been considered as hunting population who can never be tender with nature. However, through their intimacies with the non-human elements of nature along with a preference for caring and nurturing, the heroes of some of the tribal folktales help to formulate an alternative eco-masculinity, where the indigenous male protagonists appear to borrow the markers of feminisation[2] as a counter-normative mode of resisting the patriarchal masculinity.

Deconstructing the Folktales

The Brothers (A Toto Folktale)

An old woman had two sons: Tendu, the elder one, who was rich, and Tawaye the younger, who was poor. Tendu called Tawaye to help him in transplanting the paddy plants. Tawaye went along with his wife and laboured the entire day, at the end of which Tendu offered food to all others who worked, except his brother and sister-in-law. Tawaye was very offended by the attitude of Tendu and thought of taking revenge. At night he went to Tendu's field and started uprooting the paddy plants with the motive of destroying the transplantation. The moment he uprooted a plant, a voice asked him: "Who are you and why are you damaging the plants?" Tawaye explained the reason for his grievance and asked for the identity of the voice, preventing him from his strategic revenge. The voice revealed itself to be that of Tendu's fortune. Tawaye wondered if there was a fortune existing for him, too. The voice suggested him to walk for three days non-stop

in order to meet his fortune. Accordingly, Tawaye started his walk in search for the fortune. The first day, as he approached a riverside, he chanced upon a fish, unable to sink or float. Being informed by Tawaye about his voyage to meet his fortune, the fish appealed to him: "You can see that I can neither float nor sink. Will you ask your fortune the reason behind my misery?" Assuring the fish that he would do so, he resumed his journey. The following day, by the evening, he came across an orange tree and decided to sleep the night underneath. Suddenly, the tree started communicating to him. Having learnt from Tawaye of his voyage for his fortune, the tree said: "The demons eat away all my fruits every year but no human beings touch my fruits. Please try to figure out the reason from your fortune." Tawaye promised that he would and left for his pursuit, the next morning. It was the third day, and after the day-long walk, he reached the house of a king, where he was informed of the king's unsuccessful endeavour to complete the construction of his house since years. Learning of Tawaye's quest, the king urged him: "Can you please ask your fortune, why can't I complete the house?" Tawaye said he would definitely do that, and resumed walking on, till he encountered an old man that evening. Learning that the traveller was none other than Tawaye, the old man introduced himself as Tawaye's fortune. Tawaye then began to interrogate him: "Why was my elder brother so rude to me? Why can't the fish, float or sink? Why don't people eat the oranges instead of the demons? Why is the king failing to complete his house?"

The old man replied: "Your elder brother, being a wicked man, has burnt down your house. When you go back, add a bit of ash with water and sprinkle it on the debris. A new house will appear before you, which will be even better than the previous one. In case of the fish, there is a diamond in its belly that needs to be cut so that the diamond is taken out and thereafter it can float and sink once again. Plenty of gold is stored at the root of the orange tree, which should be dug out for its fruits to be eaten up by man. And the king can only succeed in completing his house, if you get married to his daughter."

Having got the answers to all his questions, Tawaye took leave of the old man the next morning. On his way back home, he met the king and told him the remedy, as suggested by his fortune.

Accordingly, the king got him married to his daughter and at once the house became fully constructed. Staying there for a few days, he started travelling back home with his new wife. He met the tree, and said what he had learnt from the old man. The tree begged him to dig out the gold and carry it away. From that day, the taste of the oranges was restored for people to consume them. It was the turn for the fish next to be relieved of the diamond. Soon as Tawaye took the diamond out of its belly, the fish regained his power to sink and float. Finally, Tawaye reached his house, which had been burnt down. His first wife was sheltered in a neighbour's house. Following the old man's instructions, he sprinkled water mixed with the ashes on the ruin and a new house got erected. Tawaye lived with both the wives, happily ever after.

The Toto *Eco-man*

The story begins with the taming of the traditionally masculine male for further transformation, whose initial mode of revenge against another male is rather detrimental to natural world.[3] The moment of Tawaye stopping short of uprooting the paddy plant is the moment of a shift from the 'ethic of daring' to the 'ethic of caring', which also makes provision for Tawaye to begin his journey which ultimately permits him to play suitably, the wanderer hero in the folktale.[4]

Bringing the unknown voice to play a major role of persuading Tawaye in such a crucial moment further facilitates in enhancing the character of Tawaye as an eco-man through what Buell calls, the 'aesthetics of relinquishment'.[5] Rejecting the narcissistic mode of phallic masculinity, Tawaye's 'aesthetics of relinquishment'—as manifested through his role as one who is trying to understand his own immanent nature, as destined by Nature, through his learning to empathise with the natural—stimulates him "to make one wonder, for instance, whether the self is as interesting an object of study as we supposed, whether the world would become more interesting if we could see it from the perspective of a wolf, a sparrow, a river, a stone" (Buell, 1995:179). Validating Butler's objection against the assumption that "the feminine belongs to women, an assumption surely suspect" (Butler, 1990: 123), Tawaye begins to

develop concern, empathy and compassion for all other elements of the natural world: the fish, the tree and the fellow suffering human being.

Tawaye's non-human intimacy, moreover, also highlights the fact that gender-contrarianism, far from being a hindrance for a male to continue to be a heterosexual, would rather stimulate him to practise an alternative "male-affirmative" that makes him eco-sensitive by assisting him in de-centering patriarchal ideologies. "Male-affirmative" does not compel men to abandon their masculinity, but altering it with "a progressive male standpoint"[6], it "decidedly did not mean affirming traditional male authority or behaviours, and it meant affirming in some sense the actual or potential humanity and humaneness of persons of the male sex" (Brod,1998:198). Tawaye thus starts performing the male ethnic environmentalist who would also become a model for an ideal "male-affirmative" eco-man.[7]

Tawaye's intersecting of his human anguish with the ecological mishap, as represented by the suffering fish and the unhappy tree, is the outcome of his sharing of eco-feminist concerns and thereby, "demonstrate incisively that feminist philosophy is no longer by, about, or even for women only", as the Blurb of the book, *Rethinking Masculinity,* notes. Through Tawaye's sensitivity of a green tribal man who can listen to the grievances of nature by offering a human-like 'personhood'[8] to the elements of nature, the Toto folktale also has underscored a deep rooted appeal for justice[9] as opposed to the conventional image of man being central to most of the ecological damages. Tawaye's invoking of 'biophilia'[10]—through his questions, as to, "Why was my elder brother so rude to me? Why can't the fish, float or sink? Why don't people eat the oranges instead of the demons? Why is the king failing to complete his house?"—itself is a 'motherly' concern about the emotional health of human beings which is dependent on "particularly the presence of other living things" as against "the threat of an emotionally impoverished future" (Milton, 2002: 61).

The Toto image of Tawaye as a green man might also trigger an apt critique of the 'mainstream' discourse where "gender studies in ecocriticism have been dominated by attention to feminism, [while] men's studies has been blind in seeing nature" (Allister, 2004: 8-9).

Tawaye's assurances, which he has given, and also fulfilled, to the fish and the tree might as well assist, echoing the proponents of 'deep ecology'[11], in sensitising the 'mainstream' man to become a bit more intimate to landscape as opposed to man's touristic consumption of ecology by regarding it as 'scenery'.

Since dependency / being dependent is considered to be feminine / emasculated as opposed to the self-made image of the masculine, the Toto tribal tale through the portrayal of a tribal hero who manages to enhance his fortune that has also resulted in enhancing the happiness of his poor tribal wife only by the realisation that his happiness is dependent on his serving of the human and non-human aspects of nature, seems to argue that the patriarchal masculinity is after all too tenuous to be sought after. Rather, it is worthy to strive towards the becoming of an eco-man who acknowledges his dependency, unlike the 'solo' self-sufficient man, on friendship—both human and non-human—for "aid, affect and affirmation" (Arber and Ginn, 1991:165). Tawaye's happy future specifies about the importance of the favourable impact of the 'tender' (and thereby, often viewed as 'womanly') intimate and emotional bond with friends in the life of man who inculcates alternative masculinity in his early life, by his interdependence on both other human being and non-human agents of nature.[12]

The fact that Tawaye has been listening to the utterances of the fish and the tree makes it clear that how it is crucial to speak for nature on the basis of a 'conversation' with nature rather than just for the sake of nature, depending on the mode of 'discovery'.[13] The folktale's motif of enhancing interaction between nature and man by inter-acting the protagonist as a caring, helpless male (almost the way a female is dependent on a man, Tawaye was dependent on the goodwill of his brother) can be treated as an indigenous counter-culture of fostering a tribal eco-man who, on the basis of his consciousness about his reciprocal relationship with nature, co-intentionally links himself with the 'feminine' Other of the hegemonic masculinity along with nature, the Other of our consumer / capitalist culture, through "the post-conventional concerns with encounter, with relationship and becoming-in-the-world-with-others" (Price & Shildrick, 2002: 62).

Creation of liquor (A Rabha Folktale)

Many years ago, in seven Rabha villages, there lived seven headmen. One day, a sage appeared in the dream of all those seven headmen. The sage said, "Tomorrow morning I shall place a gift under the Shimul tree for your betterment." The next morning, the seven heads of the seven villages assembled under the Shimul tree to find seven elephants standing in a queue. The Rabha headmen were confused, because they could not see the purpose of those elephants. Just then, a Tibetan man passed by. Seeing the elephants, he offered them seventy rupees and bought those seven elephants. Now that he owned the elephants, he said, "I will make them carry logs from the forest and throw them on the river in order to make boats and sell them to the people of the flooded land to make profit in lakhs." The Rabha headmen looked at one another in disgrace. Dividing seventy rupees among themselves they returned to their respective villages. At night, the sage appeared in their dream again. Rebuking them for their stupidity, he said, "Tomorrow morning I will place another gift for your benefit under the Shimul tree." Next morning the seven Rabha headmen rushed to the spot and found seven horses, standing in a row. They were in utter bewilderment, since they could not make out how those horses were advantageous for them. Just then, a Bengali man walked past. He took a look at those seven horses and offered a deal of thirty-five rupees for all of them. The Rabha men gladly took the money in exchange for the gift sent by the sage. As he was leaving, the Bengali man muttered, "I will soon become rich by earning through seven horse-carts." That night, again, the sage appeared in their dreams and shouted at them in fury. And he told them, "Tomorrow I will send money for you morons. Come under the Shimul tree early in the morning." The seven Rabha headmen leisurely reached the place to notice that the sage had already started showering money for them. The seven headmen had carried with them only small handbags. They were very happy to accumulate whatsoever little amount they could put into the small handbags. A Marwari man was walking past the Shimul tree. Seeing the showering of cash, he started putting the notes in his bag and shirt-pockets. Since there was a lot more lying on the ground, he wrapped himself

with banana leaves and, removing his dhoti, he packed all the money into it. That night, although the sage appeared in the dream of the seven Rabha headmen, he didn't seem to be agitated. Rather, he said pleasantly, "I have tried through all means. But there is nothing I can do anymore for your development. I will now try to make you happy. Tomorrow come, gather under the tree and you will be happy to see my gift." Next morning, the seven Rabha headmen found a huge earthen pot under the Shimul tree. Removing the lid, they found it to be filled with some sweet-smelling liquid. They were so intoxicated by the aroma that they could not resist the temptation of tasting it. The more they drank, the more they desired and finally they fell asleep. Waking up, they found a profound sense of tranquillity in their mind. The seven headmen called all their villagers and they enjoyed the drink. Then all of them thanked the sage and asked him to teach them the process of making the delicious drink. From then onwards, the Rabha people learnt the procedure of making their unique liquor, which they call *chwako* or *chwakwat*.

Beyond the Macho Male

Underneath the seeming sarcasm in *Creation of Liquor*, there is an eco-critical outlook to come out with an alternative notion of development and masculinity. The tribal eco(alternative)masculinity of a Rabha man has been affirmed through negation. For a Tibetan man, development lies in commanding elephants to carry logs in order to assure monetary gain. For a Bengali man, monetary profit is central to his notion of progress, which he tries to attain by controlling horses as a cart puller. A 'mainstream' Marwari man's idea of advancement is proportional to his surplus capital stock. Unlike all of them, the seven Rabha headmen lose all three chances of material affluence only to be compensated by mental bliss. The seven Rabha men, thus, perform an eco-masculinity by rejecting the conventional virile preference for command, control or capital with a feminine deciding on rest, indulgence and enjoyment. This unstabilising of sex / gender roles is the first step towards a gender based identity politics for equality.[14] This Rabha tale of eco-men, with no sense of exploiting the animals and moreover, as successful procurers of the

drink which is obtained from the tribal eco-ethnoscape, can be seen as a resistance offered by the tribal modernity of tradition against the gendered globalised modernity which is essentially masculine in its overemphasis on reasonableness, competitive individuality and progress at the cost of the feminine principles of passion, social bonds and continuity of the 'tradition'.[15] The Rabha headmen further deny falling into the snare of conforming to be a 'real' man by simply refuting to enhance the chauvinistic 'power' and 'glory'[16] as a singular profitable individual at the cost of the community at large. The choice of liquor obtained from the herbs is a symbolic preference for a community property that is at once socialist and democratic in its obtainment. These Rabha village heads, contriving the model of a possible "socialist gender" through their antipathy against both capital and gender control, as an antithesis to those who "'possess' gender as a commodity", eventually become not only the "critiques of gender roles, but also socialist critiques of how those gender roles supported capitalism" (Clark, 2007: 19). This 'socialist gender' of the green men is an essential prerequisite for giving rise to 'sexual socialism' (Shively, 1991:258). The Rabha headmen by their rejection of self-centred individualism, through a symbolic refutation of rational/strategic control over the non-human 'other', represent the eco-critical ideal of wellbeing that is based on the inter-connection of human beings as a community along with an intimacy with non-human actors, for a post-human inclusion of the 'earth' —other through a sense of environmental / ecological belonging.

Post-human Intimacy

Humanism by its human-centric approach has given rise to the otherisation of all that is different from the 'Enlightenment' notion of development and progress. Tony Davies has aptly stated, "All Humanisms, until now, have been imperial. They speak of the human in the accents and the interests of a class, a sex, a race, a genome. Their embrace suffocates those whom it does not ignore…It is almost impossible to think of a crime that has not been committed in the name of humanity" (Davies, 1997: 141). As a critique of the universalised humanism[17], there emerged anti-humanism:

"Anti-humanism consists in de-linking the human agent from this universalistic posture, calling him to task, so to speak, on the concrete actions he is enacting. Different and sharper power relations emerge, once this formerly dominant subject is freed from his delusions of grandeur and is no longer allegedly in charge of historical progress" (Braidotti, 2013:23). Anti-humanism has provoked in rethinking about the humanism's schema that had portrayed difference on the mode of binary, like the woman as the sexualised substandard-other of man, or animals / environment as his naturalised inferior-other. Post-humanism is the non-polemical response to anti-humanism which further attempts to provide a sense of equivalence to the notion of recognised differences.[18] In this context, the notion of 'panhumanity' (Franklin, Lury and Stacey, 2000: 26) that upholds a sense of inter-connected interdependencies not only among all human beings but also between human and the non-human ambiance is significant. Peter-Paul Verbeek's (2011) post-anthropological shift to connect human with non-human is also another substantial contribution to posthumanism. The exploration for a transversal inter-relation through the 'assemblage' of human and non-human beings via intimacy seems to be central to the Lepcha tale, *Apyong's Dog*.

Apyong's Dog (A Lepcha Folktale)

An old man had three sons: Apyong, Atyok and Apyok. He called his sons and decided to divide among his sons his property with which his sons could find wealthy and beautiful wives for themselves. Apyong, the eldest, refused to take his share of inheritance and opted only for the pet dog. The two other sons divided the old man's property among themselves. Wearing expensive clothes, Atyok and Apyok started walking on the road in search of rich and attractive girls who would prefer to marry them. They did not want to be accompanied by Apyong, who was dressed in shabby clothes. Walking all through the day, all alone, Apyong found himself standing in front of a house on the hilltop at nightfall. He thought of pleading with the inhabitants of the house to allow him to spend the night in their house since he had no money and food. He knocked on the door but only a beautiful cat came out of the house. He asked the cat to

call the owner. The cat introduced herself as the housekeeper. The pretty little cat further told him that she happened to be a princess who was turned into a cat by a witch who had also killed her parents, siblings and all the other family members. She requested Apyong, "Please stay here for three days and three nights. If you are able to resist everyone from entering into the house, I can restore myself as a princess and I will become your wife." Apyong decided to stay in the house for three days and nights with his dog. Having their dinner, he sat with his dog near the entrance. Throughout the night everyone, right from an ant to an elephant, tried to enter the house. But Apyong's dog scared them away. In the morning, after moving inside the house, he was surprised to see that the cat had turned herself into a small baby, too good to be true as a human being. He ate and rested all round the day. At night he lit up a lamp outside the house and waited with his dog for the trespassers. He killed each and every one who tried to enter the house. In the morning, the moment he entered the house, he found that the baby had grown up into the prettiest girl he had ever met. He spent the third night along with his dog, driving everything away from the house. The next morning he found that the girl had already turned into a beautiful woman. Both of them married and stayed together for some days in the house. Thereafter, Apyong, his wife and dog started travelling towards his father's place in a horse-driven carriage filled with costly items. Reaching the house, Apyong took off his expensive clothes and dressed himself again in shabby attire, leaving his wife and the wealth outside the father's house. The two brothers and their wives didn't welcome him and the dog because of his pitiable look. Annoyed by the misconduct of his brothers, he went out of the house and came back with his riches and the most beautiful wife. Neither were the wives of Atyok and Apyok as beautiful as Apyong's, nor were they rich enough to compete with her. Apyong thus became the luckiest among the three brothers.

Apyong's accountability, relationality and a sense of togetherness with non-human in the form of, first his dog and then the cat, brings out the essence of post-humanism where the radical post-human subjectivity is understood, as opposed to anthropocentrism that generates compartmentalised association among the species, on

the basis of an intersectional ethics of plurality where the nomadic subjectivity rejects stark individualism for the sake of establishing multiple belongings with multiple others, including non-human entities. The fact that Apyong has been able to turn the cat into his beautiful wife, that too with the help of his dog, reveals the post-anthropocentric advent of 'the politics of life itself' (Rose, 2007), where "'Life', far from being codified as the exclusive property or the unalienable right of one species, the human, over all others or of being sacralised as a pre-established given, is posited as process, interactive and open-ended. This vitalist approach to living matter displaces the boundary between the portion of life—both organic and discursive—that has traditionally been reserved for *anthropos*, that is to say *bios*, and the wider scope of animal and non-human life, also known as *zoe*" (Braidotti, 2013:60). The emergence of the woman from the cat further rejects the nature / culture binary which has so long been detrimental to the rise of green human. The fact that Apyong, the tribal man, by his caring of his pet dog eventually ends up by transposing the cat into a woman, reveals the eco(alternative) masculinity where the love for natural objects (naturalised Other) facilitates a man to learn how to take care of women (sexualised / gendered Other). Apyong's prosperous ending further helps in negating the conventional myth of equating the man who is close to nature as primitive / savage as compared to the one who is removed from his natural environment and seen as cultured / civilised. Apyong's 'becoming-animal' by his trans-species camaraderie with his dog is the first step towards 'becoming-earth', where the planetary correlation finds genuine expression through the inter-linking of the cat and the woman. Apyong's post-human intimacy, forming the basis of his affluence, becomes the tribal ideal for the 'mainstream' to become an eco-man, as a prerequisite of becoming a thriving man, by "replacing well established dualisms with the recognition of deep *zoe*-egalitarianism between humans and animals" (Braidotti, 2013:71) for a non-hierarchical intimacy with one's bionetwork and environment. Finally, by the tribal man's performing of the political tactic of de-familiarisation (Gilroy, 2005), which is rather a move for dis-identification from accustomed and normative principles, Apyong accomplishes the "collective imaginings" (Gatens and Lloyd,

1999) of 'becoming-earth' which "implies the open-ended, inter-relational, multi-sexed and trans-species flows of becoming through interaction with multiple others" (Braidotti, 2013:89).

Animal Rights

The orphan-king of this story is the exemplar of the care-based ethics of tribal eco(alternative)masculinity where the image of a hunting man gets replaced by a nurturing man who is conscious of 'animal rights'.

The Orphan and the Birds
(A Rabha Folktale)

Once upon a time, there was a place called Swarnapur, where an orphan used to live with his uncle. He was very fond of birds. While taking out the uncle's cattle for grazing, the orphan boy used to sit under a tree and listen to the chirping of various kinds of birds. He was often ridiculed by the other kids who would enjoy killing the birds and eating their meat. The uncle also used to get annoyed because of the orphan's inability in catching the birds. The king of Swarnapur was a great eater of birds' meat. He used to often engage himself in hunting the birds along with his sepoys. One day, while the orphan was sitting under the tree and listening to the twittering birds, the king who was passing by, ordered his men to kill all the birds. The king was very pleased to find the birds all dead. The orphan started to cry. Moving towards the king's men, he started condemning them for killing the birds. The king got very angry and ordered his men to punish the orphan with ten lashes of whip. The orphan, who was hurt by the fact that the king had punished him without any offence committed by him, thought of leaving the place. He started walking and after two days he reached a place called Koshipur. The king of Koshipur was very worried about the marriage of his only daughter. The orphan, who found a job in the king's house, used to play his flute in his hours of repose and all the birds would come to him. The king's daughter was very much impressed by him and showed eagerness to marry him. The king called the orphan and got him

married with his daughter. After the death of the king, the orphan became the king of Koshipur.

In Swarnapur the situation had become worse. Since there were no birds left, the insects began to increase in large numbers, resulting in the destruction of food and grains. Soon, there was a terrible scarcity of food. The king too was starving. He began to walk on bare foot in search of food, almost like a beggar. After two days, he reached Koshipur, where he found lots of oranges in the gardens. The moment the Swarnapur king tried to pluck an orange, the people of Koshipur got hold of him and took him to the orphan-king who would punish him for stealing the oranges. The orphan-king, however, having recognised him, treated him with great hospitality. Thereafter, he pleaded with the king to stop hunting the birds. Swarnapur's king promised that he would no longer kill birds and would also not allow anyone to continue with the killing. The orphan-king happily helped the king of Swarnapur by offering him enough of seeds and hatchlings.

The king of Swarnapur demonstrates what Mary Midgley calls, 'human chauvinism': a "narrowness of sympathy, comparable to national, or race or gender-chauvinism. It could also be called exclusive humanism, as opposed to the hospitable, friendly, inclusive kind" (1996: 105). The orphan's suffering of the lashes of his king due to his empathy for the hunted birds marks the end of 'anthropolatry' which assumed the superiority of human over other species and forms of life. The orphan's neo-humanist petition for the equal right of birds paves the way for getting intimate with the daughter of the king. His post-human intimacy with the birds thus makes him a green man who is capable enough to care for the woman. The trajectory of the orphan from a bird lover to the lover of the king's daughter and thereafter becoming the king, exposes the nature-culture continuum. The orphan-king finally becomes the prototype of a tribal eco(alternative)masculinity for the king of Swarnapur to follow by replacing his anthropocentrism with the alternative that "we are not self-contained and self-sufficient, either as a species or as individuals, but live naturally in deep mutual dependence" (Midgley, 1996: 9–10). The orphan-king is an ideal geo-centred ethnic subject

who takes care of birds only to care for the plants and crops. His eco(alternative)masculine subjectivity thus is that of trans-species where identity as post-humanism is viewed as an assemblage which does not exclude neither woman nor nonhumans for establishing an immanent relationship.

The Boy who Loved Trees (A Rabha Tale)

It is the account of a distant time when there lived an orphan boy in a village. The orphan boy was employed in the garden of the king. The king of that land had no other family members, except for a daughter. The king wanted her to be married to some prince of great fame and reputed ancestry. But his daughter declined all such proposals that had come from wealthy kings. The princess was very friendly with the orphan boy. She didn't have any clue about the world outside her palace. The orphan boy use to give her information about the tress in the forest, the animals, birds and the fruits available there in different seasons of the year. The princess started liking the orphan boy. One day, she told her father about her desire to marry the orphan boy. The king was astonished because he had different plans for her. Incidentally, there was a great turmoil in the garden. The king rushed into the garden. It so happened that some children of the nearby area had entered into the garden and were plucking the leaves and breaking the twigs. The orphan boy, who was addressing them, said, "You must know how much good all these plants do to us. During summer people sit under the shade of the leaves. Then the birds come and build nests. The birds save the crops by eating all the insects. If you destroy the leaves and the trees then there will be less rain and more drought. Without plants, human beings won't survive. We need to protect the plants and should never destroy them." Listening to the orphan boy, the king became very happy about his daughter's choice. He felt she had, after all, chosen a very wise and kind-hearted person to be married to.

