

The Editorial Note

(What's in Folklore is NOT in "Grilling")

"The sense of inquiry" and "questioning" are the roots from where the idea of modernity emerged. In a world that is a heritage of old esoteric cultures and ancient traditions, modernity brings in the force that rejects the establishment of existing belief systems. The idea of "modern" situates itself in contrast to the old and the traditional. It questions the authenticity of a set belief system and considers this "grilling" as the only absolute way of human life. Folklore as a genre has its foundation in culture, tradition and past that counters this modern tendency which outrightly dismisses the authenticity of traditional past. The current edition of *Ad Litteram* attempts to bring in the discussion on this idea of questioning that is countered through folklore as a method of human life.

The area of folklore studies is a limitless ocean – a space that preserves and fosters cultures, traditions, narratives and belief systems of communities across the world that are central to their identity and history. Folklore as a discourse plays a foundational role in understanding a culture, its history, traditions and eventually its present state and the journey to it. The so-called "shift" or "transformation" that modernity propagates reflects the sense of chaos in the absence of an order from the past that conveys the sense of coherence in the way of life, which draws a striking contrast to the mess resembled through the "grilling" of modernity.

With the rejection of existing belief systems through "questioning" it as unreliable and unworthy in the modern world, a sense of binary of old vs new, orthodox vs modern, inauthentic vs authentic is created. But folklore is trans-missive through generations and cannot be boxed as a mere thing of the old past, its presence is very much there in the modern and can be seen as a challenge to the so-called modern idea and hence the need for "grilling".

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The present edition of *Ad Litteram Journal* is an attempt to counter the idea that situates folklore and tradition as orthodox and age-old in contrast to modern and innovation as two opposite poles to each other. The scholarly articles submitted to the journal expands the discussion on the role of folklore in the broad area of cultural and folklore studies through the literature, art, culture and history of various communities across the world, which is an inextricable part of their identities.

Mamta Sharma's research paper *Understanding Migration and Condition of Women through the Folk Songs of Garhwal* is a feminist study that sets forth the role of folklore in understanding the intricacies of migration that are often missed by historians. The paper offers a case study of migration and its effects on the people of Garhwal, especially women through the critical analysis of Govind Chatak's book *Garhwali Lokgeet: Khand Ek, Laghugeet*, consisting of collected Garhwali songs.

The emerging field of ecofeminism brings the position of women and environmental studies together. The paper by Shivani Bhatt *Life and Livelihood in the Cradle of Nature: A study of Selected Folk Songs by Women of Garhwal, Uttrakhand* is a contribution to the same. Her paper takes in consideration the situation of Garhwali women and their livelihood through folk songs. It explores the relation between nature and women of Garhwal which is reflected in their knowledge of agriculture. The paper also looks into the various environmental movements from the region like the Chipko Movement. It brings together nature and orality with gender through the analysis of the folk songs collected by the author as a part of her field work in Pauri Garhwal and IGNCA archives.

A joint paper by Kashish Jain and Mansi Plaha *Integrating Roots with Modern Sensibilities: A study of African Folkloristic Culture under Colonial Influence* emphasizes on the need to hold on to culture of the past which plays an important role to strengthen communities and evokes the sense of belongingness as opposed to the

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isolating individualism of the modern age. The authors take the account of Africa whose culture is threatened by colonialism and modernization through the analysis of Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* with a focus on the depiction of folklore in the novel.

Raina Bhowal's paper *Migrating from the City to the Outskirts in Search of Knowledge: Folklore Studies in India, a Discussion* takes into account the broad area of folklore studies in India to deal with the issues of prejudiced representation of indigenous people and the movement of knowledge from the centres to the margins in order to sensitize the readers towards indigenous people. The paper also attempts to explore the practice of folklore studies in independent India as a means of knowledge through tribal lore, Indian mythology, songs, narratives, belief practices and performances that are often neglected by the mainstream.