In this story, the hero is not the typical hero material. He does not have the heroic / masculine qualities / consciousness / attitudes and has to be aided by the feminine. The story ending in marriage, bringing significant positive development in hero's life, shows the dependence

or the fulfilment of the masculine principle over the femininity. His fulfilment is achieved only by his caring of the natural. Even the king [psychic representative of the race] without queen [feminine principle] is helpless and is dependent only on the daughter [anima] who would restore growth [to king by providing progenies] while bestowing power to another man, who is also orphan [representing the lack of feminine principle] (Marie-Louise Von Franz, 1986). The boy further confirms Firth's observation that among the so-called "primitive societies…there is the keenest discussion of alternatives in any proposal for the use of resources, of the relative economic advantages of exchange with one party as against another, and the closer scrutiny of the quality of goods which change hands…and taking a profit thereby" (Firth 1964: 22).

Khocheelepa and his Bird-sisters (A Lepcha Tale)

Once upon a time, an old childless couple had adopted three children, of which two daughters were birds. Dhanese (a Hornbill) and Halaeso (a Wood Pigeon), were the daughters and Khocheelepa (the Little One) was the name of the son. One day, when the old couple died all of a sudden, Dhanese found it very difficult to stay in the same place, haunted by the memories of her parents. So she asked Halaeso and Khocheelepa to come with her to a distant place. The sister and the brother got all their belongings packed and were prepared to follow their sister. Before leaving the old house, Dhanase buried the dead bodies of the old couple and also built a *Kaapoor* (memorial), which she carried on her head. The two sisters carried the little boy and were soon in a new place. The birds used to go early in the morning in search of grains and would come back to feed the brother. The little boy, Khocheelepa, started growing up into a strong youth. After a few years, the place was struck by famine. There was hardly any food anywhere. The sisters began to fly far and wide to collect some food for the brother, but could not manage to get any. Khocheelepa started weeping out of hunger. Feeling pity for the brother, the two sisters again started flying afar in search of food. After a thorough search finally they managed to get some. The sisters, after putting the grain into a small pot, gathered dried up

branches. With their wings they fanned the fire. Khocheelepa was very happy to see the sisters cooking for him. Out of excitement, he came too close to the pot and the moment he touched the pot, the pot fell down breaking into pieces and the entire food got spoilt since it got mixed up with the ashes. Khocheelepa started to cry louder and the sisters assured him to come back with some food. Desperately they flew again and after a long time they gathered some food. When they came back they found that Khocheelepa was lying on the ground. Actually, the boy had become unconscious out of starvation. But the birds thought that he was dead. They wept and mourned for a while. After that, covering his body with leaves, they flew away to another remote place. After a long time, the brother regained his consciousness only to find himself all alone. He called out to his two sisters but there was no one to reply him back. He started to walk out of sadness and frustration. Soon he entered into a forest. He was happy to find some fruits hanging on the trees. He ate as many fruits as he could and fell asleep. The next day, a woodcutter found the boy and took him to his house. Many years passed and Khocheelepa soon grew up into a strong young man. The villagers started sending marriage proposals to the woodcutter. Eventually, he gave his consent to marry one of the daughters of a neighbouring elderly villager. But before getting married he wished to look for his sisters. He asked the pig to check if the sisters could be traced somewhere in the nearby places. The pig, after a long search, finally managed to locate the sisters. He told them, "Your brother Khocheelepa is getting married. He wants you two to attend his wedding ceremony." Dhanase thought that the pig was making fun. She rebuked the pig, "Our brother is long dead. We still cry for his death." The pig came back to Khocheelepa and informed him about the reaction of his sister. Then Khocheelepa sent a rooster who got also chased away by his sisters. Then Khocheelepa told the Cicada how he got detached from his sisters during the time of the famine and the Cicada started to sing about it in front of his sisters. The sisters, after listening to the song, began to follow the Cicada. Soon the sisters found that their brother Khocheelepa was standing below on the ground. He was all prepared to get married. He pleaded his sisters to come down and join the wedding feast. But the birds were

ashamed of their foolishness to have thought that the brother was dead. Khocheelepa then asked his friends to bring a long bamboo pole. Placing some fruits on it he raised the pole up above his head. The two sisters ate the fruits from the pole and said, "Thank you dear brother for inviting us. We have taken part in your wedding feast. May you now live happily with your wife." Saying this, the two sisters flew away to a distant land.

Longing for a woman, belonging with the birds

Khocheelepa's intimacy with the bird-sisters as well as with the pig, rooster and cicada, contradicts with the accusations often made by the feminists that as opposed to a woman's interconnected notion of the self, a man's sensing of self is more detached.[19] Although detachment might assure a fair and just reasoning but it does not promote intimacy.[20] Most often the male 'mainstream' environmentalists find themselves confined within integrity's agreement to rules, whereas, intimacy calls for a spontaneous response to the immediate situation out of closeness and concern. As per the integrity orientation, ethics becomes primarily a standardised principle; according to the intimacy code, ethics is nurtured by a morality of love. Integrity's moral request is to be responsibly rational to the other, whereas, intimacy's mandate is to be affectively responsive along with the other.[21] The brother, just before getting married with a woman—the moment which demands an intimate sense of belonging that he needs to establish with the female—wishes to meet the bird sisters. His eagerness to reunify himself with the intimate belonging that he used to cherish with the sisters just before his longing to get married is significant. It seems that Khocheelepa, by his eagerness to restore his non-human belonging is suggesting that in order to be intimate with the woman, the conventional masculinity needs to be surpassed by the man with an eco(alternative)masculinity that would empower the man to move beyond the man / woman dichotomy towards the creation of a 'thirdness'. Love, born out of intimacy, then assists in the politics of belonging in the form of a 'thirdness' that sanctions one with the capability of listening to the multiple voices of others, inviting for a collaborative, intersubjective intimacy. This

thirdness, as "not to be understood primarily as the intervention of an other, rather, requires the "one in the third," the attunement and empathy that make it possible to bridge difference with identification, to infuse observation with compassion" (Benjamin, 2002:50) is also helpful in overcoming the binary between the 'doer' and the 'done to'. The birds' nurturing of Khocheelepa which the brother remembers despite the years of separation represents what Mockus has called, 'an amphibian intersectionality'. The family of Khocheelepa comprising of the Dhanese and the Halaeso embodies, "the borderzone between identity-as-essence and identity-as-conjuncture" (Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996:13) that an eco-man has to seek for the sake of acquiring 'soft boundaries' through which the 'amphibian borders' of the diverse identities would crisscross and "obey partially divergent systems of rules without a loss of intellectual and moral integrity" (Mockus, 1994:39). Moreover, this 'borderzone' as a 'third time-space', moves beyond the older notions of identity, without instituting a new fixity of identity by being "too heterogeneous, mobile, and discontinuous for fixity" (Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996:14).

***The King and his Shalik* [the Indian mynah]**
(A Rabha Folktale)

Once there was a king whose friend was a *Shalik*. In matters of administration, the king would listen to his bird-friend rather than taking advice from his ministers. This made his prime minister feel very jealous of the *Shalik*. One day, the king had to go to some other place. Before leaving his kingdom, he handed over all the kingly responsibilities to his bird-friend. This made the prime minister more upset. The next day, the *Shalik* ordered all the sepoys to follow him for cultivating land. They reached a forest and thought of clearing the place by cutting down the trees in order to start cultivation. Since it was already dark, the *Shalik* asked the men to eat and sleep well so that they could begin the work early next morning. While everyone slept, the *Shalik* was still awake. Suddenly, there was some chirping of birds. The *Shalik* heard that a mother-bird sitting on the branch

of a tree was anxiously saying, "What will happen to us now? Where shall we go? They are going to cut down the trees!" But the father-bird answered, "Don't worry! We will find some other place to stay. But let me tell you one thing for sure. This is a very bad place for farming. If these men cut these tress and start cultivation there will be hardly any harvest. But if they walk two miles northward from this place they would come across an open land which is the most fertile land for farming." The *Shalik* listened to their conversation. Next morning, when the men got ready to cut down the trees, the king's friend asked them to move northwards. Soon they found an open land. They were very happy to find such a fertile land. They started farming with great enthusiasm. After a few months, the prime minister sent some men to that land to check if the harvest was ready to be reaped. The men came back saying that the paddy field was all golden and ready to be procured. The *Shalik* ordered the men to set the entire crop on fire. The prime minister and others protested. But the *Shalik* said, "I am supposed to be the one whose order has to be carried out. Do what I have ordered. Set the field on fire. After that collect the ashes and bring them to me." The men came back with the ashes. The *Shalik* opened a room where he stocked the ashes and hung a big lock on the door from outside so that nobody could open it. After a few days the king came back to the palace. The prime minister then and there told him about how the *Shalik* had ruined the crops. The king became so angry that he struck the bird with his rod and his friend was dead. He ordered the soldiers to break the lock. The moment he entered the room, to his utter surprise, he found that there were no ashes but it was all full of gold. The king began to cry for his *Shalik* and ordered his soldiers to put his prime minister into the prison.

Perceiving themselves as 'organism-persons' (Ingold, 2011:47), the tribal men "do not inscribe into the nature of things a division between the natural agencies and themselves, as we [mainstream] do with our "nature: culture" dichotomy. They view their world as an integrated entity" (Bird-David 1992a: 29-30). Thus even with the non-human environment, symbolised by the Indian Myna, the tribal king in *The King and his Shalik* does 'keep in touch' "intimately, in

the way one "knows" close relatives with whom one shares intimate day-to-day life" (Bird-David 1992b: 39). The speaking Shalik thus is not only the symbolic of the inter-subjectivity of the tribal king with nature but also a recognition of '*inter-agentivity*' which denotes that "the constitutive quality of intimate relations with non-human and human components of the environment is one and the same" (Ingold, 2011:47). The offering of personhood indicates the tribal notion that "human persons are not set over and against a material context of inert nature, but rather are one species of person in a network of reciprocating persons" (Scott 1989: 195). Resisting the 'culturalisation of space', these ethnic communities, by the ontology of dissolubility, transform their ethnic space as a domain of egalitarian intimacy of sharing belongingness even with non-human beings. Although it is a known fact that most of the tribal societies have been dependent for their survival on hunting, fishing and fruit gathering in the initial stages, yet as Winterhalder has rightly observed, "Hunter-gatherers, or foragers, live in environments characterised by diverse and heterogeneously distributed resources. From the array of potential food species, foraging locations and pathways, the forager can choose combinations which more or less effectively and efficiently procure subsistence. The forager's choices make up a strategy of adjustments to ecological conditions, an adaptive pattern resulting from evolutionary processes and the constraints of situation, time, and chance" (Winterhalder 1981: 66). The lesson that the king learns at the end is that in order to be prosperous, a person needs to be more intimate with non-human beings since such "vital social relations transcend those which are maintained with human beings" (Hallowell, 1960: 43).

Alternative eco-masculinity

The tribal folktales by the portrayal of intimate belonging of human male protagonists with non-human animals and "Intelligent Animalmorphs" (Lorey, *Novels List*) argues for the transformation of patriarchal masculinity by an organic intimacy with all the elements of nature that would ultimately allow to break the traditional "rules of time, place, of human reproduction and personal uniqueness"

(Warner, 1994:27) and perceive metamorphosis as "an organic process of life itself" (Warner, 1994:18). Tribal imagination as revealed through the folktales seems to have anticipated the "genetic imagination" which permits us to "blur the boundaries between human and [non-human] animal...express[ing] the fluid nature of identity" in order to "carry us into the future" by disrupting human-centric hierarchies and paving way for "transgenics, the actual moving of genes across species" (Scala, 2012:1).The 'mainstream' with its philosophers "mainly, and understandably, concerned with how humans would escape the injustice, oppression, inequality or even uniformity foisted on them by other humans or human-made systems' (Chakrabarty, 2009: 208), need to come in touch with the alternative perspectives of tribal notion of planetary justice and equivalence, through indigenous eco(alternative)masculinity as one of the means of posthuman understanding that "true/untrue" or "self-reference / external reference" need not always be differentiated, but "are located at right angles to each other. They have no mutually unbalancing effects" (Luhmann, 2002: 65). Echoing R. L. Rutsky's observation that "[a] posthuman subject position would… acknowledge the otherness that is part of us" (Rutsky, 1999:21), the tribal male protagonists of the above folktales seem to advise the non-indigenous 'mainstream' to overcome the nature / culture binary by acknowledging that all the naturalised or sexualised otherness has always been a part of 'us'. Multiple ecologies of belonging would enable men to avoid "parting 'us' from 'ourselves'" (Badmington, 2004: 155) and promote further assemblage with all the non-human presences. This ecological / planetary intimacy of belonging with non-human beings as initiated by the tribal male 'becoming-posthuman' protagonists is essential for the 'mainstream' men to embrace in order to overcome the long established image of maltreating both woman and the environment.

NOTES

1. Banerjee and Bell argued that, "women as [sole] environmental mediators homogenizes women's experience and unnecessarily excludes men as potential mediators" (Banerjee and Bell, 2007:7).

2. Feminisation, here, has been used to refer to the androgynous consciousness of femininity as a part of one's masculinity.
3. Greta Gaard has rightly stated that the conventional outlook of the 'mainstream' "tradition has resulted in devaluing whatever is associated with women, emotion, animals, nature, and the body, while simultaneously elevating in value those things associated with men, reason, humans, culture, and the mind. One task of ecofeminists has been to expose these dualisms and the ways in which feminizing nature and naturalizing or animalizing women has served as justification for the domination of women, animals, and the earth" (1993:5).
4. Ulrich Beck has rightly observed that, "Global ecological dangers, far from intensifying a general lack of meaning in the modern world, create a meaning-filled horizon of avoidance, protection and assistance, a moral climate that grows sharper with the scale of the perceived danger, and in which a new political significance attaches to the roles of hero and villain" (1999:45).
5. "The aesthetics of relinquishment implied, rather, suspension of ego to the point of feeling the environment to be at least as worthy of attention as oneself and of experiencing oneself as situated among many interacting presences (Buell, 1995: 178).
6. According to Larry May, "A progressive male standpoint is an egalitarian theoretical and practical position from which men can critically assess male experience and traditional male role" (May, 1998:337).
7. Harry Brod has insisted upon the fact that, "The most militant profeminism is not only compatible with, but requires, the finest male affirmative stance." (Brod, 1998: 205).
8. Perceiving 'personhood' in the non-human elements of nature seems to be one of the means of enhancing sensitivity, through the highlighting of the human-like characteristics of nature, for many of the environmentalists and nature protectionists. See Milton, 2002: 51.
9. "The core of one's being must love justice more than manhood." (Stoltenberg, 1989:185)
10. Biophilia means to respond out of love to all "life and lifelike processes" with a 'tendency' / 'need' to 'affiliate with' / 'focus on' them (Wilson, 1984: 1).
11. According to Bill Devall, 'Deep Ecology' asserts that "A new cosmic / ecological metaphysics which stress the identity (I / thou) of humans with nonhuman nature is a necessary condition for a viable approach

to building an eco-philosophy. In Deep Ecology, the wholeness and integrity of person / planet together with the principle of what Arne Naess calls 'biological equalitarianism' are the most important ideas" (1994: 133).

12. Possibly, the Toto tribal tale is politically striving for a change in outlook through this image of a concerned and interdependent green man, similar to Hyun-jong Jung's politico-poetic plea: "You live because you let me live / Because I let you live, I live / Oh, a change of mind!" (1992: 39).
13. Donna Haraway has emphasised that, "Accounts of a 'real' world do not, then, depend on a logic of 'discovery' but on a power-charged social relation of 'conversation'" (1991:198).
14. "Such a view of [sexual] identity as unstable and potentially disruptive, as alien and incoherent could in the end produce a more mature identity politics by militating against the tendency to erase differences and inconsistencies in the production of stable political subjects" (Fuss, 1989: 104).
15. "Modernity is commonly viewed as a masculine phenomenon, in which the male ideals of rationality, competitive individualism, progress, and order are promoted and valorized in comparison (and through contrast) with the supposedly female ideals of emotion, social bonds, continuity, and 'tradition'" (Hodgson, 2001: 8-9).
16. According to Bourdieu, stereotyped "Manliness, understood as sexual or social reproductive capacity, but also as the capacity to fight and to exercise violence (especially in acts of revenge), is first and foremost a *duty*. Unlike a woman, whose essential negative honour can only be defended or lost, since her virtue is successively virginity and fidelity, a 'real' man is someone who feels the need to rise to the challenge of the opportunities available to him to increase his honour by pursuing glory and distinction in the public sphere" (2001: 50-51).
17. Critique of humanism and the development of anti-humanism were encouraged mainly through the help of the thinkers like Derrida by the deconstruction of Euro-centricism, Deleuze in his rejection of the notion of a transcendental subject, Foucault by his critique of Humanism and Irigaray in her de-centering of phallogocentrism.
18. "Post-humanism is the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between Humanism and anti-humanism and traces a different discursive framework, looking more affirmatively towards new alternatives" (Braidotti, 2013:37).
19. See Nancy Chodorow (1978); Carol Gilligan (1982)

20. "Although detachment connotes the dispassion which signifies fairness in justice reasoning, the ability to stand back from oneself and from others and to weigh conflicting claims even-handedly in the abstract, detachment also connotes the absence of connection and has the potential to create the conditions for carelessness or violation, for violence toward others or toward oneself."(Gilligan et al., 1988: xxviii).
21. For a detailed discussion on intimacy and integrity see Kasulis (2002)

CHAPTER THREE

Martial to the Musical: De-stereotyping the Skills

Skill structures are to a very substantial degree socially constructed.

—Rosemary, Gallie and Purcell, 1996:10

The Indigenous communities of India are often assumed to be the martial representatives of the formerly hunter inhabitants of the forests. Despite the works carried out by Levi-Strauss to annihilate the stereotyped dichotomy between the nature and the mind[1], there is a categorised notion among the polemical 'mainstream' that the tribal people, by virtue of being 'natural', as opposed to being 'cultural', are, thereby, essentially 'animalistic'/ 'savages' as not being 'civilised': "a man who spends his whole life following animals just to kill them to eat, or moving from one berry patch to another, is really living just like an animal himself" (Braidwood, 1957:22). One often fails to understand that just as the garden of the 'culture' represents, "the virtualities of a homely wilderness" (Descola, 1994: 220) the jungle as the habitus of these indigenous communities "is itself a huge garden, albeit an untidy one, and the relations between its constituents are governed by the same principles of domesticity that structure the human household, yet on a superhuman scale" (Ingold, 2011:82). Seen from the stereotyped binary of savage / civilised, the tribal people always get labelled as the martial figures of corporeal skills and, therefore, without any other delicate endowments. The folktales of the indigenous communities, however, prove that more than the physical it is the musical skill[2] which facilitates means of

enablement for the tribal men. By associating ethnomusic with the tribal male, these folktales also seem to combat with the 'mainstream' stereotyped notion of music as an effeminate/emasculated art.

Martial and the Strategic: *Dardzengtapa*
(A Toto Folktale)

The folk tale is about a great hero Dardzengtapa, who could never be defeated in war or in hunting. However, he got carried away by Chioo-Chang-doima, the fiancé of Sandedara, the Mondal (Headman) of the other village. Chioo-Chang-doima was trying to dig her straight-sword (*patang*) deep into the soil to trace out the Leing yam, without much success. She was sweating and the cloth covering her bosom was rolling on the ground. Dardzengtapa, seeing the beautiful woman, who appeared to him like the freshly blossomed yellow orange, was attracted to her. Coming close to her, he dug out the big, tasty Leing yam with a single stroke of his *patang* and put it into her basket. They expressed their mutual love for one another. Yet, their desire of staying together forever could not get materialised so long as Sandedara remained alive. Dardzengtapa got the details of the location of the house where Chioo-Chang-doima lived with Sandedara. The next day, when Chioo-Chang-doima was all alone, Dardzengtapa arrived at her place and shared a secret conversation along with strong liquor from the bamboo vessels. When it was time for Sandedara to return from the forest, she asked Dardzengtapa to hide on the hill-top. The moment Sandedara arrived, Chioo-Chang-doima cut his head with a single stroke of her *patang*. Chopping the body into several pieces, she, along with Dardzengtapa, hid them into a large wooden drum. Riding together on the horse back to Dardzengtapa's house they were singing to celebrate how they had enjoyed in Sandedara's house and later on hacked his body into pieces, in order to relish their intimacy forever. Listening to them, the villagers of Sandedara started consulting among themselves: "The man is eloping with the would-be wife of our village after killing him. Should we not take action against them? What do you think?" The villagers decided to inform the nine brothers who were cutting trees of the opposite hill-slope. They started searching for Sandedara in the

house but could not find him. At last, the youngest of all found the chopped pieces in the wooden drum. They unequivocally resolved to avenge Dardzengtapa and bring Chioo-Chang-doima back. In the evening, they reached Dardzengtapa's house and threatened him to join them for a battle where they would avenge the death of their brother by cutting Dardzengtapa into pieces. Hearing this, Chioo-Chang-doima came out and addressed her ex-brothers-in law, asking them to rest and have their meals so that they could fight with Dardzengtapa, the next day. The nine brothers agreed to the proposal of their would-have-been-sister-in-law. Once the meal was ready, Chioo-Chang-doima started serving the food. Dardzengtapa thought that she was giving meat to the ex-brothers-in-law and only bones to him so that he would grow feeble and they would gain their strength for the battle. On hearing this Chioo-Chang-doima became sad and started giving meat to Dardzengtapa and bones to the nine brothers. Yet again, Dardzengtapa thought Chioo-Chang-doima was playing a trick on him so that, owing to his gain in flesh after consuming so much of meat, it would be easier for the opponent to pierce the arrows into his flesh. He also repented having brought such a wicked woman as his wife. Listening to all these, the nine brothers were happy and confident of winning the fight. Next morning, Dardzengtapa stood on the opposite hill-top which was taller than the hill top where the nine brothers were standing. He asked them to target their arrows on him, which all of them missed because of standing on a lower hill top. Having a single arrow with him, Dardzengtapa then proposed that he would tie up the eyes of all nine brothers and randomly choose to shoot at any one of them. They agreed, not having much of a choice. Dardzengtapa brought his *patang* and sliced off their heads one after the other. From that day, everybody started fearing and respecting Dardzengtapa as an eminent hero. He lived happily with Chioo-Chang-doima.

Dardzengtapa, the protagonist of this folktale, with his obsession of vigour that instigates him to suspect Chioo-Chang-doima, may initially appear to be a lopsided man who is devoted to bodily merits alone. But his Dardzengtapa suspicion that Chioo-Chang-doima is feeding her ex-brothers-in-law with meat and serving only bones to him so that he would grow feeble and they would gain their strength

for the battle does not get suspended when Chioo-Chang-doima starts doing the opposite—for Dardzengtapa, she is again seem to be a trickster who is serving him meat and bones to the nine brothers so that he'll gain in flesh which in turn would enable the opponent to pierce the arrows easily into his flesh. Reminding ourselves that Chioo-Chang-doima represents a different group from that of Dardzengtapa, his baseless suspicion in whatever Chioo-Chang-doima does has to be seen not only in terms of a carnal obsession but in the light of what WM. Hugh Jansen calls "the esoteric-exotic factor"[3] in the folktales. Dardzengtapa's suspecting of his beloved despite his confidence and robustness can be understood on the basis of Jansen's observations that, "more self-confident the group, the weaker the esoteric element" but "there are no indications that… self confidence in a group offer any deterrent to the formulation of exotic" (Jansen, 1965:47). "When the mind processes the empirical data which it receives previously processes by the sense organs", writes Levi-Strauss, "it goes on working out structurally what at the outset was already structural. And it can only do so in as much as the mind, the body to which it belongs, and the things which body and mind perceive, are part and parcel of one and the same reality" (Levi-Strauss, 1974:21). Overcoming the body-mind dichotomy the fighter hero of *Dardzengtapa* has been using his corporal gallantry along with tactical shrewdness throughout the Toto folktale. The exhibition of his martial skill in digging out the big, tasty Leing yam with a single stroke of his *patang* and putting it into Chioo-Chang-doima's basket is actually a strategy of impressing her. Although the entire folktale is meant for celebrating the powerful aggressive hero yet the skill of calculated perceptiveness finds expression in Dardzengtapa's befooling of all nine brothers and cutting their heads successively. Thus replacing a stereotyped image of an armed indigenous man with a mechanical hold on the technology of using his tool, this Toto hero highlights the importance of skill as techniques of using the tribal tool as an instrument of revealing the indigenous 'practical knowledge and knowledgeable practice' (Ingold, 2011:316). The virility of Dardzengtapa is dependent not only on the 'technical' nature of handling his weapon but also on his 'feminine' skill of intuitive indirectness.

Music as the Weapon: *The Herdsman and the Last Ape-man* (A Limbu Folktale)

There was a time when the last ape-man (Yeti / Sokpa) used to stay alone on the top of a hill, without knowing where the others have gone. One evening, a herdsman arrived with his cattle to graze on the hill. He made a small hut for himself. In the evening, he counted all his cattle and was happy that there were no animals nearby, else they would have taken away a sheep or a cow. He assembled some dry leaves and branches and created a fire in front of his hut. Then he brought out his bamboo flute and started playing. The ape-man got attracted by the music and came close to the herdsman. Looking at the ape-man, who was very furry, with the heals facing the front and the toes facing backward, the cows started mooing, the black yak snorted angrily, the one horned yak rolled its eyes and stared furiously, the sheep froze and turned pale with panic. The herdsman was very scared to find the yeti sitting next to him, but he kept on playing his flute. When he became too tired, he stopped playing the flute and placed it on the ground. The ape-man picked up his flute from the ground and signaled him to play it again. Thus the herdsman had to go on playing till it was morning when the yeti ultimately left. Next day again, Sokpa visited the shepherd and urged him to play the flute. When the shepherd got tired of playing his flute, he kept it down on the ground. The ape-man took the flute and attempted to play it, however, without any success. The herdsman got an idea. He went inside the hut and brought a container full of butter. He started rubbing butter all over his body from head to toe, including his face. The yeti started to imitate him. Soon the fur became brown with butter. Then the herdsman took out a burning twig out of the fire place and pretended to roast his body. The yeti did the same, but the thick fur soon caught fire. The Sokpa ran far away towards the frozen mountain peak in order to cool down. From then onwards, one cannot find the yeti anywhere nearby, since even the last one has moved far away on to the frozen mountain peak.

If Dardzengtapa's skillful use of sword becomes the means of influencing his woman, in case of the human protagonist of this story, it is the playing of his flute that mesmerises the non-human

listener. Since it is now accepted by the folklorists[4] that folklore is a means of validating the cultural standards of the ethnic community, the central role that the herdsman's playing of the flute plays in this Limbu folktale illustrates the prominence of the music as a skill in the indigenous society. The music not only captivates the Yeti but also assists the herdsman to get rid of that.

Traditional music of the tribal community has always been thought to be a community performance, where either the music is performed in groups or by a leading singer / musician to be followed by the rest (Herzog, 1965:171). The herdsman's solitary playing of his flute thus gets rewarded by the companion, who is also eager to accompany in playing the flute, in the form of the non-human ape-man. The herdsman's connectedness with nature is evident not only by his profession but by the unpremeditated way his music unintentionally impresses the Yeti.[5] The ape-man's appreciating of the herdsman's music along with the herdsman's fearful fatigue and desperateness to get rid of the Yeti reveal the ethnocentric viewpoint where the non-human is not solely brutalised but seen from the perspective of "a relationship based on companionship [that] is voluntary, freely terminable and involves the preservation of the personal autonomy of both parties" (Gibson 1985:392). The playing of a flute that has been the chief allure for the ape-man also becomes the antithetical-weapon that assists the herdsman to beguile the Sokpa in imitating each and every of his actions resulting in the last ape-man's distant refuge to a far off place around the snowy peaks.

Musicality and Agency: ***The Lazy-gallant***
(A Rabha Tale)

A long time ago, in a Koch village, there lived six brothers. The first five brothers were very hard-working while the youngest one was very lazy. He would sleep all through the day. In the evening, he would roam around idly, playing his *dotara* (a two-stringed instrument) or at the most, catch a few birds, since he could not eat rice without meat. Because of his ability to hunt only some small birds, people used to jokingly call him the lazy-gallant. The five brothers did all

the laborious works like cutting the logs, rearing the cattle and their wives did all the household chores like cooking and weaving. The five brothers and the four wives were very annoyed with the lazy-gallant. Only the eldest sister-in-law was very affectionate; she used to weave him clothes and serve him the major amount of meat and rice every day. The elder brothers tried their best but could not mend his sluggishness. Finally, one day they came to the conclusion that it was better to get rid of him than to continue with him by serving the largest portion of meat without any output. They planned to stab him that night after dinner. The eldest among the wives came to know about the plan and warned the lazy-gallant not to sleep on his bed. He slept in another room, keeping a hug pillow covered with a blanket on his bed. The five brothers came to the youngest brother's room and stabbed on the pillow. Thinking that the lazy-gallant was dead, they went off to sleep. Next day, to their utter surprise, they found their youngest brother alive. They promised to kill him that very night. But the idle boy's eldest sister-in-law, advising him to spend the night in the animal shed, put stones and bricks on his bed and covered them with a bed-sheet. The brothers returned back, and after having the dinner, entered the lazy-gallant's room. They hit the stones and bricks with their swords thinking that it was their youngest brother. Next morning, the eldest brother's wife suggested the lazy-gallant to stay away from the house for some days. He carried his *dotara*, clothes, some amount of food supplied by the eldest sister-in-law and entered the forest. Right through the day, he just played his *dotara*. In the evening he felt that someone was touching his shoulder. Turning back, he found a beautiful girl sitting behind him. The girl introduced herself as a princess who had to leave her house due to the murderous plan of her step-mother and on the way got attracted by the beautiful notes of his *dotara*. She proposed to the lazy-gallant to marry her. They were married and lived well with no work for some days, surviving on the food packed by the eldest brother's wife. Soon there was no food left. The lazy-gallant asked his wife to visit his eldest sister-in-law for help. The eldest brother's wife was very glad to meet the wife of the lazy-gallant. She instructed the youngest brother's wife to burn the forest and sow the seeds of maize

and rice, which she had packed and handed over to the princess. According to her directions, the lazy-gallant and his wife learnt jhum cultivation and lived happily ever after.

Here, the tag of laziness is labelled on to the youngest brother due to his withdrawal from the 'manly' skills like wood-cutting and cattle-rearing, supposed to be vigorously laborious, and thereby masculine, and his engagement with alternative, non-man-like, habits like slumbering, catching small birds and playing the *dotara*. Underlying the common belief that "knowledge and social values are associated with the elders", whereas, "uncertainty and ignorance are associated with the junior generation" (Jackson, 1978:346), the politics that the folktale often exposes is that of "a formal contrast between status position on the one hand and personal capability on the other" (Jackson, 1978:349). The five elder brothers of this tribal tale, who seem to be all for an externally standardised 'status position' in their performing of the categorical masculinity along with their mimicking of the colonial desire of erasing out the effeminate-unmanly-man[6], represent the new adults who internalise the norms of the 'mainstream' / colonisers[7], while the last-born indigenous male with his musicality representing "the reversed mirror image of the rejected norm" (La Barre, 1970:40) symbolises a minor, yet steady, tribal resistance against non-ethnic invasion. The elder brothers' multiple attempt to kill the unproductive youngest brother also shows how the colonisers have installed the capitalist notion of counting worth on the basis of value judgement. Devastating, what Shively calls 'sexual socialism', capitalism seems to have forced the ethnic men to perform standardised masculine skills which ultimately prohibits not only non-heteronormativity but intimacy in total (Shively, 1991:258). The five Rabha brothers underscore the fact that how the ethnic space with differences has been slowly appropriated by the mainstream (British colonizers, and other non-tribal intruders) on the basis of arguments put forward in the name of "those justifications of modernity—progress, homogeneity, cultural organicism, the deep nation, the long past—that rationalise the authoritarian 'normativising' tendencies within a culture in the name of national interest" (Bhabha, 1990:4). The matrifocal tribal

notion of a fluid gender role in the conventional Rabha society has been deliberately replaced with patrilineal models as non-indigenous culture along with the "Christian religion, brought by colonialism, carried rigid gender ideologies which aided and supported the exclusion of women from the power hierarchy…The rigid gender system meant that the roles are strictly masculinised or feminised; breaking gender rules therefore carries a stigma" (Amadiume, 1987:185).

The youngest brother's dependence on women in the form of the sister-in-law and wife, both for his physical and emotional sustenance, yet again, makes him appear as a degraded male devoid of manhood in the eyes of the invaders.[8] However, this Rabha sixth brother displays the tribal non-conforming attitude that does not consider manliness as to be played in an oppositional relation to femininity. With the calibres like that of playing a *dotara*, which seem to be unproductive and therefore valueless from the eyes of the non-indigenous settlers, the youngest brother's final development into a prosperous man, married to a princess and possessing enough of harvest, brings out this folktale's motif of privileging the Rabha gender-fluid skills over the newly introduced stratifications by the immigrants. Opposing the popular macho doctrine of building one's own fortune through hard work, this Rabha tale, asserting the success of a passive man, indicates that "good fortune can only come if it is not sought" (Dundes, 1962:173).

The lazy-gallant as an unmanly male who succeeds in meeting the conditions of becoming hero of the tale on the basis of his musical skill, shows how the image of the musical male fills the vacuum often created by the "antimale feminist critiques of masculinity" (Hooks, 2004:166) which fails to encourage anything possibly positive in male. Opposing the tenets of patriarchal masculinity, the lazy-gallant accomplishes 'feminist masculinity' that, replacing the old perception of strength as 'power over', "defines strength as one's capacity to be responsible for self and others" (Hooks, 2004:117). The skill of playing a *dotara* which has marked the boy as lazy finally, enabling him to come into contact with the princess, provides an agency to the tribal boy—an agency[9] that is acquired through musicality.

Skill as Enhancing Capability: *A Tale about Buying a Song* (Rabha Folktale)

Two brothers used to reside in a village. They were Shilmon and Tulmon. Both of them were married and lived in separate homes. Their condition was quite miserable. The elder brother Shilmon earned a little by labouring on other people's land all through the day. The younger one eked out his living by singing and begging. However, Tulmon and his wife were content with their poverty and stayed blissful. The elder brother's wife was not at all happy finding the younger brother residing happily with his wife. She often used to complain: "How is Tulmon keeping his wife happy simply by singing? And look at my man! Toiling three times a day, my husband fails to buy me a saree. Such a hopeless man he is!"

The elder brother was very uncomplicated and naive by nature. Being rebuked by his wife, he felt very miserable. After thinking for a while, he said: "Ok, tomorrow itself I will move out to the town in order to buy a song. After that, I will also earn a lot by singing. I will keep you happy with the money."

The very next day, Shilmon left for the town to buy song. He carried along with him whatever money he had saved, while leaving the house. On the way, he met a man who was a sly one. The man asked Shilmon: "Where are you going?"

Shilmon replied, "I stay at that village. After slogging all through the day, I am not able to buy my wife even a saree with what I earn. Hence, I am going to the town to buy a song."

Listening to him, the man surprisingly stated, "Buy a song!" He realised in no time, that Shilmon was essentially a simpleton. He could be easily deceived. Then the man said, "Why will you suffer going to the town for just buying a song? I will teach you to sing right here."

Shilmon gladly said, "It's a wonderful proposal, indeed! Will you teach me to sing it here? It will be fine then. I need not go to the town in that case!"

The man asked him, "How much have you carried along with you to buy a song? Hand me the entire amount."

Shilmon at once took out the money and handed it over to that man.

Taking the money, the man suggested Shilmon to go to a place where he could teach him singing. They went and sat under a tree by the side of a river. Then the man began:

Catch catch catch them,
That is it, that's it, Catch catch catch him,
Cane field, cane field, cane field
Catch, catch, catch him, Cane forest, cane forest, cane jungle,
Catch, catch, catch him…

Some thieves were hiding there with stolen money. They heard the song and left the money and ran away. Shilmon found the money and spent a happy life with his wife, thereafter.

In this folktale,music is seen as a skill in two different ways: first by an utilitarian mode of income generation as done by Tulmon by his music, and secondly by Shilmon's preference of adoptability as portrayed through his willingness to buy a song and subsequently enhancing his capability by trying to learn it from the sly man. The fact that Shilmon's wife prefers a to have a husband who earns by singing over the one who earns by his physical labour shows the de-stereotyped craving for "transgressing the restrictions imposed on the everyday existence and critically long for the objectionable" by "effectively behaving in a new way…[for] the denunciation of traditional schemas of classification" (Chakraborty, 2016: ix). Shilmon's willingness to skill himself with singing by substituting his identity as a labourer also shows the growing fuzziness regarding the conceptualisation of 'work', as well as in the shift of skill trends as opposed to the traditional skill classifications,[10] where any particular skill is fast losing its worth as a signifier of one's social identity (Rosemary, Gallie and Purcell. 1996:4-5). As opposed to the rule bound music of the '*maargi*' (the 'classical'), the 'desi' ('folk' / 'tribal') music that finds its reflection through the spontaneous rendition of the sly amateur man also become a critique of *enculturation* by underscoring *enskillment* where learning cannot be separated

from novice doing yet without being delinked from the 'culture of acquisition' (Lave, 1990:310). Even if the singing is imperfect, the novice's singing, in a sharp contrast with that of a rehearsed practitioner, is rendered "against a background of involved activity" (Dreyfus, 1991:74). The involvement of Shilmon, comically portrayed in his apparently foolish attempt to enhance his capability through his purchasing of the singing skill, thus is rewarded by his acquisition of wealth, enough to please his complaining wife. The elder brother's social choice of appropriating the musical skill that finally contributes to his well-being shows how by enhancing capabilities of one's functioning through "being able to move freely from place to place" in order to be able to "use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice" (Nussbaum, 2007:48) one's entitlement to social justice gets more safeguarded.

The music of the indigenous people in India has been labelled as tribal music by critics who have found some commonalities among the musical pattern of most of the communities.[11] However, most of the 'mainstream' critics have viewed the tribal music as unskilled and not enriched.[12] The 'mainstream' prejudice[13] becomes very clear when we come across the observation made by Vijaya Raghavan: "The structure of folk music is very simple. Owing to the uniformity of rhythm, throughout these lengthy songs, these folk-songs may appear a bit *monotonous*. But at the same time the *primitive people* found them to be quite enlivening and even felt ecstatic over them" (Raghavan, 1964:12).[14] The Rabha folktale ending with Shilmon's fortuitous gaining of wealth during the course of his attempt to acquire the musical skills, can be read as the tribal resistance against the 'mainstream' notion of their music as inept and not enough 'rich'.

The song that Shilmon tries to learn, deals about the thieves who are stealing canes from the forest and therefore need to be caught.[15] In between the repetitive phase, "Catch, catch, catch him", highlighting the motif of the folktale, there are three phrases which confirm who and why has to be caught. The second phrase "That is it, that's it" further affirms that the reason why the concerned has to be caught is a valid one. Combining the fourth and the sixth line it can be derived that the ones who have invaded the tribal forest in order to deplete

the cane jungle need to be caught. As a coded rebellious message about the exploitation of the tribal by the non-indigeneity that needs to be widespread, the song that Shilmon tries to learn "grapples with the hard problems of capturing nuance, of sharing meanings not readily shared. It manipulates second-and third-order overtones of meanings not reducible to explicit statement, and it does so because the communications of these overtones is important. This urgency is felt first by the poet, but if he is successful, the aptness of his imagery and its intelligibility in its tradition will transmit the feeling to his audience" (Edmonson, 1971: 134). The fact that the 'thieves' get scared by the song confirms that the "second-and third-order overtones of meanings" have been conveyed implicitly both to the non-indigenous exploiters as its audience along with the indigenous people who would ensure that "the song may gradually or quickly become communal" (Edmonson, 1971:134). The presence of the early colonisers and later on of the neo-colonising state in the tribal domain for exploiting the indigenous resources is a recognised fact which can easily make one realize how the tribal song by the so-called sly man is actually a critique against the exploitation of the ethnic assets. Songs have been the easiest[16] medium of protesting against the oppressive regime of the usurping 'mainstream' due to which the 'mainstream' must have been trying to prescribe ethnomusical skill as an emasculating skill in order to proscribe it strategically. Folklore is also an important medium to exert pressure on the individuals of the community to follow the cultural models that have been followed by the ethnic community for generations.[17] The folktale, as a component of folktale, which shows how a man gains material benefit through his endeavour of acquiring the musical skills must be a mode of opposition also against the change in ethnic outlook, as a result of the hegemonic presence of the dominating 'mainstream'. Shilmon's enforced good fortune by chance can, nevertheless, be seen as a clear indication of maintaining the tribal man's attachment to musical skills which is often stigmatised as an unmanly skill by the non-indigenous outsiders. The well-heeled elder brother conveys the Rabha people's "expression of psychology"[18] relating to their "collective objectifications" of "desire, on the part of the social group"[19] to defy the politics of de-stereotyping of the ethnic skills.

Conclusion

Inspired by the works of Vladimir Propp and Max Lüthi, Marie-Louise Tenèze has defined folktale as the tale of a hero who is in a difficult situation but ultimately overcomes the adversities through some kind of a support attained through skill, that is, 'the means employed'.[20]Tenèze further states that the hero of the folk tales often in his solitary undertakings discovers himself to be capable of self-supportive through the discovery of a "personal provision of power".[21] It cannot be denied that the tribal folktales with their obsession with king, princess, minister on one hand and the orphan, bird and tree on the other, become the narratives that address primarily the question of power relation. The 'mainstream' with a stereotyped notion of tribal sturdiness often try to categorize the ethnic skills for empowerment essentially in terms of indigenous physicality. These tribal folktales, however, by their celebrating of musical skill as a de-stereotyped expertise of enablement not only refute the 'mainstream' bias but also, mainly with reference to the Rabha folktales, display the residue of a matriarchal counterview as opposed to the contemporary 'patriarchalisation' through the 'mainstream' / state agencies intruding into the ethnic domain. For the non-conformist located within the 'mainstream', these folktales of de-stereotyped perspectives provide 'political'[22] alternatives "of the untutored *folk* still intact and resistant to all manner of sophisticated (and corrupting) influences" (Edmonson, 1971:34).

NOTES

1. Specifically, Levi-Strauss, 1974.
2. I am using music as a skill by borrowing from Rousseau, according to whom, "It hardly seems that song is natural to man…The first expressions of nature in them are only those of pain, and they learn to sing as they learn to speak: after our example. Melodious and appreciable song is only a possible and artificial imitation of the accents of the speaking voice; one cries out or one complains without singing, but one sings by imitating cries and complaints. And as of all imitations the most interesting is that of the human passions, of all the ways of imitating the most pleasant is singing" (Rousseau, 1998: 287).

3. "The esoteric applies to what one group thinks of itself and what it supposes others think of it. The exotic is what one group thinks of another and what it thinks that other group thinks it thinks" (Jansen, 1965:46).
4. Malinowski has stated that one of the major functions of the folklore is that it "expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of man…[It] is not an idle tale, but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom" (Malinowski, 1926:19).
5. Engels has already assured us that, "the further removed men are from animals…the more their effect on nature assumes the character of premeditated, planned action directed towards definite preconceived ends" (Engels, 1934:178).
6. For details see Krishnaswamy 1998; Sinha, 1995.
7. Mrinalini Sinha has vividly shown how "the colonial authorities had injected a powerful new dimension in the self-perception of 'effeminacy'" among the people in India which made them conscious in trying to have "redeemed their 'manliness'" (1995:93) mostly by their mimicry of the colonial standards of a hypermasculinity.
8. In *Englishman* one comes across such statements that assert how Indian men "are notoriously destitute of manliness" and are often "cowardly in their treatment of the weaker sex" (*Englishman*, April 26, 1883. 2). In the opinion of J. Munro, "The training of natives from their childhood, the enervating influence of the zenana on their upbringing, early marriage" are mostly responsible for the deficiency of "those manly and straightforward qualities which under other conditions are found in Englishmen" (Sinha, 1992:100).
9. According to Amartya Sen, "A person's agency aspect cannot be understood without taking note of his or her aims, objectives, allegiances, obligations, and—in a broad sense—the person's conception of the good" (Sen, 1985:203).
10. "Skill structures are to a very substantial degree socially constructed" (Rosemary, Gallie and Purcell. 1996:10).
11. For details see Carol Babiracki (1991).
12. Amalendu Bikash Kar Choudhury has written that, "According to our modern ideas tribal life may not be rich in their performing arts like dances and music, it is also true that tribal music is lacking in modern musical accompaniments but at the same time it is true that we can

have a glimpse at the past still living in the tribal areas, in their music with simple and easy tuneful songs and with easy and simple unskilled dances" (Kar Choudhury 1984:46).

13. The tabooed linking of a prejudiced 'primitivism' with the folk has been the outcome of faulty works like that of Lucien Levy-Bruhl, according to whom, the mind of the so-called primitive people is 'prelogical' and thereby functioned in a different manner unlike the so-called civilized individuals (Edmonson, 1971:39). However, this notion has been proved to be faulty by the researchers like Richard Thurnwald (*Psychologie des primitiven Denkens*, 1918), Franz Boas (*The Mind of Primitive Man,* 1911), Paul Radin (*Primitive Man as Philosopher*, 1927) and R. R. Marett (*Psychology and Folk-Lore*, 1920).
14. Emphasis mine.
15. I have been convinced by Edmonson's remark that a song is more "a matter of the manipulation of meaning" (Edmonson, 1971:133).
16. Folksong "is a collective, not an individual, expression", writes Betty Wang, "and consequently the singer of a song of protest is not to be blamed for the content of his song. He is only reporting what the folk say" (Wang, 1965:308)
17. William R. Bascom has observed that, "More than simply serving to validate or justify institutions, beliefs and attitudes, some forms of folklore are important as means of applying social pressure and exercising social control." (Bascom, 1965:294). He further argues that, "folklore operates within a society to insure conformity to the accepted cultural norms, and continuity from generation to generation through its role in education and the extent to which it mirrors culture" (Bascom, 1965:297).
18. Folklore, as per Dan Ben-Amos's observations, "is the expression of the psychology of the early man as it concerns any field, either philosophy, religion, science, or history" (Ben-Amos, 1982:6).
19. Conforming to the definition provided by Joseph Rysan, "Folklore can be defined as the collective objectifications of basic emotions, such as awe, fear, hatred, reverence, and desire, on the part of the social group" (Rysan, 1952:10).
20. "The magic folk tale reveals itself in its very core to be like the narration of the situation of the hero between the "response" and the "question," that is between the means obtained and the means employed. In other words, it is the relation between the hero—who is explicitly or implicitly but always assured of aid in advance, guaranteed—and the difficult situation in which he finds himself during the course

of action that I propose as the constitutive criterion of the genre." (Tenèze, 1970:23–24).

21. According to Tenèze, "like the real hero of this custom, the hero of the magic folk tale ventures, alone and far from his familiar surroundings, to the perilous fringe of an exceptional experience capable of supplying him with a "personal provision of power," his insertion into the world—and thus, there is a magic solution to the absurd and desperate endeavor to leave the social order which is played out in the universe of fiction. Isn't the folk tale a response to the oppressive interrogation of reality?" (Tenèze, 1970:28-29).
22. The word 'political' has been used in the way Munro S. Edmonson has used in 'Politics of Folklore': "If truth and right could no longer be sought in the divinity of the king's person and the mystique of the imperial tradition, they could be traced to the sublime will of the people of the [First] nation. It was stirring at such a moment to find (or imagine) the integrity of the untutored *folk* still intact and resistant to all manner of sophisticated (and corrupting) influences" (Edmonson, 1971:34).

CHAPTER FOUR

The Lesser One, the Trickster: Subverting the 'Mainstream' Ethos

> There can be no practical realities without the symbolic coding of them as practical; the theory that the social is created out of action—the day-to-day decisions of myriads of people—truly obfuscates the nature of the social.
>
> —Cohn, 1987: 40

The 'mainstream' in India is preoccupied with the privileges and the responsibilities of the first-born, usually expected to be a male. The eldest male among the siblings, with his right to perform the major rituals after the death of the parents, almost becomes the father figure for the younger ones. In the 'mainstream' family discourse, the youngest one is hardly left with any authority but has to suffer the hegemonic dictat of the eldest brother. In the 'mainstream' epics and legends of India, the central figure who gets all the power and the glory is the first-born. Contrary to this norm, one comes across in the folktales of the indigenous communities the reverse formulation, where the youngest becomes the protagonist of folktales. One also finds alternatives in the tribal folktales where, as a sharp contrast to the sagas of the kings and princes, the poor and the unprivileged become the central figure. And most importantly, the means by which the younger or the lesser one moves from depravity towards prosperity is chiefly that of playing a trickster—a role which is customarily condemned by the 'mainstream' as malevolent.

Here I aim to highlight how the folktales of the tribal

communities provide alternatives, which violate the dominant ethos in two major ways: firstly, by providing importance to the younger / lesser one, unlike the obsession with the eldest among the royals and; secondly, by an alternative reading of the 'trickster' as a model for emancipation through which indigeneity seems to subvert all attempts, programmed by the 'mainstream', to impose majoritarian values and statist cultural standards on them.