Folklore cannot be confined in a box against modernity, this idea of modernity emerging as a ground-breaking idea conveys the sense of traditional past as orthodox but the truth is that folklores are full of the tendencies that challenge and reject the norm which are considered modern ideas. Madhumita Mondal's paper *The Transvestite as Transgressor? Cross-Dressed Heroines of Bengali Folktales* expands this idea. Her paper counters the idea of looking at Bengali folk tales as a propagator of heteronormative gender norms, especially among children by her analysis of cross-dressed Bengali heroines who are a total opposite of gender norms and heteronormativity, who reject the societal set conventions of gender and it is characteristically a modern idea.

Nishi Singh's paper *Folkloric World: Mythical Concerns in Angela Carter's Fiction* is centered around the depiction of mythical elements in the fiction of Angela Carter and her recreation of her own myths in order to prove her feminist concerns. This work is a feminist study that takes into consideration the strong women characters in

Carter's works. It presents an analysis of myths, culture, tradition and folklore in her work and their role in the postmodern world.

The "grilling" attitude of modernity along with the rise of chaos in the modern world order which are often not in the prime interest of humans but of the materialistic and capitalistic society, actually makes one look back at the old traditional world to find solace. Dr. Swati Singh's paper *Reclaiming Ramayana: The Sita that Nobody Read* is a feminist study that analyzes Devdutt Pattanaik's *Sita* in the socio-religious context of India and challenges the depiction of Sita in the popular imagination as a helpless and suffering figure and delves into the discussion of cultural appropriation through this image by countering the male voice by reclaiming the female voice in myths.

Chandra Ghosh's paper *Holistic Approach to Life in Select Indigenous Folklore in Oodgeroo Noonuccal* explores the idea of holistic approach to everyday life by indigenous people and their aboriginal laws of animal protection that are instilled into children through folk tales. It challenges modern civilization and colonialism by bringing the folklore culture of indigenous community from margins to the center, through the select folktales by an Australian aboriginal writer Oodgeroo Noonuccal. With the emergence of technology our lives are taken up by online culture spanning almost every part of our culture, including folklore. Parijat Pandya's paper *The Digital Folklore of Cyborgs* explores this idea. The paper looks at "memes" as a new form of folklore in the age of the Internet and sees memes as semiotic structures that are capable of promoting folklore tradition. By taking into account select memes the paper is an attempt to draw parallels between memes and folklore which legitimizes memes as a way to transmit cultural information, like folklore.

Tenzin Nyima Bhutia's paper *Folklores in Buddhist Folktales and Interdisciplinary Approaches: An Analysis of Documentation of Faith* studies the role of folklore in the rise of Buddhism as folklores were the means to explain rituals and principles by Buddha and later by his disciples. The paper attempts to revive these lost narratives

through the help of Buddhist monks from the eastern Himalayan regions of India. The paper also explores the connection between folklore and faith, and offers an interdisciplinary approach to Buddhism and deals with the superficiality of "questioning" minds.

Debangana Das in her paper *Hijacking the Folk? A Study of Latif Shah's and Coke Studio's "Milon Hobe Koto Dine"* talks about the role of music in human life and explores the transition of the Bengali folk song from regional to global through its two different renditions. The paper critiques the cultural appropriation that takes the folk songs as a base to produce vogue products which are popular in the modern world of remix and mashup but then ultimately loses the cultural significance of the original art.

Apart from these rigorously studied research papers, the present edition of *Ad Litteram Journal* brings to its readers a short story "A Beautiful Illusion" by Dr. Rajeshvari, a poem titled "Cling On!!" by Silpa T.H.

Ad Litteram hopes to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of its readers in the realm of folklore. The research papers and creative works by acclaimed scholars are going to encourage discussions on the role of folklore through literature, music and art, which is central to understanding a community's culture, history, traditions and legacy. In the modern world that is characterized by a skeptical viewpoint which is founded on the modern tendency to "grill", the journal brings the works that would help the readers see the significance of holding on to our culture and traditional heritage through folklore besides being a meaningful contribution to the area of folklore studies.