Ronald Paulson, in his conviction that evil is "in the eye of the beholder", has concluded that, "evil is a cultural construct" (Paulson, 2007:xiii). The 'mainstream' notion of evil that gets attached with a trickster is essentially the cultural imperialistic design of the state for whom the trickster represents the indigenous wisdom of disclosing its essential neo-colonial functioning. According to C. Fred Alford's claim, evil is "not a state of mind, but a state of world"(Alford, 1997:15). For him evil is "no-thing" (Alford, 1997:ix), that is, "the nothingness we dread" (Alford, 1997:15); the nothingness that results from "the loss of self, loss of meaning, loss of history and loss of connection to the world itself" (Alford, 1997:ix). This existential conceptualising of evil shows how evil is more experiential in the sense that to exist as per one's notion of being human is to keep up a correspondence with evil: "doing evil is an attempt to transform the terrible passivity and helplessness of suffering into activity" (Alford, 1997:3). Engaging with indigeneity on a paranoid-schizoid locus, where the tribal community dreads of its "doom at the hands of malevolent external persecutors who seek to destroy" (Alford, 1997:40) them, the performing of the trickster by the underprivileged protagonists of folktales confirm how the tribal people choose to be party with the 'mainstream' notion of evil, and as an evildoer the indigeneity tries to claim its authority over the presence of the gaze of the other.[1]

Disfavoured as the Trickster: Son of the Youngest Wife (A Limbu Folktale)

There was once a king who had two wives. The elder wife lived in a beautiful palace, while the younger one was given a horse stable. The elder wife had lots of children with whom she enjoyed all good

food and costly things. The younger wife had only one son with very little food and no good clothing. One day, calling all his sons, the king announced: "I want you all to travel and bring a treasurable jewel. Whosoever will be able to bring the most precious jewel for my crown at the earliest will become the heir to my throne." The elder wife had lots of food items which she packed for each of her sons. All her sons went in various directions to collect valuable stones and jewellery for the king. The younger wife hardly had anything to provide to her son. She asked her son to stay back home. But the son said, "Let me try my luck, mother. In case I succeed in getting something nice for father, then he might start treating us well." His mother then managed to prepare five *rotis* from the grain that were given to the horses. The boy packed the five *rotis* and began to walk in search of something valuable that would make the king feel happy. After walking throughout the day, he felt tired and sat on the rocks on the top of a cave. He was very hungry, but looking at such less number of *rotis,* he felt sad. He started counting them one by one and said, "Only five to eat. But I am so hungry!" In the cave below, there were five witches. They thought that the boy was thinking of eating them. The witches got scared. The boy again repeated, "How can I sustain with just five!" The witches started pleading, "Please don't eat! Please don't eat" But the boy thought that they were asking him not to eat the *rotis*. So he went on saying, "I am hungry. I have to eat." The witches them said, "We will give you whatever you want if you stop eating". The boy immediately said, "Give me ten beautiful diamonds." The witches threw out ten costly diamonds from the cave. The boy took them and went back to his horse stable. He showed the diamonds to his mother. She was very pleased. Next morning the son of the youngest wife went to meet the king. The king at first did not pay much heed to him. But when he showed the ten beautiful diamonds, his father, the king, became very happy. The king then realised that he shouldn't have maltreated his youngest wife and the youngest son. Out of remorse and contentment he declared the boy to be the next king.

The youngest son of the king and his younger wife in this Limbu tale represents the alternative youngest-hero of the tribal folktale, unlike the 'mainstream' lore where hardly one comes to know much about the younger ones.[2]

The folktale begins by imitating the stereotyped 'mainstream' narratives where the elder wife of the king lives with her children in a beautiful palace full of good food and costly clothes while the younger wife and her only son stays in a horse stable with very little food and no good clothing. However, at the end of the folktale it is the youngest son of the disfavoured wife who manages to bring the diamonds for the king's crown before the sons of the elder wife succeed to bring anything precious for the father and accordingly has been declared as the future king of the land.

The aged kings in folktales usually become the tyrannical patriarchs who try to turn every other as his slave[3]. But unlike the Oedipal plot of the folktales where the patriarchal father is often despised by the competing/confronting son, the youngest son of the king and his younger wife tries to please his displeased father despite the dissuasive mother who prefers him not to compete with his other step-brothers. The disfavoured son acquires his treasures by performing a trickster. By chance he sits on the top of a cave—counting his *rotis*[4] and trying to figure out how many he can eat—under which the witches who have been staying think that the youngest son wants to eat them. Again, as opposed to the usual pattern where human beings get scared of the witches here we have the witches who get frightened by the king's disfavoured son. The trick that the son plays on the witches, while negating the 'mainstream' notion of evil (such as the use of trickery) suggests that "evil is due to human freewill" (Mackie, 1990:33). The free will that has provoked the maltreated son to begin his quest in search of a gift for his father has also prompted him to play a trickster before the frightened witches. Offering a vision of empowerment for the disfavoured son, the role of a trickster according to this tribal folktale seems to be portrayed as a 'post-heroic' performance, in the sense that it can be performed by "men who have mastered the hero's way [and, thereby,] can deal with the primordial energies of the unconscious and the deep masculine" (Chinen, 1993:19) by wandering at an outer realm beyond that of a stereotyped warrior hero or a patriarchal dominator. Although the youngest son's fulfilling of his aspiration by becoming the future monarch might appear to be an enactment of the shadow of the patriarchy, yet the alternative that he provides by his unheroic

depiction of a trickster is that of a non-conformist monarch with 'deep masculinity'.[5]

Underprivileged as the Trickster: The Clever Man (A Limbu Folktale)

There was a queen who would change lovers each day, by appointing a man as the king for the day and next morning that man would be found dead. To be appointed as the king became the saddest event of a man's life and everyone thought that in the near-future there would be no single living male left. Eventually, a very poor man got appointed as the king. Since already his life was full of hardships, he was rather happy to take the challenge. At night he wrapped a banana tree in a blanket and placed it on the bed, while hiding himself only to witness how a snake came out of the queen's nose and bit the banana tree. He repeated the trick the very next day and the moment the snake emerged out of the queen's nose to bite the banana tree, he killed it with his *khukuri*, the small curved sword. Thereafter, none of the kings got killed.

The striking feature of *The Clever Man* is the depiction of a queen as opposed to the king-centricity of most of the folktales, where the queen is always a secondary character, or is dead. The presence of the queen as one of the central characters is the consequence of the Yumanism[6], where Tagera Ningwaphuma as the only supreme Goddess is the icon of cosmic consciousness and eternal 'Motherhood' who gives rise to all other creations, and thereby, asserts the feminine principle as the principium reality. The hierarchical Yumanist Trinitarianism—where both the First Reality, Tagera Ningwaphuma, and Yuma Sam, her daughter cum heir and the second Person in the Trinitarian order, are females only to be followed by the third Person, Thoba Pa-Sam or Hang-Sam, the masculine component originating out of the primordial womanhood—exposes the radical component of Yumanism unlike some of the 'mainstream' androcentric religions of India. Yumanism provides the feminine principle with the foremost agency of even defying the grip of the masculine exigency.

This Limbu folktale describes the alternative circumstance where the males are the victims of the female queen. Although the

beginning of the story, on the one hand, seems to be almost a parody of the king-centricity as the usual pattern followed in the folktales, which also rejects the use of Otherised female bodies like that of the witches, yet on the other hand, the association of the snake with that of the queen underlines the tactful warning of danger about the female body beneath its apparent grandeur. However, the poor man's killing of the serpent that comes out of the queen's nose, thereby, turning the 'abject' body into a 'normatised' desirable body for the male, reveals the alternative 'sublime terror'[7] of the poor man in sharp contrast to the dreadfulness of other men who have been killed by the serpent. The poor man is the underprivileged person who is, nevertheless, gifted with an unbounded faculty of imagination that stimulates him to wrap a banana tree in a blanket and place it on the bed, while hiding himself only to witness how a snake comes out of the queen's nose and bites the banana tree. The poor man as a trickster repeats the same the next night and successfully kills the snake with his small sword. The fact that the poor man's 'trick' is in reality a mode of procuring agency by the underprivileged often gets overlooked by the element of 'wonder' that is produced by the folktale. Contributing a fairly-tale-like feature to this 'wonder folk tale', the poor trickster reveals the paradox of trick: that the magic obscures the struggling interests which produce it.[8] The folktale thus reveals how the performance of a trickster by an underprivileged man enables him not only to empower the self but also permits him to sanction the feminine as not being a mere 'abjection'. The poor man as the trickster, indicating a 'sublime terror', rather resolves the boundary between himself and the serpent-queen, often projected as the Other of a hypermasculine self.

Unheroic as the Trickster: Two Brothers and a Tiger
(A Lepcha folktale)

Once upon a time, there were two brothers; the elder one was very strong and hefty but almost an idiot, while the younger one, who was very short and timid, was very clever. One day, both of them started walking for Tibet with a bag full of maize in order to exchange it with a bag of salt. Soon it became dark. They decided to sleep under a

tree. The younger brother felt thirsty. He requested the elder brother to fetch him some water. The elder one went inside the forest where a tiger was hunting a deer. The idiotic elder brother, who thought that it was a huge cat, came running to the younger brother to show him how a big cat was eating a deer. When the younger brother reached the spot along with the elder one, the deer was lying dead on the ground but no other animal was there. The younger better suggested, "Let's take the deer and roast it for our dinner." The elder brother was delighted. He collected some pieces of dry wood from the forest and made a fire. Then he started roasting the deer. Soon the tiger got the smell of the meat. It came right in front of the younger brother. The younger brother understood that it was the same tiger that the elder brother had mistaken for a cat and that it came to take back the deer that it had successfully killed. The thin and weak brother shouted at his elder brother for help. But the idiotic brother who was busy roasting the deer said, "Why are you afraid of a cat? Don't disturb me now." The younger brother cleverly replied, "See how the tiger is touching your meat." Listening to this, the elder brother became very furious. He turned back, and lifting the tiger by his hands, tossed it far away. The tiger ran away into the forest.

The clever younger brother, with all his unheroic lean and weak features, plays a trickster as one who "emphasises healing instead of heroism, communication rather than conquest, and exploration over exploitation" (Chinen, 1993:19-20). The younger brother's mode of combat with the tiger through the use of a trick on one hand, emphasises how a trick can serve as a mode of empowerment for the unheroic, and on the other hand, it exposes the element of 'wonder' that is often produced by the folktales as mere trickery. The younger brother provides a stark contrast to his elder brother who appears to be heroic by his stoutness and fearlessness. The story satirises the conventional notion of heroism by depicting the elder brother, who lifts a tiger with his hands and throws it far away almost like a ball, as an idiot who even fails to differentiate a tiger from a cat. Perceived by the standards of the patriarchal 'mainstream', the younger brother has nothing heroic about him. He can be easily labelled as feminine due to his lack of boldness. He is scared to go in search of water into

the dark forest and has to depend on his elder brother. It is the elder brother who arranges dried up wood for the fire and handles the deer on his own in order to roast it well for dinner. The frail younger brother is rather clever enough to play an effective trickster. Despite himself being unheroic so far his physicality is concerned, the clever younger brother efficaciously gets rid of the tiger by playing a trick on his elder brother through misinforming him that the tiger is stealing the roasted meat of the deer. Performing a trickster thus compensates for the unheroic trait of the younger brother. Rather in a way of mockery the folktale renders 'mainstream' notion of a macho heroism as idiocy and favours a trickster over a daring male. The weak younger brother as a trickster justifies that Chinen has been correct in stating that as the role of a trickster "helps men break free from traditional male roles, but [due to that] it also provokes the enmity of patriarchal culture. Society therefore supresses the Trickster, calls him criminal…This is why the Trickster suffers from a bad reputation and why his wisdom is not immediately obvious. Patriarchal society rejects him, forcing him to hide. The Trickster represents a positive…spirit behind the wild man and the deep masculine" (Chinen, 1993:91).

'Mainstreaming' of the Trickster: Two Sisters
(A Toto folktale)

Two sisters lived in a village. The older of the two was well-off while the condition of the younger one was pitiable. Having many children, she had to work door-to-door for her survival. One day, she was looking for work but was not successful. With no other options left, she went to her elder sister to borrow some food for her children. The elder sister made a bargain: if the younger one managed to comb all the lice off her hair by the evening, she would give food. After killing all the lice, when the younger sister demanded food for her children as per the condition, the deceiving elder sister, who had hidden two lice in her nails, put the hand on her head and released the lice. Combing the hair herself, the elder sister could easily show the two lice still present in her hair, and thereby, accusing the younger

sister of neglecting the work, denied food for her children. Cheated, the younger sister was full of anguish and annoyance. Weeping, she entered the forest to gather wild vegetables and fruits. Suddenly she found herself in front of a gigantic bear while she was gathering fruits by a forest stream, and stood there petrified. To add to her astonishment, the bear started talking like a man and asked the reason for her grief. Listening to her sorrowful saga, the bear opted to visit her house. Reaching the house, the bear asked her to make arrangements for the night stay in the room where she had the sacred shrine, the door of which should be closed from outside and should not be opened until the sunrise. The younger sister, along with her children, ate the wild fruits and slept. She woke up quite late the next morning. She found the house flooded with sun rays. She was worried that she might not get work as she was late. Remembering of the last night's incident, she ran to the room of sacred shrine, to discover that the bear had left behind food stuff, gold and precious things for her. From that day, she started living a pleasurable life, but never forgot her past sufferings. She would always help the poor of the village. The villagers loved her a lot and soon she became so famous that her elder sister visited her out of curiosity. She became very jealous to see the transformation and asked the younger sister the secret behind the prosperity. The younger sister narrated the entire account of the bear. The elder sister imitated the younger sister and started weeping in the forest. The bear appeared and she misleadingly told the bear of her children starving for want of food. The bear told what was exactly told to the younger one. The elder sister intentionally didn't give food to her children and neither did she eat anything. All night long the children cried out of starvation, which she thought would make the bear provide her with more abundance. She couldn't sleep and early in the morning got up and opened the door of the sacred shrine only to find that the bear didn't leave a single piece of wealth, but consumed whatever food was stored there, leaving the room full of its shit. Thus, the wild bear taught the conceited elder sister a lesson for her viciousness.

Reading this story in the light of what Chinen has stated regarding the society's unease about the performing of a trickster—that has been quoted above—it can be said that the folktale reveals

the 'mainstreaming' of the image of a trickster by erasing out the alternatives that it has been positively representing and rendering it ultimately as a criminal character. Unlike the lesser ones of the previous folktales, the one who plays trick here is the elder and the affluent one among the sisters. The fact that she can bargain with her poor and helpless younger sister, who is desperate about how to provide food to her children, is enough a clue about the essential ruthlessness of the elder sister. Hence, it is no wonder that she plays the trick of hiding two lice in her nails, so that by putting the hand on her head she can release them and after combing her hair again can justify that since the younger sister has not fulfilled the condition of killing all the lice from her hair she is not supposed to provide food for the younger sister and her children. By shifting the role of a trickster from that of an underprivileged who uses trick as a mode of empowerment in an affirmative manner, this folktale which associates trickster with that of a well-off oppressor who uses trick as a means of depriving the disadvantaged, represents the 'mainstreaming' of the alternative positive role of the ethnic trickster into a deviant who needs to be eliminated. This politics of framing of the deviant by the motivated 'mainstream' can be best understood if one recalls Howard Becker's observations that "the question of what rules are to be enforced, what behaviour regarded as deviant, and which people are labelled as outsiders must also be regarded as political. The functional view of deviance, by ignoring the political aspect of the phenomenon, limits our understanding", because "deviance is not the quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an 'offender'. The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label" (Becker, 1966:7 & 9).

The folktale, however, provides an alternative by favouring the lesser one in the form of the younger sister over the elder in its mode of offering resistance against the majoritarian perspectives of the encroaching 'mainstream'. The elder sister's attitude towards his younger sister which is more beastly[9] in comparison to the humanitarian bear elucidates that "The total humanisation of the animal coincides with a total animalisation of man." (Agamben,

2004:78). The support that the younger sister gets from the bear to get rid of her poverty reveals how in the folktales of the pre-industrial oral culture one can find anti/pre-anthropocentricism. The woman's identification of her human self with the empathetic animality of the bear suggests her understanding of animal manifestation as being *priori* to human which on one hand, helps her to understand the severity of her elder sister and on the other, to rely upon the liberality of the bear. This also shows the move from 'person-centredness' towards 'animal-centredness' and ultimately to 'animal-directedness', which alone would result in what Roy Willis (1994) has termed as "Humanity's reincorporation in the natural Commonwealth". These characteristics of 'animal-centredness' and 'animal-directedness' which become the integral component of the world view in small scale or tribal societies has been termed by Joan Halifax as a "cathexis to the realm of creatures" (Halifax, 1982: 6).

Although the influence of the 'mainstream' idea of a trickster on the tribal ethos altered by the trespassing non-indigeneity is very clear at the beginning of the Toto folktale, yet the constructive trick that the bear plays in order to teach the elder sister a lesson for her betrayal and viciousness can be seen as the counter-attempt of the tribal community to restore the alternative notion of the trickster. The bear who has left the younger sister's house only after providing her with a room full of food stuff, gold and precious things, leaves the house of the elder sister, having consumed all her food, with a room full of shit.The response of the bear torwards the younger sister, in a sharp contrast to that of the elder one, must have been due to "the special kinship and / or ritual relationship between human and animals" (Ucko, 1994:xvii). But this bond between the younger sister as the lesser one and the bear as the 'lower being' is the consequence of "an original logic, a direct expression of the structure of the mind (and behind the mind, probably, of the brain)" that helped the early human being to at once identify with and differentiate from animals through that logic of "oppositions and correlations, exclusions and inclusions, compatibilities and incompatibilities" (Levi-Strauss, 1964:90). The ending of this Toto folktale with a bear as performing the trickster has reinstated the alternative image of a wise indigenous

trickster—unlike the criminal-trickster of the 'mainstream'—who can disclose the essential baseness of the elder sister along with assisting the younger sister in transforming the inner "anthropophorous animal"[10], which has enabled her to master the internal animality cum humanity, into an elevated individual who continues to serve the poor and the needy.

Conclusion

The last-born folks in all these tribal tales are the embodiments of the 'little traditions'[11] that the 'first nations' represent. As opposed to the 'mainstream's' obsession with the bigger / advantaged, these tribal folktales, by focusing on the younger/lesser ones, provide resistance to the 'mainstream' disciplines vis-à-vis the 'mainstreaming' of the indigenous knowledge under the plea of a majoritarian modernity where the scientific state seems to strategically encourage "the only kind of relationship that could exist in the context of domination, between so-called modern science and so-called traditional knowledge, where the latter is either marginalized or, better still, *eaten* by the former" (Hountondji, 1995:4). The alternative use of performing a trickster also underscores the "ethno-philosophy"[12] of the indigenous people that differs drastically from the 'mainstream' perspective. It is true that what is known as the archaic/traditional societies of the indigenous people is neither static, nor homogeneous. The First Nations denotes varying heterogeneous groups of ethnic communities whose notions of alternatives differ from one tribal society to another as well as from what gets labelled as the 'mainstream'[13]. However, certain commonalities that have emerged out of the folktales of Toto, Limbu and Lepcha communities, in their favouring of both the lesser one and (or as) the trickster, can allow us to conclude about the diffusion of 'endogenous'[14] knowledge among the intra-ethnic communities. The alternative endogenous knowledge endorsed by these diverse tribal communities, that provides an antithetical perspective regarding the lesser-one and the trickster, reminds one of Laclau[15] that since an exclusive politics of pure difference would be self-defeating, indigenous people of differences as the markers of depravity need to belong intimately

with other different tribal groups who are equally marginalised by the majoritarian state and governmentality.

NOTES

1. The Gaze of the Other, according to Sartre, is "a limit of my freedom […] it is given to me as a burden which I have to carry without ever being able to turn back to know it, without even being able to realize its weight" (Sartre, 1989:262). One has to invalidate the active gaze of the other for asserting the existence of the self. Sartre has further argued that "the Other has to make my being-for-him be in so far as he has to be his being" (Sartre, 1989:262). This establishes the fact that the autonomy and subjectivity of others demands the loss of integrity of the self. Sartre's notion of the Gaze of the subject, finds its correspondence in Alford's idea of the evil-doer who exercises the authority of the self for claiming power over the other.
2. In the *Ramayana*, one hardly gets to know much about the youngest brother, Shatrughna, and same holds true for Nakula and Shahadeva in the *Mahabharata*.
3. For details see Campbell (1968).
4. *Roti* is a flat, round, hand-made bread, chiefly consumed by the South Asians.
5. First used by Robert Bly (1990), 'deep masculine', according to Chinen, refers to "the part of the male psyche that is normally buried under conventional male roles, heroic ideals, and patriarchal ambitions" (Chinen, 1993:14).
6. The way of life of the aboriginal Limbu tribes based on the traditional faith is termed as Yumanism. For a detailed study of Yumanism see Subba (2012a; 2012b).
7. Connolly has categorized 'sublime terror' as "an 'unlimiting' of the imagination, an increase in consciousness and a capacity to accept ethical guilt about our abject desires" through which the self resolves the boundary between the 'monster' or the devil, seen as the self's Other, by recognizing that "the perverse and psychotic desires of the monster are a mirror image of our own perverse desires and the perversity of our own community and culture, based as they are on mechanisms of sacrifice and of scapegoating" (Connolly, 2003:419–20).
8. "When I reflect on the continuity between the 'wonder folk tale' and the fairy tale", writes Christina Bacchilega, "I find I want to emphasize

the ideological paradox or 'trick' which in its multiple performances informs both: that magic which seeks to conceal the struggling interests which produce it" (Bacchilega, 1997:7).

9. "The tale spells out the message that in each of us there is a latent animal nature, normally held in check by reason and morality; that bestiality lurks beneath the civilized veneer." (Mérimée, 1999:xxiv).
10. Agamben, inspired by Kojève's reading of Hegel (Kojève, 1980), has stated that "man is not a biologically defined species, nor is he a substance given once and for all; he is, rather, a field of dialectical tensions always already cut by internal caesurae that every time separate— at least virtually—"anthropophorous" animality and the humanity which takes bodily form in it. Man exists historically only in this tension; he can be human only to the degree that he transcends and transforms the anthropophorous animal which supports him, and only because, through the action of negation, he is capable of mastering and, eventually, destroying his own animality" (Agamben, 2004:12).
11. Robert Redfield (1956) has coined the term 'Little tradition' while Milton Singer (1972) has used it in Indian context.
12. The word "ethno-philosophy" in a polemical sense has been used by Hountondji and Marcien Towa. For details see Hountondji (1970) and Towa (1971).
13. My conscious recurrent use of 'mainstream' is mainly influenced by Akeel Bilgrami who has also considered 'mainstream' to be an important route to nationalism as "a modern state of mind in which the very ideal of 'nation' has built into it as a form of necessity the ideal of nation-state, with its commitment to such things as development, national security, rigidly codified forms of an increasingly centralized policy, and above all the habit of exclusion of some other people" (Bilgrami, 1998:383). It is the dominant mainstream culture that, under the plea for 'culturalism', appropriates the *tribalism* by distortingly fitting the nonconformist indigeneity within the frame of national discourses and institutions.
14. Replacing the word "traditional" which would mislead the reader to think that the society and its knowledge is permanent, unchallengeable and unchanging, critics have used the word 'endogenous' to "dwell on the origin of a cultural product or value that comes from, or at least is perceived by people as coming from inside their own society, as opposed to imported or "exogenous products or values" (Hountondji, 1995:7).

15. "To assert one's own *differential* identity involves…the inclusion in that identity of the other, as that from which one delimits oneself. But it is easy to see that a fully achieved differential identity would involve the sanctioning of the existing *status quo* in the relation between groups. For an identity which is purely differential vis-à-vis other groups has to assert the identity of the other at the same time as its own and, as a result, cannot have identity claims in relation to those other groups. Let us suppose that a group has such claims—for instance the demand for equal opportunities in employment and education…In so far as these are claims presented as rights that I share as a member of the community with all other groups, they presuppose that I am not simply different from the other but, in some fundamental respects, equal to them" (Laclau, 1996:48).

CHAPTER FIVE

Memories of Transgenderism

> Danger lies in transitional states; simply because transition is neither one state or the next, it is undefinable.
>
> —Douglas, 1966: 116

The Toto community had hardly been phobic towards the erotic. So far as sexual intimacies are concerned, both male and female have been allowed to experience pre-marital eroticism, which continues to this day, but in hushed tones, due to the presence of the normatising agents of the mainstream: the counselling NGOs with their welfare-manuals of medical discourse for producing docile bodies; the preaching missionaries terrifying them about the sin of flesh and; the vigilant administrative agents of the state assuring them of money the moment they match to their conformist schemes. Counter to the mainstream sexual discourse where the state / law treats sexuality merely as reproductive, and therefore compels it to be confined within a procreative institution (turning even live-in heterosexual relationship as almost an institutionalised construct), in Toto society, marriage would have taken place only after the woman was sure that she had conceived. The institution of family was seen from a utilitarian standpoint, not sexuality. The pleasure aspect of eroticism always got acknowledged in Toto culture, assuring space for non-reproductive intimacies. Even not so long ago, once they attained puberty, the unmarried girls were free to choose their provisional partners among the guests, who arrived at their dwelling place and the young unmarried Toto boys would have the initial exposure

to sexual life by being intimate with either the widows of their elder brother or / and with young grandmothers (except their own grandmothers) with whom they shared casual relations (Roy Burman, 1962). Coming in contact with the mainstream culture through the intermixing with the neighbouring Rajbangshis and Nepalis, this system is censored these days, though the youth seem to often get intimate with such grandmother-figures in a clandestine mode. The Toto folk stories reveal the ambivalent apprehension regarding the grandmother-youth sexual intimacies that has emerged out of the compulsion exerted by the external agencies, on the Totos to be converted as normatised, while, nonetheless, unable to overcome the indigenous appeal of the suppressed tribal ethos embedded in their collective unconscious.

Tales and memories

All identities of the self and society are essentially "steeped in memory" (Casey, 1987:ix). Hence, in order to historically understand an ethnic group, one needs to apprehend the ethnic memory, manifested through the folktales. Memory is the foundation of the folktales. Collective memory reflects how the social groups construct the image of the past through agreed versions that get formulated on the basis of communication. Recalling the past through retelling of the folktales show how some facets of past offer resistance to the attempts of revision (Schudson, 1992). Retaining many aspects of cultural / traditional history through the sharing of the ethnic memory, the subordinate tribal groups assert their identity and provide resistance to the impositions intended by the dominant culture, often under the guise of a hegemonic, nation-building agenda. What get conveyed through the tribal folktales are the descriptions of remembered culture or what Roger Sanjek (1993) calls 'memory cultures'.

The tribal tales rendered by the individual are the part of individual memory that is shared with the extended memory across generations and beyond the individual lifespan (d'Azevedo, 1962). Thus, a folktale embodies not just a reproduction of an individual memory or a personal documentation, but a collective memory of interpretations across generations. Collective memory, as a transactive

'lived memory' of social functions, is "what remains of the past in the lived experience of groups, or what these groups make of the past" (Niranjana, 1978:398).

Vansina has argued that the oral literature provides a historical intentionality of an oral account and hence, an oral tradition can be treated as a 'historiology' of the past, that is, a version of how people have interpreted their history through the oral legacy (Vansina, 1985:196). Thus the 'historiology' of the past that one obtains from the oral tradition of the tribal tales provides the contemporary audience, even if not always the factual truth but, with the interpreted truth of the historical truth.

Even if the commemorative storytelling by an individual is proved to be erroneous, the personal narrative, nonetheless, exhibits continuities and alterations in memory as the consequence of continuities and alterations in identities over time and discloses the subjective cum collective mentalities/reactions to such historical moments of rupture. Any retelling of the tribal-tales story beginning with "once upon a time" and ending with "and it continued ever after" allows the determined past and anticipated / probable future to meet the present, and thereby becomes the duplication of the tension of every moment of real-life present experience. All that one experiences in the present moment of time, can only be expressed by narrating, just like the tales, its experiencing of the tension with a determinate past of origin and an anticipated future of possibility and indeterminacy.

"Stories, in particular, infuse the incipient drama of experience" (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997:41). It is immaterial to ask if at all things "remain the same ever after", for that unoccupied future as narrated in the story, is the "emptiness", the unorganised void that exists between our real-life perception of "tock" and the next "tick".[1]

Story as the Memento of an Ethnic History

Culture has often been seen as "the story its members tell so as to make sense of all the different pieces of their social life" (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997:235). Barthes has also commented that "there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives"

(Polkinghorne, 1991:135). Narratives thus, in a sense, create the community (Keeshing-Tobias, 1994:120). Folk literature holds appeal for various reasons: according to Raphael Samuel, these oral traditions seems to represent popularised historical imagination (Samuel, 1994); for Jameson, these literatures convey the commodity fetishism and the atrophy of some authentic history (Jameson, 1991); while for critics like Shaw and Chase their merit lies in providing the present listeners with a retro-fashion retreat into the personal and familial domain of nostalgia and thereby providing an escape from the uncertainties of future (Shaw and Chase, 1989:3).

The folk tales exemplify the mnemonic rendition of the oral tradition. There have been two distinct approaches of understanding the merit of these oral mnemo-cultural practices—one that treats the foundational memory (remembrance for transmission) required for (re)narrating these story-tales as passive and thereby almost the "mirror" of the past-history, tradition and community; and the other that rather than looking for reflection and authenticity, tries to focus on the present-day representation and fabrication of the folktales, relating them to subjectivity, invention and fantasy, and ultimately treating memory as being actively produced. In both these approaches there is immense tension so far as memory is concerned: either in the form of anxiety concerning the loss and upsurge of memories embodied in objects of narration and the narrating subject (from the historic perspective) or the fearful hope about the possible implantation and transfer of the evoked experiences of unlived-through events (Landsberg, 1995) that prompts the teller to fabricate the inherited tales with rhetoric—metaphoric, metonymic—as well as literary devices like magic-real, transbiology, morphology, all allied to fantasy.

The folk tales are the narratives of reeling world of imagination along with some sort of a telling about the extra-texual real world. The inherent dynamics of the inner-texture of these tale-texts are the "mirrors" (Byrskog, 2002:1) of the narrator, reflecting the self-contained world of the subject, while the intertextures of the series of tales in an extra-texual mode, become the "windows" (Byrskog, 2002:1) opening up to the extra-fictional terrain of diachronic levels of the socio-cultural history. The narratives where history

becomes an intrinsic part despite as stories have been labelled as "realistic narratives" by Hans W. Frei.[2] The use of magic-real, transbiology and such other literary devices in these folk takes is one of the major reasons on which one can question about their validity as realistic narratives, and thereby relevant to history. But it must be acknowledged that although these tales are stories, but they are uniquely bound to the past, with elements of reminiscences and remembrance, getting transmitted as memoirs of past from time immemorial, without which they can get counted as good stories but not folk story-tales. Moreover, the uses of rhetorical devices would tempt us to deconstruct them in order to make use of them both as signifiers of the socio-cultural texture of the bygone time, as well as for the "focalization around the reception of extrafictional material from the past" that form a part, external to the story-tales (Abramowski, 1983:215-216; 232-233). Like different pearls collected at different times, but all stringed together into a single garland, these folk tales are historical items; there is history but history, while reaching us to our present times, has become stories.

The discourse in these folk story-tales can of more relevance as a way of relating the past-ness with the present. As an extra-existential reality though the history in its past-ness seems to vanish from these story-tales, but their very contact with the present make them appear more useful as the means of understanding the almost historic eschatological continuum of something that occurred within what is past history, but that is present in the memory as being important to memorise and convey for the community, even from the position of the present. Ulrich Luz (1993), in his attempt to deal with the alleged distinction between story and history, observed that the "otherness" of the past-ness of the orally transmitted stories get absorbed by the present time of the community through the collective oral synthesis of the present; hence, in a sense, story is history.

This interpretative study, thus, is centred round the searching for traces of encoded voices as to how these voices expressed oral history, behind the textualised work of tales. Beside the items in the text that serve as a window for the tradition, some items in a text may be fictional ones, mirroring only the world of story itself. Nevertheless, the fact that the self-contained world of the story has emerged as the

textualised narrativisation by someone from the real world, where the story despite being fictitious shared the language of the narrator and thereby got implanted in a common social system, the story can serve as an index to the socio-cultural situation of its teller of tales.

Reading under a Queer Transgender lens

The Pumpkin Prince: A Toto Folktale

Cleaning up a bit of the jungle, the grandfather and grandmother sowed pumpkin seeds around their house. However, none but a single tree grew up to produce a single pumpkin, which the old couple thought of preserving for future consumption. The day the grandmother attempted to eat the pumpkin, it started pleading her not to cut it and promised to look after them and also do the farming. Thereafter, the pumpkin did the cultivation and took care of the grandparents. One day, he proposed to go to the king's house and bring his daughter as his wife. The old couple wished him all success. The pumpkin then went to the king's house and found that the daughters were busy washing their dishes after having the meal. He proposed marriage to the eldest one. She rejected him for being a mere pumpkin. On the similar ground the middle one too rejected him. Finally, the youngest daughter arrived and the pumpkin asked her: "Will you go to my house and stay with me?" The youngest daughter agreed and both of them left for the pumpkin's house. On the way, seeing a mango tree, the king's daughter wished to have some mangoes. The pumpkin climbed up the tree and asked her to spread a cloth for the mangoes. Suddenly the pumpkin jumped on the cloth and burst into pieces. The wife started crying for she feared of losing her husband. All of a sudden, a beautiful prince emerged out of the pumpkin. The king's daughter was overjoyed to find such a handsome bridegroom and they started living happily and wih a lot of wealth with the grandparents and soon she gave birth to a son. When the the two daughters of the king came to know about this, they were very angry and jealous as well. They even repented for their mistake. The eldest one came to visit the youngest

sister one day. Under the pretext of taking the lice off her head, the eldest one took the youngest sister by the riverside. Proposing a bath, the eldest sister asked the youngest one to undress herself. The moment she took off her clothes, the eldest one pushed her sister into the river. The pumpkin's wife drowned and died. Putting on her youngest sister's clothes, the eldest sister returned to the pumpkin's house. While the Pumpkin could not recognise the difference, the child refused to drink milk and cried all through the night. At the break of dawn, the soul of the real wife appeared and she breast-fed her son. The child continued not to drink from the disguised wife and kept on weeping all through the successive nights. This created suspicion in the mind of the pumpkin. Checking closely, he found that his wife seemed different, though she resembled his real wife. That night he stayed awake. Early next morning, he saw his real wife coming and feeding the son, while her eyes were full of tears. The pumpkin-prince realised that the woman staying with him was the eldest sister of his real wife, who had killed her youngest sister in order to live with him. Catching hold of the baby with his mother, he insisted that his real wife should reveal the truth. Hearing the details, he asked the real wife to stay in the adjacent room. While the false wife was serving him breakfast, the pumpkin asked her to dig a deep hole for him to plant an arecanut tree. The false wife dug a deep big hole. The pumpkin-prince tied up her hands and legs and pushed her into the pit, with her entire body covered with earth and the head alone remained open. Bringing the real wife from the next room, he beheaded the eldest daughter of the king with a single stroke. Thereafter, they lived happily, accumulating more wealth and producing a number of children in due course.

The transgender possibility of the folktale, *The Pumpkin Prince*, lies in its projection of ephemeral sexuality.[3] The unconventional engagement of the tale, proposing for a triangular intimacy between the plant, human and non-human (apparition of the dead wife) in terms of erotic desire[4], makes the tale a site of ephemeral sexuality. The transbiology in this tale demonstrates the transgender 'anti-separatist' cum 'anti-assimilationist' trait of being 'transitive—multiply transitive'.[5] The pumpkin's bond with grandmother, by its portraying of the pumpkin to be a singular item for consumption

represents queerness as a preference as well, is cut-off once the pumpkin gets married to a princess; from pumpkin (in a satirical echoing of the mainstream idea of an "insufficient / useless man") he emerges as a 'prince'[6]. Conversely, the process of normatising remains incomplete despite the entry into the heteronormative institution of marriage and procreation. Hence, a replacement of cohabiting with the older grandmother (the ethno-traditional norm, but a taboo for the mainstream) by an elder sister (suggesting the historic censorship of the tribal norms as primitive by the self-assured enlightened mainstream) has to be made. Apparently, by killing the elder sister and returning back to the former wife the normativity is attempted to be restored. Yet again, the interesting paradox surfaces with the fact that the 'magical' in his love for the grandmother disguised as a pumpkin, and not as normative human, has to be revived. After a short performative inter-phase of living as and along with a human wife in order to enact the 'reproductive agent' as a normalised man, the desired non-normativity is achieved in the form of the compensatory apparition, disguised as his wife, in order to match the 'inextinguishable' queerness of the pumpkin prince and thereby live happily ever after. The tale suggests a movement from a transgender desire of life under the pretext of pumpkin, enacting a fleeting normative life represented by the death of the pumpkin and rise of the heteronormative man, only to regain the nonlife / afterlife where the reeled version of the real world, troubled with the politics of the normative, can be enacted along with the restoration of the transgender desire signified by the pumpkin's choice for a real-dead-wife. The return of the dead brings out the 'uncanny' which, again, is a combination of weirdness and the probable. The essence of uncanny, that at once causes trouble and fear, is similar to the encountering with the return of the most familiar: "this uncanny element is actually nothing new or strange, but something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed…something that should have remained hidden and has come into the open" (Freud, 2003:148).

The very use of a communicating pumpkin makes us assume of its transgressive non-normativity, along with the alarm that the fantastic

is an outcome of the prescriptive forces creeping into the tribal Toto society that labels the traditional normal as a 'normal-deviant' (Goffman, 1990). The transbiology confirms the assumption. The uncanny end of living happily with the phantom wife further surfaces the 'ghostly' existence of a nonconformist, forced to function as per the dictates of the homogenizing demands while constantly yearning for the resurgence of the repressed desire for the grandmother which finds its eventual eruption in the desire for the death of the normative agent. Uncanny thus is not death itself, but its return, that reminds of the popular saying that "the postman always rings twice". Death's return can be best understood in terms of what is killed, either in actuality or in thought. The pumpkin prince's inability to understand the difference between his wife and her elder sister, which is crucial for the realisation that the wife is dead, can be seen as an instance of 'projective inversion' (Dundes, 1980:51), by which the protagonist's tabooed desire of killing the wife on account of his queer grandmother-fixation, is transposed deliberately as the outcome of a commonplace rivalry of a jealous elder sister. The latent necrophilia that often results from the apprehension of being rejected by a female which he did face earlier by the two daughters of the king, further, exposes the essential incapability of the prince to maintain a lasting straight identity[7].

The Toad Man

Having gone in search of lobsters and crabs and not finding a single one, the grandfather returned with a large number of toads. The grandmother, out of her slackness, gave him lukewarm water instead of hot water, which the grandfather poured on the toads and all the toads, except one, managed to run away. The moment the grandmother thought of eating by grinding it with red chilli, the toad asked her not to kill him and promised to look after the old couple apart from cultivating the lands. Both of them were convinced by his appeal. Days passed and the toad grew up till the time finally arrived for him to get married. He asked the grandmother to prepare seven breads for the seven daughters of the king, whom he was thinking of proposing marriage. Reaching the king's house, he declared from

outside, his intention of marrying one of the king's daughters. The king asked the daughters to find out who was shouting from outside. All the six daughters came but didn't find anyone. Finally, the youngest one saw the toad and informed of his presence to the father. The king refused to give any of his daughters to a toad like him. Rejected by the king, the toad started laughing and as a consequence the sun continued to shine incessantly, resulting in the shortage of water and grass for cows, goats and horses. The king had to call the toad and he promised him of giving one of his daughters in marriage if he would bring rain. The toad immediately made arrangement for rain. The king, however, denied to let any of his daughters, marry the toad. The toad then started crying and as a result the heavy showers created such a flood that could almost submerge the king's house. The king again promised to give him his daughter if he stopped the rain, along with the condition that he should also agree to cultivate the king's land for a year. Having fulfilled all the conditions, the toad, a year after, demanded the king to give one of his daughters to him as per the promise. The king offered the toad to choose one among the seven. The toad opted for the youngest one and went with her back to the grandparents. Every night, the toad got transformed into a beautiful man. The wife once asked him: "Where do you leave your toad skin? " The toad replied: "I keep it inside the oven". That very night, the wife put fire on the toad skin and as the skin turned into ashes, the toad-husband, having failed to save his skin, ultimately died. Weeping and lamenting for her misdeeds, the wife returned back to the king's house. Meanwhile, the grandmother came back from the jhum house only to find the toad-man dead along with the toad-skin turned into ashes. She collected some ashes, mixed that with water and sprinkled the ash-water on the body of the dead toad. In due course, the toad came alive. He went to the king's house and brought the wife back and happily lived ever after.

This folktale strikes the reader with its repetition of queer transbiology and singularity of transgender preference. Transbiology here is a projection of expurgated desire resulting in an uncertain sexual status that destabilises the boundaries of gender and species. The toad, with no specificity of being a male or a female that talks, however, like a man seems to suggest what Deleuze and Guattari

calls “becoming”.[8] As an antithesis to Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of ‘becoming-animal’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:290), the toad’s non-teleological movement towards ‘becoming-man’ can be seen as the outcome of a recent surveillance against the transgender tribal subject by the external interveners into the tribal society that results in the in-between-ness of the ethno-queer to perform the imposed normativity through a ‘fugitive becoming’ (Turner and Greenhill, 2012:229) and yet assert for the queer liberty that the indigenous culture had been providing. The toad-skin is not symbolic of cross-dressing for the enactment of manhood and thereby gaining power cum pleasure, because the crisis then wouldn’t have been so acute for a necessary death and rebirth. Rather, it is suggestive of a transgender identity that “cross-over, cut across, move between, or otherwise queer socially constructed sex / gender boundaries” (Flanagan, 2008:12). Queerness, both in the sense of non-heterocentric and transgressive of the norm, gets visible the moment one scratches the toad-skin.

The willingness of the toad to stay with the grandmother gets emphasised by the fact that while all the rest have managed to escape that particular talking-toad stays back. This issue of choice gets further complicated with the youngest daughter’s ‘identification’ of the toad while the other six daughters of the king have ignored him. The commonality between the unwelcome ‘youngest’ daughter by the patriarch desperate for a son, and the non-essential transgressive toad must have been the initial link of correspondence, although later on she acts as an agent of power and dominance resulting from the internalised hierarchical ethos of the influential class. Talking-toad, as “fattening up a concept through the use of metaphor” (Stockton, 2004:279), can be taken as the figurative embodiment of interrogations related to size, species, class, noncompliance and social significance. The plebeian in the form of the grandparents, however, are at ease with the transgender toad which reveals the endorsement of the natural desire over the regulated need. The grandmother, as a metaphor for the pre-transitory / colonial Toto society, can afford to be careless in the mode of a Freudian slip so that the unattached youngsters get differentiated from the queerly provoking one. Her (psychosomatic) hunger is translated into the (somatic / pathological) appetite for a toad-man, suggesting the

replaced tangible desire of the connubial as cannibal. Grandmother's attempt to consume the toad with the (phallic) red-chilly again brings to light the fact that the Toto boys were allowed to have unproductive and non-utilitarian hedonistic sexual intimacy with grandmothers other than the parent's mothers. The grandmother's desire to 'grind' the toad is a metaphorical blending of death and sexuality not as antagonistic principles but as cyclic exchanging of energies to excite each other (Bataille, 1987:61). The death of the toad-man is another instance where life and death, violence and sexuality represent the passage into eroticism through the recognition of festivity and loss in destroying the self-contained character of the queer Toto participants as they are forced to live in their actual lives under the regimes of the trespassing mainstream.[9] The substitution of the 'carnal' with 'edible' is a device used recurrently in all folktales and also in this particular one when we recall how the toad has insisted in carrying seven breads for wooing the seven daughters of the king.[10]

The refusal of the king to give any of his daughters results from his stereotype trivialising of the queer transgender. The counter resistance of the toad not to succumb before the state illustrates the required queer politics of confrontation and negotiation. The toad's laughter and weeping, correspondingly giving rise to despair and delight for the non-queer lot, reveals the reversal of existential predicaments between the queer periphery and the normatised center. The promise made by the king, only to violate it shows the duplicity of the normative power along with the tension between the politics of the non-categorised body and the body politic. The multiple ways by which the toad man has to prove himself as a creature of potentialities, also reveals the growing suspicion associated with non-conformity. The toad finally compels the king to surrender in a mode of poetic justice offered by the rebellion narrators in the attempt to retain the freedom of tribal queerdom. The toad, bearing the connotation of an amphibian's two worlds of existence, is symbolic of both heteronormative and transgressive sexuality; from the toad-man he becomes a performative man by his entrance into the heterosexual institution of marriage with the king's youngest daughter. During the entire day the transgender self in the form of transbiology is kept intact as the mark of disobeying the homogenising agencies while

at night the sexuality with reproductive goal has be performed in the mode of a heteronormative man. The temporal pause between the queer transgender subjectivity and the straight performativity resembles what Judith Halberstam calls, "queer time" of the LGBTQ people's participation in "alternative life narratives" (2005:175) by engaging with queer subcultural practices before entering into the reproductive partnership. The wife's confrontation with the deviation is manifested by her burning of the toad skin in order to fix the toad-man into a normatised, gender-specified man and thereby erase out the non-functional desire that gets hidden under the toad skin. On account of the loss of the toad-skin, the man ceases to exist, because for him "What is real is the act of becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987:238). The necessity to continue with the *becoming* in order to survive as *not a being*, finds expression in Bakhtin's depiction of the grotesque as a multi-layered composite creation.[11] The toad man dies only to be resurrected by the grandmother. A transformation has to be enforced to replace grandmother's carnal desire with a safer motherly love. Hence, her role has been renovated from that of an 'eater' (the typical image that is assigned to the tribes as primitives when viewed from the mainstream) to the 'restorer' of the life in the pattern of an archetype mother figure that would help the invading mainstream in infusing taboo and repression strategically. Ultimately, the functional sexuality gets asserted through the union of the toad man and his wife, but only after the wife's accepting of the possible nonconformity in the resurgence of the dead man again as a toad, followed by the return of the grandmother. The revival of the grotesque toad-man by the old grandmother makes one recall, the image of "a pregnant hag" as used by Bakhtin while illustrating the grotesque as a consolidation of life and death, sexuality and chagrin: "It is ambivalent. It is a pregnant death. A death that gives birth" (Bakhtin, 1984a:25). This magic-real revival becomes a means by which the wife is taught to accept (through atonement for her prejudiced otherisng, revealed by her weeping and realization of her 'misdeed') the 'non-normative' as a normal-alternative.

The folktale not only hints at the normative pressure imposed on the Toto culture but also makes an interesting suggestion. The fact that the toad man has to die despite the transgressory living

as a normatised (husband-wife) and non-normatised (grandmother-boy) heterosexual, only to revive as a toad man again, allows us to be more confident about our assumption. The queer transgression represented by the toad man has to be something more than a contested heterosexuality that makes death as the only possible solution of the complexities. Only when one tries to recognise the underlying pressure on the toad man from the point of non-heterocentric orientation then only the revival, which always implies a revision, makes sense as one's endeavour to reconceive relationship to a twisted time. The transgender indigeneity, that could once enjoy the dignity of being normal in the tribal world, had to be reframed as a 'toad man' resulting from the conflict initiated by the majoritarian modernity that forcefully began to amend the Toto mindset by labelling its ideology as primitive. The death of even the transgender toad man, that best reveals the aptness of the metaphorical projection of the amphibian, suggests that the non-straight transgender can no longer survive under the increasing watchfulness of the homophobic neo-colonial / governmental machineries but only as a compromised transgressive heterosexual, symbolised by the revival of the dead toad, challenging at the most the homogenising agencies of a prescriptive reproductive / functional sexuality. The toad man could have been reborn as a man. However, his choice to resume along with the toad-skin, reveals the denial of the tribal transgender queer to fit into the prescriptive normative category of the mainstream but persist to be transgressive, but no longer a proclaimed transgender, through the continuum of non-functional eroticity, symbolised by the grandmother's reappearance. The death of the 'transgender' symbolises 'an impossible limit' (Bataille, 1992:39), that marks failure and powerlessness; however the rebirth projects that despite failure, "This powerlessness defines an apex of possibility, or at least, awareness of the impossibility opens consciousness to all that it is possible for it to think" (Bataille, 1989:10). The queer persistence also highlights the tribal awareness of the dysfunction that the pain of normality offers: "The pain of normality, is not just the consequence of a more or less successful renunciation, but the effect of a radical contradiction, an extreme dysfunction" (Dollimore, 1991:177).

The folktales thus becomes a documentation of how from the

intruded home life the transgender tribal looks for a badly fitting animal hide (Stockton, 2004:279) which again gets threatened by further incursion, resulting in the tangible loss and a symbolic resistance of indigeneity. The magical revitalising of the toad-man along with the repaired 'skin', can also be seen as a transgender attempt to consider eroticism as the 'anti-matter' of realism. Thereby, it has to be excluded from the social system demanding for a normatized identity, out of the consciousness of celebrating prohibition as the foundation of pleasure in a camouflaged mode[12]. The violence conveyed through the death of the toad-man on account of the 'burning' of the queer toad-skin by the wife who as the successor of the 'powerful elite' has internalised the normative ethos of the neo-coloniser, is the projective inversion to convey how the transitions in tribal society and history are the filtered forms resulting from violence (against all that represents 'difference' and 'dissidence' in their response to the mainstream) that enter into the consciousness fabricated by this authoritarian (governmental) society and history.

The rebirth of the toad-man is also a counter-normative attempt to retain Toto cultural freedom by defying to accept the notion of normativity assigned by the state. This further conveys the toad-man's refusal to become a normatised citizen, since the category of 'citizen' demands the acceptance of the regulation of law, interlinked with heterosexist normativity, and to fit into the power structure that robs the subjects' right to pleasure and autonomy.[13] The fantasy of becoming a toad-man also exposes that no rewarding norm for desire can be granted by the provisions of civilisation because of which the only mode that remains available is to seek completion through 'fantasmatic' object which reveals sex as "the impossibility of completed meaning," but not "a meaning that is incomplete"(Copjec, 1994:206). The toad-man as a utopian body of queer-continuum, resulting from the fantasy of the dissident, also becomes a rebellious political commentary.[14] Moving away from the initial notion of viewing the body mask as a straitjacket (Fanon, 1970) to the later developments where body as a mask is seen as a performance (Goffman, 1990) where the individual possesses self-awareness, control and choice to appear as per his/her motive of conveying the symbolic meaning associated with such appearances,

the fantastic body of the re-toad-born-man exhibits the "affirmative abjection"[15] of the Toto people, in the wish to oppose 'the affirmative culture' (Moylan, 1986:1) of the intruders for the restoration of indigenous socio-cultural and ecological autonomy in the historical context of being subjugated by the majoritarian culture.

This Toto folktale projects the Toto community's move from the 'animal of mind' to 'the psychological animal' in their response to the animal world.[16] This psychological animal that emerges as a palpable and sensual image in the cultural psyche is neither a biological reality nor a conceptually constructed abstraction, but is ontologically real as an interstitial presence that frequents in dream, religious beliefs and common fantasies of the tribal, small-scale societies. The toad man can be a suitable example of the psychological animal. Shifting from the conventional notion of the existence of imagination as foregrounded on *biological instinctive urge* that gives life an image, Bachelard reversely talks of the *natural* being created through the 'zoological imagination' in the form of a 'biological dream' (1986:28). Gaston Bachelard has related the appearance of the 'psychological animal' with our consciousness, and the notion of it being existent as a 'species of imagination', thus arguing for the animalising imagination as pre-presentational before re-presentational: "A need to animalize….is at the origins of imagination. The first function of imagination is to create animal forms" (1986:27). Such intimate imagining of the 'terrible familiar', according to Roy Willis "may well be the most archaic of all metaphors of cultural world-making, to judge by its world-wide distribution in tribal…myths" (Willis, 1994:19). The fusion of the animal and the human, as observes Ruth Padel (1992) is also the suggestive of the intercourse and is often resulting from the human erotic desire that is as invading as a bee sting. 'Animalising', thus, becomes the sublime incarnation of a biological imagination that is at once embodied with the terror and the sensual, the savage and the erotic and thereby re-defining / blending the natural:

> The imagination is not, as its etymology suggests, the faculty for forming images of reality; it is the faculty for forming images which go beyond reality, which *sing* reality" by permitting us to "surpass the *human condition* (Bachelard, 1983:16).

The abundant presence that one can feel of the 'animalising' in Toto folk tales also reveals the bio-centricity as well as the compulsion of the teller / composer / performer to revisit the biological history in order to frame the biological imagination through, what Lawrence calls, a 'blood consciousness', 'instinctive knowledge' and 'species intensity' (Norris, 1985:191) as a resistance against the altered social condition of a regulated/institutionalised compulsive-heteronormativity. By prioritising 'bios' over 'logos', the aesthetic biology that these folktales produce, assists us to extol wonder as the appreciation of life over its nominal explanation of merit.

The talking animals like the talking toad, represent the collapse of language as means of genuine communication due to a prevailing state of 'emergency' characterised by a lack of human relationship—a lack that is the marker of a closely knit simple society being replaced slowly by its transformation into a complex post-industrial / techno one. It also conveys (the disillusionment / discomfort at) the rapid hitting down of tribal social values, established wisdom and knowledge of previous eras, by the contact with the mainstream's particular respect for technology, biology and religion. From the transformed realm of existence the once-natural for the tribal individual, might appear as anthropomorphic.

Animal should necessarily not be seen as the Other, but as route to the Other. Animal provides a bridge to the Otherness, by acting as an emissary of 'meaning', which in Heidegger's notion is the opening of the world, the 'disclosure of Being'. The tribal people's apathy to participate in the change which is projected as progressive / civilising by the agencies of the mainstream gets disclosed by the mutant human-form. For, when the human (symbolising the superior / rationality) is correlated to all that is animalistic / vegetative (symbolising inferior / irrationality), then the entire reforming project faces the question of legitimacy: for the animal / vegetation co-exists with the human, "When the difference vanishes and the two terms collapse upon each other…the difference between being and the nothing, licit and illicit, divine and demonic also fades away, and in its place something appears for which we seem to lack even a name" (Agamben, 2004:22).

The presence of the animals in these Toto tribal folk tales also

provokes the modern readers to ask multiple questions. Revisiting and extending the insight in Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents*, can't we ask that the way the toad has made its prior appearance to the becoming-man, what if animal body / desire / instinct is privileged over culture and not seen as a lack in relation to human? Isn't it acceptable to say that the animal represents a priori condition to the human? Baudrillard has rightly perceived:

Once animals had a more sacred, more divine character than men….and for a long time the animal order has been the order of reference (Baudrillard, 1994:133).

In this context, Alan Bleakley has suggested:

If we are to restore the radical effect of Freud's insight, then we have to reverse the view that the animal offers lack in relation to human. Rather, we would see human cultural 'advance' (sublimation, mediation, interpretation, representation—Lacan's order of the symbolic) as offering lack in relation to the powerful immediacy of the biological (aesthetic self presentation—the order of the real); the cultural then destined to always be plagued by fantasies of the biological (Bleakley, 2000:33).

In the folktale *The Toad Man*, at the end the contested biological needs and drives get manifested in "atavism," whereby the amphibian protagonist metaphorically slips back into the ways of the 'wild' by the rebirth as again with a toad skin.

Conclusion

This study of the queer transgender expressions has been carried out on basis of the premise that folktales reflect more than the mere literary expression of the community:

[Folktale] is, in a very real sense, their ethnography which, if systematized by the student, gives a penetrating picture of their ways of life (Herskovits, 1948:418).

Richard Bauman has more precisely declared that "Folklore is a function of shared identity" (Bauman, 1971:32). The elements of wonder in folktales, as an illustration of the communities' ways of

life through shared identity, expose the efforts of individual to escape into the fantasy, for the gratification of the suppressed sexual desires, away from "his own biological limitations as a member of the genus and species" (Bascom, 1965:291). Hence, the motive of this study is to interpret the tribal folk literature as a projective system (Bascom, 1965:292). Projection, in psychology, is referred to the tenacity of attributing externally the tabooed tendencies to another individual or the environment, which actually lies within the self (Dundes, 1980:37). Though the connotation of symbols may vary and is not universal, yet, as observes Dundes, "symbol employed in any one given folkloristic (con)text may be related to a general system of symbols" (1980:37).

The shared queer identity of the ethnic groups gets its best expression through the interpretation of their use of symbols and customs. Thus,

> A relationship between human individuals and selected cultural elements—the symbols—is the essential feature of a collective identity (Spicer, 1971:796).

Folktales, through extensive use of transbiology, deal with identity confusion regarding sexuality that gives indications about how one often desires to make alterations in one's sexual identity / orientation / act. The queer expressions emerge from inside-out of the stories and not imposed outside-in. There must have been multiple revisions / distortions in the folkloristic data regarding the queer expressions, but the significance lies in the fact that the changes have been initiated by people within the tribal communities.

NOTES

1. See Kermode, 2000:44-46.
2. According to Frei, "Realistic narrative is that kind in which subject and social setting belong together, and characters and external circumstances fitly render each other" (1974:13).
3. Munoz in "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts" has observed that "queerness has existed as innuendo…fleeting moments, and performances" (1996:6)

4. The grandmother's attempt to 'eat' the pumpkin is a gastronomic metaphor for a latent sexual motif with the evident notion of 'appetite'.
5. See Sedgwick, where she states: "something about *queer* is inextinguishable. Queer is a continuing moment, movement, motive—recurrent, eddying, *troublant*. The word 'queer' itself means across—it comes from the Indo-European root—*twerkw*, which also yields the German *quer* (transverse), Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *athwart*…The queer…is transitive—multiply transitive. The immemorial current that queer represents is antiseparatist as it is antiassimilationist. Keenly, it is relational, and strange." (1993: xii)
6. The hyperbole suggests a counter discourse, against viewing queer as incomplete, of depicting queer as superior over a mere commoner.
7. According to Jonathan P. Rosman and Phillip J. Resnick, one of the psychodynamic events which can lead to necrophilia is that: "He (usually male) is very fearful of rejection by women, and he desires a sexual object who is incapable of rejecting him." (1889:161).
8. Becoming, as a desire to bring together and produce a diversity of forms, is a process where a subject comes into connected with something real or imaginary and is changed, without a sense of progress or regress. For details see Deleuze and Guattari (1987).
9. For Bataille "death, the rupture of the discontinuous individualities to which we cleave in terror, stands before us more real than life itself" (1987:19) in the sense that death, resembling the erotic nakedness, instates a state of communication and fusion, consequential to the loss of imposed structures of identity.
10. For the connection between food, sexuality, ritual and violence in folktales see Nikolajeva (2008) and Everett (2009).
11. "The grotesque body…is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created and builds and creates another body….the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body which outgrows its own self, transgressing its own body, in which it conceives a new, second body" (Bakhtin, 1984a:317).
12. "The essence of eroticism is the inextricable association of pleasure and prohibition. In human terms, prohibition never appears without the disclosure of pleasure, nor does pleasure ever appear without the feeling of prohibition" (Bataille, 1987:108).
13. Judith Butler feels that the "remaking of [alter]subjectivity" that aims to resist the statist homogenization must move "beyond the shackles of the juridical law" with the conviction that "[T]he simultaneous

individualization and totalization of modern power structures," requires the dissidents to distance themselves "from the state and the type of individualization which is linked to the state" (Butler, 1997:100-101).

14. Krishnan Kumar states that: "Utopia challenges by supplying alternatives, certainly. It shows what could be. But its most persistent function, the real source of its subversiveness, is as a critical commentary on the arrangements of society." (Kumar, 1991:87–8).
15. Iris Marion Young has rightly shown how the marginalised groups like the homosexuals are victimised by a "body aesthetic that defines some groups as ugly or fearsome and produces aversive reactions in relation to members of those groups" (1990:145). Winfried Menninghaus, in a counter argument, has shown how these abject groups engage in "affirmative abjection" to "condemn their own cultural abjection as a repressive function of patriarchal authority, while, on the other hand, provocatively affirming their abject existence as a socially un-accommodated way of life and source of pleasure" (2003:389).
16. There is a recent duality in the tribal's approach to the animal presence that enables us to understand the complexities resulting from the transitions from an unaffected community to an adulterated one. On one hand they cannot fully internalise the mainstream's framing of the human by othering the animal as impure/irrational, and on the other hand, they can also not fully be at ease by their former will to engage with an unprejudiced sense of animality. This must have been the primary motif that stimulated the community to move further from the 'animal of mind' to 'the psychological animal' in their response to the animal world. The 'animal of the mind' (Bleakley, 2000:39) can be referred to the phenomenon of turning the biological animals into tropes and metaphors by attaching a socially constructed meaning to it, apart from its own constituent natural identity (in body), in the form of a signifier as codified semiotically or envisioned conceptually by the human culture—e.g. making bear the signifier of strength, peacock of vanity, etc. In between the mental and the zoological transpires the psychological animal, where an image is provoked to embrace the experience of 'animal'.

CHAPTER SIX

Alternatives for 'Mainstream' Nonconformists

Folk and fairy tales remain essential force in our cultural heritage, but they are not static literary models to be internalized for the therapeutic consumption. Their value depends on how we actively produce and receive them in forms of social interaction which leads toward the creation of greater individual autonomy.

—Zipes, 1979:177

To be located within the 'mainstream' does not always donate a privileged situation. The 'mainstream' with its specified normatised standards otherise all those who deny to obey the prescribed norms of belonging. In order to get approved of being a competent 'mainstream' agent, disciplining of the body / desire / ideologies according to the socially erected framework is mandatory, failing / resisting to which one easily gets otherised as the deviant, transgressor, outsider or an outcast (Giddens 1991:57). The 'mainstream' nonconformist suffers from what Patricia Hill Collins has termed as 'the outsider within'. The 'mainstream' nonconformist, therefore, are the people who, similar to the indigenous people of the First Nations, suffer from the common internal colonialism of the state where both of them are stereotyped as the Other of the 'mainstream' and, thereby, forced to give up their fundamental nonconformity and become nationalised by being programmed into normatised citizens of the state. Hence, a nonconformist rebel, even if coincidentally located within the 'mainstream', can possibly get a more liberal space for a

dialogic relationship in a mode of 'pluriculturality' with the tribal communities where the ethnic alternative ethos are not hostile against the atypical ideologies of the 'mainstream' rebel. Guiding us about the mode of bypassing certain facets of our identity by preferring certain other aspects, the "intersectionality theory directs us to researching the standpoint of those identities located at the site of intersection" (Rahman, 2010:951).

Raffaele Corso's treating of folklore as 'contemporary pre-history' enables the one who has been tagged as a deviant to find alternatives in order to support the dissident self through the different outlooks offered by these tribal folktales as opposed to the official version of 'mainstream' normativity. Gramsci has rightly pointed out that,

> Folklore should instead be studied as 'conception of the world and life' implicit to a large extent in determinate (in time and space) strata of society and in opposition (also for the most part implicit, mechanical and objective) to 'official' conceptions of the w orld (or in a broader sense, the conceptions of the cultured parts of historically determinate societies) that have succeeded one another in the historical process (Gramsci, 2015:189).

Hence this work, about the plentiful alternatives which the tribal communities offer with their indigenous knowledge and ethnic philosophy, while hoping for the ethnic people's accommodating of the 'mainstream' dissident might also initiate an intersectional understanding of oppression faced by the 'mainstream' nonconformist and the traditional communities with an emancipatory solidarity for social justice.

The 'mainstream' rebel, despite being situated within, suffers from 'outsideness', which, however, is not necessarily is a state of distress, because,

> In order to be perceived as a whole, as something finished, a person or object must be shaped in the time/space categories of the other, and that is possible only when the person or object is perceived from the position of outsideness. An event cannot be wholly known, cannot be seen, from inside its own unfolding as an event (Holquist, 2002:29).

The notion of 'outsideness' which enables the self to assimilate the subjective perspective with that of the others results in self-

actualisation, which further results in the manifestation of the consciousness of "I-for-myself" against the background of "I-for-the-other". For Bakhtin, 'being' is a shared 'event' of co-habiting as a co-being, simultaneously sharing and co-operating with others, with implication / understanding arising on the frontier between two consciousness. This comes from the perceiving of the self as non-self-sufficient. According to Bakhtin, the non-self-sufficiency of self attains proficiency only through the other.

> The very being of man (both external and internal) is the deepest communion. To be means to communicate…To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he looks into the eyes of another or with the eyes of another (Bakhtin, 1984b:287).

The most crucial question for someone located within and censored by the 'mainstream' on the basis of differences with governmentality is that of acquiring an identity through a compassionate togetherness:

> [O]ne of the most basic of all human questions: who are you? This is not a question that can be answered with a name nor can it be answered satisfactorily in words. Rather, the question requires qualitative demonstrations. Answers emerge in the lived experience of relationships developed in shared time and place. Ultimately, answers are a sharing of perceptions, attitudes, experiences, and, I think, compassion (Rose, 2009:26).

'Recognition Struggles', according to Carol Mueller, gains legitimate momentum through the "contingent definitions of means, ends, and fields of action that exist in a state of tension arising from a system of social relationships as well as systems of meaning" (Mueller, 2003:276). My own positioning is foregrounded upon an intersectionality of the dissident ('mainstream')-indigeneity by bridging intimately (driven by a conscious politics of belonging) the experiences of a nonconformist marginality with that of the marginalised indigeneity,

Intersectional intimacy as the conscious choice of loving others who are equal in their Otherised state of 'statelessness' is the first step towards an assemblage against oppression:

The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others (Hooks, 1994:298).

Love, born out of intimacy, then assists in the politics of belonging in the form of a 'thirdness' that empowers one with the capability of listening to the multiple voices of others, who seem to be voicing even some parts of the victimised self, and thereby, inviting for a collaborative, intersubjective struggle against the experiences of belittlement. This thirdness as "those values, rules, and principles of interaction that we rely upon in our efforts to create and restore the space for each partner in the dyad to engage in thinking, feeling, acting or responding rather than merely reacting" (Benjamin, 2009:442) is also helpful in overcoming the binary between the 'doer' and the 'done to' which, if extended, becomes beneficial for the state to rule by distancing the marginalised people of 'differences' from one another. The politics of belonging as a mode of intimacy among the nonconformist people from the 'mainstream' India and the indigeneity, equally otherised but differently, is also important in ensuring that the Otherised subject, overcoming the polemical enshacklement often fortified by the particularity of the victimised self, acquires the agency "to reunite elements that have been divorced and that have come into conflict, [through] interpersonal and inter-cultural communication" (Touraine, 2000:301).

The realisation, that even among the differentiated-group identities there are multiple differences, some of which get reduced while some other crop up with time, can motivate one to contemplate upon the notion of what is 'sacred' (what has to be safeguarded) and 'profane' (what needs to be denounced) in order to 'live together while living differently' by forging flexible and need-based intimacies. Thus,

> The campaign for acceptance will continue since the decision is never final but only for a fixed duration, and since it is made in a free and fair manner. Considerable negotiation, accommodation, compromise and adjustment is involved. This negotiation and compromise is an important basis for the democratic culture which emerges (De Souza, 2002:28).

In one's private zone one does not remain necessarily alone but with the intimate others. Hence, the question is how to or why to turn the strangers into intimate others through a 'longing-

to-belong' (Ferreday, 2009:21). The answer lies in the dream to determinately fight together against the "unfreedoms" (Seidler, 1998:20) of alternatives, disapproved by the majoritarian state. Belonging through intimacy is meant for not to negate one's identity but to minimise 'disidentification'.[1] Belonging "captures the desire for some sort of attachment" (Probyn, 1996:19) and affect has an important role in the culmination of such desire. For a meaningful belonging, "What is important is a holding-in-common of qualities, perspectives, identities or ideas" (Wilbur, 2000:47).

Extending this argument, one can say that despite differences in their identities, 'holding-in-common' in terms of perspectives and ideas among the communities of "unfreedoms" and affect might help in accelerating the politics of belonging which is never in a fixity but always a part of one's prioritized 'shared concern' in the process of becoming. The 'surfaces of the other' as being marginalised surfaces the 'suffering', that appeals the self to extend sensitivity to other not to "order the course and heal the substance of the other, but to feel the feeling of the other" (Lingis, 1994:31). Jean-Luc Nancy has initiated us to reconsider how "all loves…are superbly singular" (Nancy, 1991:99). Moving beyond the traditional notion of love, predominantly seen as a hybridised encounter / relation, an intimate belonging of love actually remains a singular passage of opening of the one to another, assuring, thereby, singularity of a being in its community.

The politics of belonging is endeavoured at fostering the intimate act of offering help to others, which, according to Derrida's notion of 'hospitality', is intrinsic to "the performance of happiness; desire which disturbs the pure narcissistic enjoyment of the Oedipal self and its familiars, and which reaches towards the absolute demand of the other" (Abbinnett, 2013:183). Politics of belonging as a mode of exploring intimacy for the recognition of a pluralist identity is closely related to the 'politics of happiness': moving beyond the 'neoliberal economy of pleasure', happiness as an experience "can only be approached through the presence of others, both familiar and unfamiliar, to whom we must respond without the expectation of requital. This then is the aporetic fate of humanity: to live between ideological regimes that offer the shelter of collective happiness and

the possibility of receiving the spectres that haunt the experience of belonging, plenitude, and love" (Abbinnett, 2013:185).

The above arguments can be nullified by the single question that how can an-other in the form of the Otherised 'mainstream' perceive the 'lived' experience of an-otherised indigeneity? If 'lived' experience are the marked with the absence of freedom of choice in even altering the experiences but keep on suffering the 'lack', then one can argue that it is easier to relate the self 'lived' experience of experiencing the 'lack', howsoever different it might be in form but equal in its degree, for the contested citizens in the form of the 'mainstream' nonconformists in India with that of the 'not-self' like the tribal communities. Moreover, extending the argument provided by Srinivas, it can be said that these diverse marginalised groups reside in 'same cultural universe', and therefore, unlike someone from the foreign geo-cultural space, it is 'self-in-the-other' that is operational unlike the non-self or non-other position (Srinivas, 1996:656-657).

Approving of Srinivas's stand, Sarukkai has also affirmed that, "For a person steeped in this tradition, this does make a qualitative difference in constructing the other" (Sarukkai, 1997:1408).

Beyond the traditional linking of opposition / contradiction with difference, pluralism as a guiding trait in to our understanding of difference might enable us to treat difference itself as ever-shifting:

> Difference must become the element, the ultimate unity; it must therefore refer to other differences which never identify it but rather differentiate it. Each term in series, being already a difference, must be put into a variable relation with other terms, thereby constituting other series devoid of centre and convergence. Every object, every thing must see its own identity swallowed up in difference, each being no more than a difference between differences. Difference must be shown differing (Deleuze, 1994:56)

With the acceptance of the self and the other as individuals with differences along with the recognition that "since differences are what there is, and since every truth is the coming-to-be of that which is not yet" (Badiou, 2001:27), differences need to be treated as what truth might render as less significant in its more significant facilitating of "the constitution of a subjectivity in the interrelation to others, which is a form of exposure, availability, and vulnerability.

This recognition entails the necessity of containing the other, the suffering, and the enjoyment of others." (Braidotti, 2009:58).

Intercultural dialogue among the subjects can pave way for an intimacy that democratically empowers the subject to be free to communicate with all that have been so long distanced under the anxiety of conflict. Inert tolerance and passive acceptance of differences do not necessarily enhance intimacy. Rather it often reinforces anxiety. Intersectional communication and a collaborative togetherness alone can enable us to become intimate inhabitants. Touraine has rightly observed:

> The three themes of the Subject, communication and solidarity are inseparable, just as freedom, equality and fraternity were inseparable during the republican phase of democracy. Their interdependence delineates a field of social and political mediations that can re-establish the link between the instrumental world and the symbolic world, and thus prevent civil society from being reduced to a market or an enclosed community (Touraine, 2000:301).

Deleuze and Guattari in their *Anti-Oedipus* talks of two kinds of desire that essentially unites the entire humanity: the constraint of paranoia and the freedom of schizophrenia. Their notion of the body-without-organs is in fact a notion of a 'dis-organ-ised' body of schizophrenic who, resembling Nietzschean heroic force, breaches the conventions in practice and intent. The transgressor of the 'mainstream' as a schizophrenic, "produces himself as a free man, irresponsible, solitary, and joyous, finally able to say and do something simple in his own name, without asking permission; a desire lacking nothing, a flux that overcomes barriers and codes, a name that no longer designates any ego whatever. He has simply ceased being afraid of becoming mad" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977: 131).

The use of grotesque in the tribal folk tales becomes an important tool for the 'mainstream' nonconformist to be inspired by the fantasy and the bizarre with the motif of transgressing the norms prescribed by the 'mainstream' such as, the division between human and non-human, and between classes/configuration of men and their

gestures.[2] This 'carnival', popularised by Bakhtin, has become a useful vehicle to read the social, "so that we can go beyond patterns of lived experience to explore the structures of independence of individual and community, order and chaos, the sacred and the profane" (Chaney, 1994: 39–40). With the transition taking place in the socio-cultural norms, the protagonist of the folklore has to be a masquerade with the 'pumpkin' or 'toad' masks, for, as informs Foucault, s/he can no longer cling to the identification of a faint individuality with the solid identities of the past, but can partake into the 'unrealisation' through the excessive choice of identities, almost in the form of a concerted carnival. (Foucault 1977: 160–1). A dialogic interaction that removes the divide of high and low, the affluent cacophony of spontaneous dialogue brings out the 'carnivalesque':

> This temporary suspension, both ideal and real, of hierarchical rank created during carnival time a special type of communication impossible to everyday life. This led to the creation of special forms of marketplace speech and gesture, frank and free, permitting no distance between those who came into contact with each other and liberating from norms of etiquette and decency imposed at other times. A special carnivalesque, marketplace style of expression was formed (Bakhtin 1986a: 10).

Such carnivalesque gets manifested with the transgressive celebration of the grotesque body of the toad getting married to the king's daughter, in a dialogic interaction, breaking down the standardized notion of class/norm divide:

> Carnival was the true feast of time, the feast of becoming, change and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed (Bakhtin, 1984a: 10).

Thus the transgressor of the 'mainstream' norms can be an ambiguous traveller, aspirant for a permanent state of liminality, readily stepping out of any identifiable fixed position rooted into the modalities of culture and thereby representing the cultural miasma. Here, the transgressor comes close to the Freudian image of the rupturing of taboos. Focussing on the conflict between the (deviant) self and the societal constraints, Freud in *Civilization and*

Its Discontents (1961), has charted out the plight of a transgressor of the taboos on the basis of 'the irremediable antagonism between the demands of instinct and the restrictions of civilization'. In the tribal folktales, one finds the transgressive drive often originating out as the resistance of the civilising process of mainstreaming them with a homogenous modernity. Thus for the 'mainstream' nonconformist, it is the indigenous people with multiple alternatives as opposed to the rigid codified state-sanctioned-normativity, that a sense of belonging is possible with the possibility of even forming a community premised upon the hope that "In the midst of the work of the rational community, there forms the community of those who have nothing in common, of those who have nothingness… in common" (Lingis, 1994:13). This togetherness without a plea for common identity, but founded on a dialogic continuum retaining the singularity as the nonconformist 'mainstream' and tribal world intact, would result in the formation of what Agamben calls the 'coming community', with its 'coming politics':

> The novelty of the coming politics is that it will no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the State and the non-State (humanity) (Agamben, 2009: 84).

The "going Native" of the 'mainstream' rebel by bearing the markers of alternatives which are available in the tribal outlooks is meant not for an impossible appropriation of the non-indigenous identity but rather to enhance a politics of belonging in the form of a 'communitas' of the "ex-centrics" so that the murky existence of the Otherised 'mainstream' gets illumined with the non-tabooed "light of pure anteriority" (Cioran, 1970:48). The 'performance turn' initiated by the scholars like Kenneth Burke, Erving Goffman, John Austin and Judith Butler has paved way for an affordable 'performativity' of a 'surrogate indigeneity' (Graham and Penny, 2014:182) by the contested 'mainstream' that would ensure a processual re-counting of interaction along with asserting the 'disidentification' of an ever shifting identity.

NOTES

1 Zizek explains disidentification as tendency to negate the multiplicities by retaining "false distance toward the actual co-ordinates of the subject's social existence" (Zizek, 1998) through interactivity.

2 "[T]he grotesque tends to operate as a critique of a dominant ideology which has already set the terms designating what is high and low. It is indeed one of the most powerful ruses of the dominant to pretend that critique can only exist in the language of 'reason', 'pure knowledge' and 'seriousness'. Against this ruse [there is]…the logic of the *grotesque*, of excess, of the lower bodily stratum, of the fair. This logic could unsettle 'given' social positions and interrogate the rules of inclusion, exclusion and domination which structured the social ensemble. In the fair, the place of high and low, inside and out, was never a simple given: the languages of decorum and enormity 'peered into each other's faces'" (Stallybrass and White, 1986: 43).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Select Folktales

Toto

The Orphan Boy

There was once an orphan boy, who was given shelter by a village person in return for grazing his cattle everyday. But he didn't offer the boy adequate food. One day, while taking the cattle out for grazing, the boy felt very hungry but could not find any fruits or tubers in the forest. He started crying. Just then, an old woman appeared there. Hearing about his hunger, the woman pointed at a red cow of his herd. She said, "The moment you hit the right horn, you will get flattened rice; to get molasses, hit her left horn". She then vanished in the forest. The orphan boy followed her instruction and ate to his heart's fill. Besides, he bundled up the leftover food in a cloth and hiding it inside the cavity of a tree. returned home. Meanwhile, a crane came by and ate up the food. When he arrived the next day, the boy could not find any food where he had left it. But he saw a crane flying past and understood it had eaten up his food. He started chasing the crane for three days and three nights. Finally, the crane surrendered, saying, "Please don't kill me. Come to my house and I will offer you food and clothing. Tie some mustard to my tail which will drop as I fly and you can follow the track to reach my house."

Collecting a handful of mustard from the nearby village the boy followed the crane by walking an entire day and an entire night. The next day, he ran into a house at the end of the forest. Inside the house, he found the same old woman who had helped him to get

food out of the red cow. Learning that the orphan was going to the crane's house, the old woman said: "The servants of the crane's house would not allow you to enter the house by the main door. So take the back door on the right side. Inside the crane's room, you will see a small phial which you must acquire from the crane."

Walking for three days, on the path directed by the old woman, he reached the crane's house. The servants, expectedly, didn't allow the boy to enter. He took the back door and found the crane sitting on a beautiful elevated platform. The crane asked the boy to wish for anything for himself. The boy asked for the phial and the crane offered it to him, asking him not to open it before reaching his house. Three days passed as the boy walked back towards the village, and every day the weight of the phial seemed to increase. Unable to resist his curiosity, he opened the cork of the phial, to discover a beautiful girl sitting in it. He tried to close the mouth of the bottle with the cork, but the girl resisted. Soon she came out and pleaded: "Take me to your house as your wife".

Overwhelmed with joy, the orphan asked her to wait there till he could gather the villagers and get married before taking her home. The girl sat on the branch of the tree. Suddenly, an ogress appeared, and killing the girl, she sat on the tree, disguised as the girl. The boy returned and took the ogress as his wife to the village where he built a house for both of them. The boy sowed a seed of sweet pumpkin by the side of the house. Soon the ogress became pregnant. The pumpkin vine too started spreading out the leaves and bore a fruit just above the main door. The vine touched the ogress every time she went in and out of the house. This annoyed her so much that she uprooted the vine along with the fruit and threw it off. Soon a pamelo tree emerged out of the same place where pumpkin had grown and a fruit sprouted out. In the meantime, the ogress gave birth to a son. One day, while she kept the son under the shade of the tree, the pamelo fruit fell on the son and killed him. Out of rage, the ogress wife went out to call the people to cut down the tree. None agreed to cut the tree down. Finally, she herself chopped the tree down and threw it off. One day, the old woman visited the orphan boy, asking for a pamelo fruit. He said that it was cut down and thrown outside. Yet, the old woman managed to gather a fruit from

the remains of the tree and took it home in her basket. One day, a beautiful girl came out of the pamelo. It was none other than the lady of the phial. She asked the old woman to bring some betel leaves and areca nuts along with an earthen pot from the market. Every day, the girl would chew the betel leaves and spit into the earthen pot till it became full. With the old woman, she visited the orphan's house and poured the sputum out into the house. In the evening, the old woman summoned the boy to tell him about his ogress wife. She advised him to kill her. Returning home, the orphan found that his house was wet with a pool of blood. He could not differentiate the sputum from actual blood. Being convinced that his wife was an ogress, he sought advice from the old woman. The old woman said: "Tell your wife that you are planning to buy lots of areca nuts which need a large pit to be stored and processed. Then once it is over you ask the wife to peep into it to check its depth. As she does so, cut her head and throw her body into the pit and cover it with earth." The orphan boy did as he was told. Finally, the old woman came with the beautiful woman and said, "This is whom you brought from the crane's house. The ogress killed her and you had wrongly accepted the ogress as your wife. Now take the real wife." The orphan boy came to his house with the beautiful wife and lived happily ever after without any want.

The Tale of the Birth of the Sun

In the primordial time, there was only the moon in the sky, who suffered from seclusion. Then, realising the loneliness of the moon, Itspa went on a search from the East to the West, the North to the South, to find a companion for the moon, but in vain. Ultimately, he reached the 'jungle of the sky' where the primal wild hen and cock were residing. Seeking the egg on which the mother hen was incubating, Itspa thought of taking it as the moon's companion. The moment he tried to fetch the egg, the hen jumped out of the jungle of the sky due to which the egg fall down and cracked, with the yellow yolk dancing round the jungle. Itspa took the yellow yolk and hung it on the sky as the moon's companion, which is known as the sun. Since that day, the sun travels through the sky all through

the day and goes to sleep in the jungle of the sky at night, only to be awakened the next day by the call of the mother hen and resumes the routine duty.

The Story of Two Orphans

An epidemic broke out in a village and both husband and wife died. Their children—an elder daughter and a son—became orphans. The girl used to work in the neighbours' homes, helping them fetch water or with jhum cultivation and thus managed to get food for both of them. Sometimes, she used to gather wild fruits and vegetables from the forest. The sister grew up into the most beautiful young girl of the village, while the brother was only eight years old. She was helped by her brother in her works. One day, she said to her brother: "I am going to the neighbouring village. You stay here and don't worry about me." One winter passed and another winter arrived. The boy kept waiting for his sister to return. Finally, he decided to go in search of her. The entire day he walked. In the evening, he found himself in front of a house of an old woman, staying on her own. Seeing the orphan boy, the old lady offered him shelter for the night, asking him not to travel further in darkness for there was a forest nearby. The old lady offered him such good food that he could have never afforded for himself. She gave him such warm woollen blankets that he had never enjoyed before. He slept peacefully. The following morning, the old woman offered to guide the boy in looking for his sister and showed him her house. But the boy changed his mind: "I want to stay with you, grandmother. I do not want to go looking for my sister now." The woman was also hoping for the same. Further, gratifying the unarticulated aspiration of the woman, he said that that he would help fetch firewood from the forest, collect grass and look after her once he would grow up. The old woman bought a pair of pigs for him that multiplied within a few years and they earned a good amount by selling them off, with which they reconstructed a nice house for themselves. One day, he decided to move out in search of a wife, reassuring the old woman to come back and stay with her. She agreed, persuading him not to be too late. Walking all day long, he reached the village of his elder sister. Meeting her after

such a long time, he narrated all that had happened and told her of his quest for a woman for himself. The elder sister said, "I will find a woman for you. You stay with me tonight and tomorrow we shall start looking out." The brother went to the elder sister's place. But he found that she was not as caring as she had been before. For, she gave him bread made of bran meant for the pigs. The boy could not eat those. In the morning the sister asked him if he would like to stay more. But he said, "I cannot eat what you have served. I will move out today in search of my wife." The elder sister taunted him by saying, "Nobody will give you their daughter in this village to you as you could not eat the bran-made bread yesterday." The boy asserted that he would rather not look for a woman among the villagers who were bran-eaters. Again, he walked through the day and before sunset, arrived at the king's house. The king had three daughters, but no son. Seeing the boy from a distance, the eldest sister, who was playing with the other two sisters in front of the house, ran to inform the king of the arrival of a stranger. The king thought that he might be a probable son-in-law and asked her to call him inside. Learning from him that he was searching for a wife, the king said. "I will give one of my daughters, provided that you render your service to my family for three years before getting married." The orphan boy agreed to the proposal and started staying there while helping in cultivation, growing crops, collecting fruits from the forest and even looking after the cattle and pigs. Every day, he used to make a mark on the pillar of his house to be sure of the count of days. At the end of the third year, he requested the king to fulfill his promise. The king arranged for a grand feast to celebrate the wedding of his daughter with the orphan boy. Then he said, "Now I will not forbid you from going back to your house." The orphan didn't have a house of his own, but he decided to go back to the grandmother's house.

The next day, he started his journey with his wife, towards the village of the grandmother. But it was already dark when he reached a village by the side of the forest. So he decided to stay through the night in a deserted hut. A fox appeared during the later part of the night, and asked, "Who is in the hut?" Hearing from the boy about his plan of returning to the grandmother, the fox informed him that she had been dead and now the woman whom he would find there

was, in fact, a witch, who should be killed before he starts staying there with his wife. The fox then chalked out a plan for them. Following the plan, the orphan and his wife reached the grandmother's house where the witch greeted them genially and they, too, pretended not to have recognised her as the witch. He shared with her the food that he carried from the king's house. That afternoon, with the help of the wife, he dug out two big holes in the courtyard. As per the direction of the fox, they set fire near the forest in the evening and then rushing in front of the house, they started shouting, "All the women of the house get out straight away. The king's soldiers are approaching." The moment the witch came out, she fell into the hole, which they instantly covered with earth, thus killing her. Thereafter, the orphan boy and his wife lived happily, with their many children.

Why are the Celestial Stars Immortal? Why do Men Die?

One day, when there was no human being on earth, but only trees and plants, Itspa, coming down from the sky to his jhum-house, curved the forms of human, sambhar and other animals. He went back to the sky, in order to bring, the very next day, 'life' for these creatures, whom he shaped and thought of giving men the 'stone life' so that humans would become immortals.

However, seeing the effigies, Pidua thought of playing a trick. With some magic-rituals he turned them all from inanimate to living beings. The next day, Itspa was very angry to find the creatures already alive. He threw the 'stone life' to the sky and thereby the stars became immortal instead of the human beings.

The Witch Mother

A man in a village lost his wife when his daughter and son were still infants. He was an affluent man, but soon the food that he had stored was all exhausted, since he could not work and had to just look after the children. He was against remarrying, for he thought that the step-mother would not treat the children well. He asked his neighbours if they could take care of his children so that he might work and get some food, but none of them agreed to take the charge

of the kids. All of them suggested that should he remarry. The man, apprehensive of further confusion on the arrival of a new woman, continued to gather wild fruits and tubers from the forest to feed his children. After some time, the daughter was grown-up. She said to the father: "You can go out and work. I can take care of my brother for a few days." Bringing a fair amount of tubers for the kids to survive, happily the man left his house in search of work, saying: "I will return after seven days and seven nights." He walked through the forest during the day, and while it was dark, found himself walking around the same place. Actually, he was possessed by a witch who was not allowing him to move further. Soon it was dark. Suddenly, he could trace out fire at a distance and following the direction of the fire, he walked to discover a hut. Inside the hut he found a large quantity of food grains stored in the rooms. In the kitchen, he found a beautiful woman who was crying, sitting by the fireside. The man asked her the cause of her suffering. The woman said, "I have become an orphan and I don't have anyone to look after me." The man said, "If you are prepared to take care of my son and daughter, then I can take you home as my woman." The woman agreed willingly, "I will give them motherly love and serve them food." At that time someone yelled, "It's all fake. She is a witch." The man wondered who it was. The woman suggested, "It is a wicked bird who speaks nonsense whenever it finds a man." They had their food and slept. Next morning, packing food for the children, the man and the woman started walking back to his home. The parrot appeared once again to warn him: "Don't take this witch with you!"

The woman tried to kill the bird, but it flew away. At home, the children were very happy to see the father back along with the new mother. For some days, they enjoyed the food that he had carried and all of them had a lovely time. Soon the food exhausted and the man had to go for work, leaving the children in his wife's care. The wife was actually waiting for this opportunity. She never liked the children. She started engaging them in domestic works. She also asked them to fetch water by giving them cracked bamboo pipes. The entire day the children tried to store water in their pipes but through the pores the water leaked out. As it was getting late, they

began to weep. A crane that was resting by the side of the lake asked them the reason for their agony. Understanding their crisis, the crane advised them: “Take some mud and close the holes. Then you can carry water and your mother will be pleased.” On the contrary, the new mother was very annoyed. She rebuked them for the delay and gave only a few tubers to eat. Next day, handing over a blunt sword (*patang*), she ordered the kids, “Go and collect firewood from the forest. I need wood from the trees that are alive and the woods should be dry.”

Spending almost the entire day they could not find a tree that was alive yet dry. They started crying once again. Just then a woodpecker appeared and after listening to their trouble it arranged for their firewood. Their new mother was more furious and astonished in finding the children back with firewood as she had demanded. She gave them a handful of wild tubers. Next day, she sent them to the forest to collect the eggs of wild hens. The children didn’t know where to find wild hens. Roaming all day, they could not even collect a feather of the hen. Soon, it was dark and they lost their way in the jungle. Soon, they saw fire burning at a distance. Following the glow, they came ultimately to the hut of an old couple. They welcomed them and listening to their tale of suffering, they said: “Oh poor babies. Stay here till your father returns.” They stayed there amidst plenty of food and care; yet they were missing their home. In the meantime, the man returned and the new wife told him: “The wicked children must have gone to the forest despite my regular warning.” That very moment, the parrot cried out: “Witch, witch. Look for your kids in the forest.”

The new wife was actually a witch who had killed the daughter of the old couple residing in the forest and was staying as the wife of the children’s father. The witch tried to kill the bird but failed in all her attempts. Giving a lemon to the man, the bird continued to utter: “Eat this and then place your hand on the wife’s head. Her reality will get revealed.” The woman tried running away from the man. The bird advised him to follow her; the man ran fast to follow the flying bird. Ultimately, they reached the hut of the old couple, where the witch-wife fell down in front of the hut and the moment the man

touched her hair, he found the witch-woman getting transformed into another woman. The old couple rushed out of the hut and screamed out of their happiness: “Oh our daughter.” The bird narrated to them the details of what had actually happened. After that, the man started living happily with the daughter of the old couple, along with his children. Even the parrot became a member of their family.

The Naked Orphan

An orphan used to stay with his son and daughter. Removing all his clothes one day, he started playing and shouting near the king’s waterfall. The daughters of the king found him frolicking and went to inform the king of his presence by their waterfall. The king thought that he might have been a possible bridegroom, and asked the daughters to call him inside. Seeing the naked orphan, the king proposed him to choose any one of his two daughters for marriage. The orphan opted for the youngest one. Putting his clothes on, he took permission from the king and started returning back to his house, along with the king’s youngest daughter, who was crying out of the premonition that the orphan must have been a very poor fellow. Reaching his house, the king’s daughter, however, was happy to find the house a good one with ample cattle heads and edible stuff. Three days later, the couple went to the king’s house for the betrothal ceremony. Being uneasy, the orphan returned back with the wife, inviting the king to visit his place. The king visited him, accordingly, in the evening and was very pleased to see the house full of abundance. The king arranged for the wedding and within a few days, he asked the son-in-law and his youngest daughter to accompany him. The orphan stayed back, while his wife went to the father’s house. The orphan then started preparing his own food and arranging his own bed, all by himself. One day, when he woke up in the morning, he found the breakfast already prepared. He decided not to sleep that night. But soon fall asleep. Yet early in the morning he woke up to find someone going out of the house after preparing the food. He caught her and found out it was none other

than his new wife. She described how her elder sister, being jealous of her marriage to the wealthy orphan, killed her by pushing her into the king's water pool. The orphan started sweating out of rage and told her to stay with him. He called the elder daughter of the king and, thrashing her hard, threw her out of his home. The king too didn't allow the elder daughter to step into his house. Thereafter, the orphan stayed with the younger daughter of the king as his real wife and led a peaceful life.

Seven Brothers and One Sister

A woman used to stay with her seven brothers in a village. Apart from the youngest one, all the six brothers were married. One day, when the seven brothers left the village for the barter trade, the six wives planned to kill the sister. On the seventh day, when the brothers were supposed to return, the six jealous wives, on the pretext of removing the lice from her hair, took the youngest sister by the edge of the river and pushed her into deep water, thus killing her. On the way towards their home, the eldest among the brothers heard a yelling voice while crossing the river. Addressing the voice he said, "If the voice is from someone outside the family, please come to the fold of my garment on the right side, else if the voice is of some family members, then come to the garment-fold on left side." But there was no response. All the six brothers experienced the same. But only when the youngest one addressed the voice, a bird suddenly appeared and entered the pocket-like fold of his garment on the left side. The youngest brother thought of gifting the exceptionally beautiful bird to his sister. Entering the house, when the brothers looked for the sister, the wives started giving various false excuses. One said that she had gone to fetch water; some other said that she had gone to play. Keeping the bird at home, they left in search of their sisiter. In the meantime, the wives killed the bird and cooked it. When they returned, the wives informed their husbands that they had cooked and eaten the bird. While the youngest brother was about to eat, the pet cat approached him for some rice and promised to provide him with a bone of the bird. Being fed with some rice, the happy cat vomitted out a piece of the bird's bone on a heap of ash and asked

the youngest brother to preserve that after wrapping it in cotton. The youngest brother followed the instructions, only to discover that each day the shape of the bone was changing till it took the full shape of the youngest sister. Finally, the sister emerged out in her full-form and narrated the entire incident of the misdemeanour of the six wives to the seven brothers. The brothers drove their wives out, after thrashing them hard. Then they all got married later again and began to live separately. The sister was also married off to a good young man. After she died, her soul turned into a parrot. There were no parrots prior to that time.

Wild Hen and her Son

At the very outset, when there was no human being on earth, but only water and forests everywhere, there lived a wild hen and an old cock, as the world's primordial creatures, in the dense forest. There was plenty of food for them and they were living very happily, by earnestly loving one other. In the morning they used to visit the forest for food and return back in the evening. However, this happiness did not last long. One day, the wild hen started laying and the husband was happy to feel that they would have a number of children to help in the work, and shall look after them in their old age. While the hen started incubating the egg, the cock went to the forest to bring food for the hen. One day, the husband left for the forest but never returned back. The wife kept on waiting but in vain. Similarly, all her attempts to hatch the eggs turned futile. At last, one egg got hatched and a baby cock emerged out. Time passed and the boy grew up. He asked the mother about his father. She narrated as to how the father had vanished into the forest. The boy went in search of the father in the forest but could not find him. Returning back to the house he told his mother: "Father must have been eaten up by the forest animals." Remaining silent for some time, the mother said: "Since now we exist alone, we need to have children. From today onwards there would remain no relation of mother, father, brother, sister among us." Since then, they began to stay as husband and wife and gave birth to a number of offspring.

The Story of Itspa and her Uncle, Pidua

In the north, there was a hill named Badu with a stream flowing at its foot-hill, which was the abode of the deities like Itspa and the rest. The entire place was so densely covered with forest that even during the daytime one would feel scared to visit the place, fearnig the demons. Even the animals and birds were afraid of the evil spirits and demons who resided there. Pidua, who is also known as Moishing, is a deity who is enormous in shape, almost like a black bear. Being stubborn, he was beyond the control of the parents, even right from his boyhood. That ultimately detached him from the family and he turned into a vagrant. Meanwhile, Sainjani (Itspa), who is the daughter of Pidua's elder brother, reached adolescence. Her body was in full bloom like the full-flooded hill-stream. Her hair resembled the black bats of the forests. She roamed around with female companions like a peacock roaming around the jungle. One day, while Sainjani was gathering fruits and tubers in the Ti-tring forest, she got trapped by a ghost who misguided people and consequently, she was isolated from her women folk and was all alone. Wandering all alone, she was by a river bed with a small water pool. Being thirsty she tried to drink water of the pool and that was the very first moment when she saw her shadow, cast on the pool water. She got so captivated by her own beauty that she fancied taking a bath in the river in order to enhance her prettiness; accordingly, she undressed herself. Just then, a strong wind flew over the forest and Pidua arrived along with the storm. He had no idea about Sainjani for he was disconnected from his family. Looking at the beauty of Sainjani, he got seduced, and failing to resist his temptation, jumped upon Sainjani to ravish her. However, coming to her senses within a short while, she realised, what was actually happening to her. Being a daughter of a god, she was a brave girl who could easily defeat and finally cut off Pidua's head with her *patang* (sword). Sainjani's father appeared on the scene; for having informed by the friends that she was lost in the forest, he was in search of Itspa. He was shocked to hear the entire incident and introduced the daughter to his brother, by asking Sainjani to forgive her uncle and transplant his head. Despite being sorry for her uncle, Itspa said that since she could hardly trust Pidua, she wanted

him to promise that he would not try to play mischief on anyone in future. Pidua's head was still talking and he agreed to her terms. Itspa transplanted his head, but in a reversed position so that Pidua could never look directly at anyone, for she was still apprehensive of his misconducts. Pidua then and there left the place along with his supporters, while Itspa and her father went back to the heavenly habitat on the hill top of the Badu.

Coming of the Rivers

There was a time when, even though there was no river or streams on earth, there were enough water pools on top of the hills, due to which no one suffered from water scarcity. One day Pidua, after hiding the water into the belly of the hills, pushed the clouds away from the sky. The people prayed to Itspa Shainjha for rescue. Chasing the disappeared clouds and water, he asked the hills and jungles, who had the gift of speech, but both lied to him and didn't help him. Then Itspa asked the moon, to which the moon suggested him to ask the sun, since sun travels the path all through the day more frequently than the moon. On being questioned, the sun hinted at the bellies of the hills. Itspa, who was shivering with wrath, hit the hills with his sword and the water stored inside them, came spouting out in the form of rivers and streams. Owing to their falsehood before Itspa, forests and the hills lost their power to speak.

The Monkey and the Wild Hen

There were once a monkey and a hen who laboured together, taking turns. One day, the monkey went to help the hen in her house to make the field ready for cultivation. Sharp at noon, the hen went to prepare food. Laying down some eggs, the wild hen boiled them to prepare the meal for the two of them. Finding the food appetising, the monkey asked for the procedure of preparing it. The wild said that the easiest way of making the food was just to heat a pan red hot on an oven, and to sit on it. Next day, when the wild hen went to the monkey's house to return the labour, the monkey, at midday, followed the procedure as prescribed by the hen for preparing the food. The

moment he sat on the hot pan, his back got burnt and he dived into the stream. He was crying for help, since the current seemed to have carried him far away, but the hen went on laughing without coming to his help. The monkey came across a tiger and asked for help. The tiger wanted something in return. The monkey said: "I have only my body and nothing else to give. You may eat me." The tiger rescued him and demanded if he would eat the monkey then and there. The monkey tried to buy some time, telling that as his body was still wet, the tiger could eat him after some time. After some time, the monkey shouted at the tiger, pleading with him: "Look! Something is approaching." The moment the tiger looked at that direction, the monkey jumped up on a tree. Ever since, monkeys have red backs and tigers never spare monkeys when they get hold of them.

Laka, Laira, Leeing[1]

Once there were two orphan boys. The youngest one was an adolescent while the elder one was an adult. The elder brother brought a woman as his wife. The wife, being a wicked one, mixed grit into the rice of the younger brother. While taking the goat for grazing, he used to cry everyday for the want of food and ate Laka, Laira and Leeing. Seeing him digging out Laka and Laira, the wife added poison, which turned them bitter in taste. The day after, when the boy was about to look for the creepers, the goat warned him not to eat since he might die because of the poison. He then found Leeing yam and ate. The wife of the elder brother pressed Leeing deep into the soil so that the boy would not find them to eat anymore. The orphan boy was left with nothing to eat and he started crying out of hunger. The goat consoled him by assuring to provide him food. The goat began to bleat loudly and porridge started coming out of its udder. The orphan boy ate those and this became the regular affair. The wife was curious to know how the boy was surviving without food. Hiding in the forest, she saw that the boy was supplied food by the goat. In the evening, when her orphan-husband returned, she declared that she was suffering from a deadly disease which could only be cured by eating the meat of the orphan boy's goat. The young orphan boy cried the entire night and next morning his elder brother asked him

to bring back the goat early in the evening for he would kill and cook its meat. Being asked why was he weeping, the boy revealed the fact to the goat, to which the goat suggested that after cooking the meat, the wife would only serve him the bones, which he need not eat, but should bury them after bundling them a leaf, in a particular spot. Accordingly, the boy followed the direction and buried the bones. Immediately there appeared a golden pole. All the people, including the king, arrived and the king declared that whosoever could lift up the golden pole, would be wedded to his daughter. People tried and failed. Finally, the orphan boy was asked the king to give at try. He was hesitant, but the king said that irrespective of what might be the consequence, he should give it a try. The orphan boy, astonishingly, raised the pole up with a single stroke. The king took him to his house and gave his elder daughter in marriage as well as the half of his kingdom to the orphan boy. The boy looked after his people and lived in peace. One day, he called his elder brother and his wife. He asked them to eat rice mixed with grit which they declined. The boy then reminded the wife how she used to do the same. Both of them were ashamed of their wrong deeds.

Why the Totos take Beef

According to this tale, the Totos were not beef-eaters in ancient times, for they never killed cows. However, they were 'compelled' to do so after an incident. Once, the Totos, during one of their hunting sessions, killed an animal which they thought to be a Sambhar-deer; they relished it with rice and *Iu* [traditional liquor] and before going to sleep, the *Mondal* [headman] took a bamboo pole and hung the head of the animal on it, to be consumed the next day. Early at dawn, the Head priest and Mondal summoned the community for an urgent meeting, where the Mondal narrated his dream, in which Itspa took offence for not offering him the food that they had hunted. Itspa demanded the Mondal to offer him next day the same animal that they had hunted the previous day. Hearing this, people brought the head that they had hung on the pole down, only to discover, with utter , that what they had thought to be a Sambhar was actually a cow. But since it was the order of the deity, they had

to perform the religious ceremony and that was the time from when Toto people started offering beef both to the deities and themselves. The king of Coochbehar, having heard about the sacrificing of the cow, which was prohibited, expelled the Totos out of his kingdom. They were given refuge by the king of Bhutan for some time and thereafter returned back to Totopara.

The Cause of Landslide in the Hills

Once, the hills suffered from scarcity of water during the winter. Itspa, feeling pity for the troubled men and animals, planned to make many water pools in the hills. However, he needed the help of Pidua, for the hill streams used to flow following Pidua's direction. Both of them stared working. But Pidua, as expected from his evil instinct, did everything to upset Itspa's plan. Itspa noticed all of Pidua's misdeeds from a hiding place and thought of a counter-plan. The next day, he asked Pidua to find the depth of the ditch that he had dug, by moving down the ditch by holding one end of the rope of which Itspa held the other end. While Pidua started moving deep down the ditch, Itspa covered it with soil and stones from the top. He thought Pidua was dead, which was a wrong assumption. Pidua emerged out with a frenzied wrath and from that day, whenever Itspa showered rain for the service of human beings, Pidua would cause landslides in the hills to distress people.

Limbu

Death by a Flower

A god had a son and a daughter, whom he sent down to the earth. Having growing up together, the sister longed to marry the brother. By the virtue of possessing the divine mind, the brother came to know of the secret desire of the sister and thereby married another woman, who soon gave birth to a son. This made the sister very jealous. One day, the wife found her sister-in-law, swinging the baby's cradle with her foot and spelling out evil chant. The wife complained to her husband, who became furious enough to kill the

sister. The wife prevented him from doing so with a weapon, since it is considered a sin. She gave him an idea of hitting the sister with a deadly flower, which she would ask in the process of the ritual dance of the community. Accordingly, he invited people for song and dance and offered all the women natural flowers, except to his sister. When the sister insisted on having one, he struck her chest with the poisonous flower, which infected her and finally killed her. The brother bribed the people not to inform the father about his cremating the sister's body. However, the god-father, smelling the daughter's body smoke up in the sky, came down only to find out about his daughter's jealousy, which was caused by the baby. He wanted to kill the baby, but the baby wanted some sacrificial offerings before his death. As per the wish of the baby, the god-grand-father gave a pig to the baby as a sacrificial offering to be offered in the puja. As soon as the pig was offered, the grandson died.

Four Brothers and a Sister

A king has four sons and he was worried, what if none of them would be able to have children due to the lack of a daughter. However, when the queen got pregnant, he said that if she gives birth to a girl then he would kill all his sons because he would not need them. Hearing this, the queen started weeping. Seeing her weeping, her youngest son, Lagerick asked her, "What makes you sad mother?" She made her son promise not to inform the king about the secret that she was prepared to share with him. She then told Lagerick about the king's plan if she would give birth to a daughter. The son shared the secret with other brothers and they thought of running away to the forest. The mother suggested that she would wave a red flag on the rooftop if a daughter was born, otherwise a white flag, seeing which they might return to their father's house. A few days passed and the brothers saw a red flag. They understood that the mother had given birth to a sister. They moved further away and built a small house for themselves. After five or ten years, the daughter one day discovered some men's clothes and went to her mother, asking about the owner of the clothes. The mother revealed the truth to the daughter. She was very annoyed and started moving towards

the forest in search of her brothers. Finally, she found a small house and a man staying inside that. Being interrogated, she said: “I have come to find my four brothers, the youngest being Lagerick.” The man happily introduced himself as Lagerick. They were happy to be united. However, Lagerick remembered suddenly of the brothers’ plan to kill anyone who would come in search of them. He hid the sister when it was time for the other brothers to return home. When they returned, Lagerick informed them of the sister’s pursuit and the other brothers cancelled the plan, for they too were happy to find the sister. In the meantime, the sister thought of offering flower garlands to each of the brothers. The moment she plucked the flower for the garland, the brothers turned into crows and flew away. The sister started crying and went on searching in the forest. She suddenly came across an old lady who asked her about her problem. After hearing everything, she suggested to the sister, “If you want to see your brothers, do not cry or laugh in front of any old woman for the next three years.” The girl thought, “It is impossible not to talk to old woman, approaching me, for three years. I will better hide myself by living on the tree.” For almost three years, she lived on the tree. All of a sudden, a king who was passing by, saw the beautiful girl on the top of the tree. He carried her down and took her on his horse to the palace and married her. But the girl didn’t utter a single word. The mother of the king said, “I think she is a witch. Better get rid of her by drowning her in a big pot of boiling water.” Accordingly, the king tied her to a big pot. Just as he was about to put boiling water, a gust of air blew and four crows appeared who immediately transformed back into the four brothers. The brothers untied the sister and assured to protect her whenever she would be in crisis.

Losing a Daughter

Semewa was a young girl who lived with her mother. One day, the mother collected some mushrooms from the forest and put it in the sun, asking Semewa to watch carefully so that none could steal the mushrooms. The sun was so strong that the mushrooms shrank into tiny wrinkles. The mother came back and was terribly upset seeing the condition of the mushrooms. She suspected that her daughter might

have done something. Although Semewa denied having committed any mischief, the mother called her a liar and hit her with a sweeping broom so hard that the daughter eventually died. The following day, when the mother gathered some fresh mushrooms and put them in the sun, she found that the mushrooms automatically shrank. She was filled with a sense of guilt that she started weeping and running into the forest, calling the nickname of her dead daughter, "Semou, Semou!" Thereafter, she turned into a suffering bird of the jungle, and one can still find her in the form of the Semewa bird, yelling, "Semou, Semou!"

The Story of Two Brothers

Wandering through the forest, a woman became thirsty. She found a water-filled stone and drank the water. After walking for some distance again she became thirsty and drank from a log that was filled with water. Some time passed in between when she suddenly discovered herself to be pregnant. It was also discovered that the water that she drank from the stone was in fact a tiger's urine and that of the log was the urine from a man. She was hence, made pregnant by both an animal and a human being. Consequently, she gave birth to twins: a boy and a tiger. As they grew, the tiger kept on finding ways of eating the man-brother. The man, though, always took care of the tiger-brother, but finally found no other alternative left than to kill the tiger in order to save his own life. Both of them went to a jungle. The man climbed up the ninth branch of the Simal tree, while the tiger sat on the eighth branch. Then he proposed to the tiger brother to close his eyes and open the mouth as wide as possible so that he could jump into the tiger's mouth and allow the tiger to eat him. The tiger followed the instructions. The man, with the sole arrow left with him, shot straight into the tiger's widened mouth. The tiger fell down dead. This made the mother happy and she threw flowers for the well-being of her human son. The man, however, climbed down the tree and de-skinned the tiger for making a Limbu drum called Chyabrung. Then, along with his mother, the man-brother performed the tiger style dance along with the drum in the honour of the dead tiger-brother's vigour.

The Papoo Fish

A grandmother was the sole guardian of a boy whom she looked after till he grew up as a man and got married. The boy then thought of keeping the grandmother away from him. He took her and left her inside a cave in the jungle. After some days, he visited the cave and found her alive. So he took her to a river and abandoned her. However, returning after several days, the man found that the grandmother was clutching a big rock with her hands and was still alive. He asked her if she was hungry, and the grandmother nodded her head to imply that she was indeed very hungry. Then the man said, "Show me with your hand how much food you need." The moment the grandmother opened her palms, she slipped into the river. But instantly, she turned into a papoo fish, with the gray plaits of her hairs turning into the silver plaits, which one can see at the back of the papoo fish.

Losing a Father

A son was walking with his father in the jungle. The father went into a bush to take a leak, when a tiger came from behind and ate him up. The son kept on waiting for his father. As it was getting dark, he came back to his home and informed the mother, "I think father has disappeared into the forest. He went into the bush but never returned. A bird, instead, followed me home from the forest." The mother went out to see the bird which was sitting on the weaving loom. All of a sudden, it turned into a needle. The mother told the son, "This is your father."

Lepcha

Two Friends and the Devil

One upon a time, there lived two young friends from two different villages. They used to catch birds and sell them to earn their livelihood. Every day in the morning one friend from his village used to travel to the other friend's village and together they used

to climb up on the mountain top to watch and trap birds from the trees. One day, the one who used to come to the friend's village proposed that they would meet on the mountain top, the next day. Accordingly, he reached the mountain top and, climbing up the tree, stayed there waiting for his friend. Suddenly, he felt that someone was approaching him. Thinking that it was his friend, he asked: "Why are you so late?" A voice answered, "It's difficult. How could you climb up the tree?" The boy looked back and discovered that it was a devil and not his friend. That was the reason why he didn't know how to climb up. Suddenly, the boy saw that the devil took his friend's head out of his bag. The devil nvited him: "Come and taste a little of my cucumber." The boy was terrified to see the bleeding head of his friend. But he got an idea. He threw a bundle full of his trapped birds far away. The moment the devil went to get the bag, he climbed down and ran back home. However, the boy was so shocked and sad that ultimately he also died, just like his friend.

The Luckless Punshohang

Once upon a time, there was a house of two brothers—the baby brother and luckless Punshohang, the elder one. It was a time when the holy people came and drew away all the devils, except a single devil family, who remained in a cave. One day, the parents of the two brothers went to work in the field, leaving the baby in the care of Punshohang. There was a devil-family who stayed in a nearby cave. Finding the house empty, the mother devil came and took Punshohang to her cave. She locked him along with her children-devils before going out for her nocturnal work. When the father and mother devils left, Punshohang was afraid: "I think these children are going to kill and eat me." He started crying. The children came and licked up his tears. This made Punshohang annoyed and he began to cut the devils left and right with his knife. The parent-devils returned with food early in the morning. The children-devils ate but Punshohang could not eat their food. That day, again, at night the parents went out, leaving the children-devils locked inside the cave along with Punshohang. Punshohang again began to cry and the children-devils licked his tears. He again became mad and

started cutting the children left and right with his knife. This made him so exhausted that he fell into deep sleep. While he was sleeping, the children-devils woke him up. Giving him the key, they showed him way for escape. Punshohang ran back to his house. He told his parents about all that had happened to him. However, he died on that very day.

The Orphan Boy and the Giant

There once lived an orphan boy who was starving due to lack of food. He went to his uncle and got some *Chi* [fermented beer] and *Zo* [rice] to eat. Putting on new clothes, he took his uncle's cattle for grazing. Returning back, he was provided food by his uncle. However, the boy was not satisfied and went on demanding for more food, again and again. Finding him to be greedy, the uncle asked the boy to leave his house immediately. The boy became very sad. He came across a spring where he placed his *vore* [a snare used to catch birds] and hid himself in a bush nearby. But every time he came to check the *vore,* he found it empty. He was very angry and wanted to see who was taking away his catch. Suddenly, he heard some noise of someone approaching him. But it was not a usual human sound. Being frightened, he pretended to be a dead man. But he tried to see through his eyes half open and a found a giant walking up towards him. The giant was happy to see a bigger game caught up in the snare. Taking the boy on the palm of his hand, he said, 'Hmm, today I got quite a big bird!' Looking at the boy, he asked: 'Are you alive or dead?' The boy was too frightened to answer. He stayed motionless, as if dead. Thinking that he was dead, the giant carried him on his shoulder and climbed on a huge rock mountain. Again, he examined the boy and interrogated if he was alive or dead. Not getting any reply, he opened the door inside the rock cave and placed him in a corner, while resting himself on the huge bed. Waking up after some time, he rang a bell and plenty of food, treasure and *Chi* appeared before him. After this, he again checked the boy and finding him dead he left the bell on his stone-shelf and went out for his work. The boy took the bell and slowly came out of the room and ran back home as fast as possible. Reaching his house, he rang the bell

and immediately huge heaps of food and wealth appeared in front of him. Soon he became very rich and lived happily thereafter.

Two Brothers

Once there were two brothers—the rich younger brother and the poor elder brother. The younger brother was very close to his friend. Ignoring the elder brother, he used to take care of his friend affectionately. The younger brother one day suggested, "Dear friend, let's go to the forest to collect red berries." Off they went. Climbing up the tree, the younger brother started eating the berries, while the red juice oozing out of the fruit marked him red. Calling out his friend, he tumbled down the tree, "O my friend, I am falling!" he cried. Climbing down the tree, the friend found the younger brother lying on the ground and smeared in red colour. He said,"You are no way related to me. Why should I look after you? Rather I will inform your brother. Let him come and take care of you." He left the place without attending to the friend. The elder brother, however, rushed to the spot. Looking at his younger brother, he lamented: "My brother, you have forgotten your own brother and have neglected me. You have showered all your love and affection on such an undeserving man." As he was about to lift the younger brother to carry him home, the younger brother opened his eyes and said, "Brother I am fine. Nothing has happened to me." He got up and went back home with his elder brother. From that day on, the friend was no more a friend, but the two brothers were always together, loving and caring for one another. This is the reason why the Lepchas believe that nothing is more important than the love of one's own kinsmen.

Rabha

The Helpless Kartika

Kartika is the son of Mahadev Shiva and his wife Parvati. One day, Shiva took permission from Parvati and went for arranging Kartika's wedding with Usha, a beautiful and respectable goddess. Though Parvati gave her consent, she was not happy. As the date of the

wedding approached, Mahadev started making arrangements for the journey to the bride's house, which took three days each to reach and come back. Performing all the rituals, Kartika, Shiva and a host of the bridegroom's party started for the bride's house. Reaching midway, Kartika discovered that he was not carrying the wedding ring. He thought that mother Parvati must have forgotten to give that to him. Asking everyone to wait for him, he came back to take the ring. Reaching home, he found that Parvati was cooking rice in a huge earthen pot and meat on a large frying pan. Bewildered, he asked Parvati the reason for making such a huge arrangement when hardly anyone else was around. Parvati replied that after getting married, Kartika would bring the bride along with him and the wife would then never allow the mother-in-law to eat to her heart's content. Hence, she was trying to satiate all her desires before Kartika would return with Usha. Hearing this, Kartika became very sad and said, "I promise in the name of my father that I will undertake whatever you ask me to do in order to make you happy." Parvati happily stated, "I am attracted to you. Your beauty surpasses the beauty of all the gods and goddesses. I want you to satisfy my carnal yearning." Kartika closed his eyes and covered his ears with his hands. In a terrified voice, he asked, "How is it possible? Isn't this a sin?" Parvati assuredly replied, "Why should it be a sin when you have grown up? Why shouldn't one be allowed to taste the harvest of one's own sowing?" She reminded him of promising in the name of Shiva to do anything to please her. A helpless Kartika urged, "I have one condition. Take me to a place where there is no creature to see us and bad-mouth us for our deed." Parvati took him to a far-off place which was thoroughly desolate. The moment they were about to make love, a peahen came from nowhere, followed by a peacock. Kartika got up and said, "You have failed to fulfill the condition, mother. I cannot keep my promise, as well." Parvati, agitated by her unfulfilled desire, cursed the peahen that from then onwards, she would never get sexual satisfaction. Since then, according to the Rabha belief, the peahen becomes pregnant by swallowing the tears and sweat of the peacock. Parvati also cursed Kartika with impotency and because of that, all through he has to stay as a bachelor.

Love Story of Seuji

A long time ago, there lived a man who, having fathered a son named Anteswar, gave up worldly attachments and became a sage. However, he asked his wife and son to remember him in times of crisis. One day, when Anteswar fell sick, his mother went into the forest for medicinal leaves. By coincidence, the mother of another girl, Seuji, who was also unwell, came in search of medicine and both the mothers decided that their kids would get married to one another once they grow up. Unfortunately, Anteswar's mother suddenly expired and an elderly spinster of the neighbourhood started taking care of Anteswar. Then the day arrived when Seuji's mother approached Anteswar to marry her daughter, as per the promise made by her and his late mother. Though the spinster was much older, she got attracted to Anteswar, who grew up as a handsome young man. On the day of marriage, she, having good knowledge of witchcraft, took the shape of the bride and got married to Anteswar. At night, when she re-established her real identity, he became very sad and started planning to get rid of her in order to marry the real Seuji. One day, he proposed to his wife to go to the river for removing the rust from the sword and lice from their hair. While the wife got busy in removing lice from her head, Anteswar, with a single stroke of his sword, beheaded her. The detached head, however, did not die and came rolling towards him. Anteswar became very scared and he climbed up a tree. The head started climbing too. He then began to ask help from his saint father who sent his disciple for his protection. But the head attacked the disciple and defeated him. Then the saint father sent a wild boar that ultimately smashed the head and saved Anteswar. After some time, he got wedded to Seuji. Both of them were happy to be together after such a long waiting, but Seuji was often scared of the catastrophe that might befall as a curse for killing the former wife. One day, she was so worried that she told the entire event to her mother and her maternal uncle. The maternal uncle became agitated after listening to Anteswar's duplicity. He stared chasing after him in great fury and Anteswar ran fast to escape from the uncle. Seuji also joined Anteswar to save him from her uncle's frenzy. She understood that her uncle had created magical grasshoppers to tempt Anteswar.

She alerted him not to eat those raw and went to fetch fire from a neighbour's house for roasting the grasshoppers. When she came back, she found that Anteswar had disobeyed her instruction and was lying dead after having consumed those magical grasshoppers. Seuji fainted and remained unconscious for a long time. Recovering her senses, she found herself in her mother's place. She lamented and mourned for months. But as she was a beautiful girl at the peak of her youth, it was not possible for her to stay alone for long. She got involved into a clandestine affair with a man and became pregnant. When she informed the man of her pregnancy and asked him to marry her, the man became panicky. He knew that since he was from a warrior's clan, the society would not allow him to marry Seuji, who was a descendant of a sage's clan. In utter disgrace, the man jumped into the river. Seuji too jumped into the river to save him, but because of her pregnancy she was heavy and therefore, sank deep into the river. Thus ended Seuji's love story.

Mothers and Daughters

Once upon a time, there were two sisters who went to a sage in the forest with the hope of having children. The saint, knowing that it was a sacrilege, could not resist the temptation. Attracted by their beauty, he satisfied their craving and once again submerged into deep meditation. The sisters left him, and in due course, each of them gave birth to a daughter. The two daughters grew up as passionate, adventurous and reckless girls. One day, the two young girls saw two young brothers and having learnt the art of enchantment from their mothers, they turned themselves into earthen pots. Instantantly, the two young men got attracted to those pots and thought of carrying them back to their house. On the way, however, the pot fell down from the elder brother's hand and to his surprise he found that blood oozed out of it and the molten clay turned into a bird that flew away in the sky. Back home, the younger brother was astonished to find a young beautiful girl, coming out of the pot and doing all the household works. The two brothers held her and pressed her to introduce herself. She narrated the entire story: "Both of us wanted to marry the two of you. Since the elder brother had killed

my elder sister, now I am here to marry the younger brother." The elder brother became jealous of his younger brother's fortune. He decided to kill the younger brother in order to marry the beautiful girl. Accordingly, he took his younger brother to the forest and left him deep inside the jungle from where it was not possible for him to return home. The beautiful girl had a pet parrot. She sent the parrot in search of her beloved and the elder brother was shocked to see his younger brother returning home. Next day, when both the brothers went to the forest for work, the elder one forcefully tied the younger one to a tree just in front of a snake-den. The girl, with her magic, came to know of the elder brother's evil plan and immediately sent her pet dog that freed the younger brother, scaring off the snakes, and brought him home. The very next day, the elder brother set the forest on fire and pushed his younger brother into it. The girl came running, but it was too late. By the time she reached the spot, the younger brother was already dead. She started weeping out of grief. Her mother came rushing to her along with her sister. Hearing about the elder brother's misdeeds, they created a magical river on the way to the elder brother's home. The river flooded into his house and drowned the wicked brother. With his death, the mothers succeeded in avenging him for the daughter's sorrow.

The Manly Woman

Long ago, there was a young lady. Her name was Maaykawn. She was fearless like a man. Also courageous and full of strength. For that reason, people used to call her a manly woman. Like a man, she could cut woods with axe. She was efficient in doing every work which was manly. She would assist men in their jhum cultivation and would walk on the road like a boy. The village women used to refer her as ox-like-virile-female while communicating among themselves. Due to her macho attire and attitude, she was almost past her youth and yet unmarried. The men were afraid to mingle with her. She also hardly socialised with other women. After everyone had left, she would go to the river and take bath all alone there. One day, a woman arrived, carrying her little boy on her back, when Maaykawn was taking bath after everyone had left the riverside. She requested

Maaykawn to take care of her boy till she would finish washing her clothes. Maaykawn kept the baby with her for some time. Then the woman came back, and while leaving for her home into the forest, invited Maaykawn to visit her place and have food with her. But Maaykawn said, "No I don't want to come and eat in your place. I am a single woman. It's not a good thing to visit an unknown woman and eat with her. I helped you because you are also alone like me. But I cannot accompany you." Failing to earn Maaykawn's faith, the woman went back with her son into the forest towards home. Next day, again she appeared with her son and a big pile of clothes. After washing those, she said to Maaykawn, "Look today I have so many clothes to carry home. How will I carry the child? Please help me today." Maaykawn felt that it would be bad not to help her. She carried the clothes while the boy was with the mother. As she walked faster, she reached the woman's house much before her. Entering the house, she was surprised to see all forbidden food in the room. Then she understood that the unknown woman must have been a witch. Quickly, she came out and returned to her village. Maaykawn understood that living as a single woman is bad since one would develop all sorts of corrupt aspects like that of the forest woman.

Saving the Man

Once upon a time, there was a newly-married couple. The girl's parents visited her in-laws and invited the newly wedded couple as part of the ritual. The wife was very happy and she did the packing. Eating rice-water, she went to sleep so that next day early in the morning she, along with her husband, would leave for her parent's house. In her sleep, she dreamt that while her husband was eating fish in her parents' house, a fish-bone got stuck in his throat and he died. She woke up and found that her husband was sleeping peacefully by her side. Again in her sleep she dreamt that while her husband was cutting banana leaves, badly hit by a banana trunk on his chest, he died then and there. The wife could not sleep and was panicky throughout the night. But she didn't tell anything to her husband and both of them started for her parents' house, early in the morning.

In the afternoon, while taking bath in the river Torsha, the husband caught a big Boroli fish which his mother-in-law cooked and served him in lunch. Since the wife had the memory of last night's bad dreams, she was sitting by his side. Almost immediately, the husband seemed to have chocked while the wife slapped him hard and the rice along with the fish-bone came out of his mouth. The new son-in-law felt humiliated on being smacked by his wife in front of his mother-in-law. However, he thought not to create any scene and silently finished his lunch. His mother-in-law then asked him to cut some banana leaves for serving dinner. The wife immediately recollected her dream. She followed him to the forest. Straightaway hit by a banana trunk on his chest, he fell unconscious. The wife started punching on his back which made him recover his full sense. Finding his wife hitting him in the presence of the in-laws, he felt very embarrassed. Feeling insulted and thinking that his wife was maltreating him, he started to pack his luggage in order to move out of the wife's house. The wife then disclosed to him her dream. The man felt ashamed of his misapprehension and stayed back happily with his wife.

NOTE

1. Different types of wild creepers.

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