



Folk Tales to Digital Narratives: The Transformation of Indian Storytelling Traditions

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Abstract:

Indian storytelling has undergone a significant transformation from oral folk traditions to contemporary digital narratives. It is deeply rooted into folklore, mythology, and regional epics. Storytelling was originally an oral practice passed down through generation to generation. With the advent of written literature, it evolved to print culture, these narratives has found permanence and has wider reach. The 20th century saw a major shift with the emergence of cinema and television, making traditional stories accessible through visual media. In the digital age, storytelling has evolved into new formats such as web series, podcasts, audio books and etc. These platforms have redefined the way narratives are consumed while preserving cultural heritage.

However, the shift also presents challenges, including commercialization and the potential loss of authenticity. The paper explores the transformation of Indian storytelling across different mediums and examines how digitalization has reshaped the way stories are told while maintaining their cultural significance.

Key Words: Folk Tales, Tradition, Mythology, Transformation and Digital World.

Introduction:

Indian storytelling has evolved from ancient oral traditions to contemporary digital narratives. In India, people are giving more significance to folk tales, mythological stories and short fables. They are enjoying and learning the history through story telling tradition. Storytelling is one of the most valuable Indian traditions. It preserves the deep-rooted culture and tradition. From the 19th and 20th century, people have been listening to fictional stories of these characters such as Thennali Raman, Birbal and Panjathanthira stories and especially all the elders used to narrate story stories every day, it is a wholesome experience for the listeners. Children learn more about the culture, tradition, history, life skills and mythology through stories. The concept of storytelling is real-time entertainment. Storytelling is a craft that requires a perfect craftsman to explore the life's sequences. In the stories, they have some peculiar elements like adventure, fantasy, supernatural spirits, nostalgia, etc.

Folktales are tales that are being told regardless of their age. The transferral nature of folktales has never changed but the modes have changed through the burgeoning nature of the technology. Every nook and corner in the world has its own folklore or folktales. Every folktale has its own unique characterization, plot and moral. The modern world is carrying it up with a new mode of narration and facilitating it with the appeal to the senses of ears and eyes. Kids and people from the modern world are experiencing a new version of storytelling. The art of storytelling is not just a way of exhausting leisure. It paves the way for the young minds to be creative and imaginative while listening to the stories. It paves way for them to learn morality, virtues and vices that exist in the world before them from the stories that involve mythologies, folklore, and history. These stories teach them life lessons and make most of them lead a virtuous life or at least it makes them aware of the virtue and vice.

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Storytelling is an art. India has a rich tradition of storytelling culture. People enjoy listening to stories based on mythology. The oral narratives of folk tales to the epics, such as Ramayana, *Mahabharata*, *Silapathigaram*, *Manimegalai* and *Thiruvilaiyadal*. Storytelling has played a crucial role in shaping Indian Culture. Folktales are part of Indian tradition and culture. They are not just stories; they are the compartments that transfer cultural norms and ethics to the impending generation. Folktales have affluent morality and profuse entertainment in them. As Romila Thapar notes, "Storytelling in India is not just a form of entertainment but a means of preserving and transmitting cultural values" (*Indian Tales Retold*). People of all ages are showering their immense attentiveness over the folktales. These folktales have a considerable impact on all generations and ensure their existence in the digital world.

Nothing has changed about folktales, but the methods of storytelling have had a drastic change. The modern storytellers are not telling stories through books and magazines, they use animations and cartoons as their mode of storytelling. Indian Storytelling has evolved from ancient oral traditions to contemporary digital narratives, reflecting cultural continuity amid technological advancements. Over time, these narratives evolved from oral traditions to written texts, stage performances, cinema, and now digital platforms.

With the advent of written manuscripts, Indian storytelling expanded beyond oral traditions. Ancient texts like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were recorded in various regional languages, giving rise to distinct literary traditions. Writers such as Kalidasa's

Meghaduta, Shakuntala. These are the admirable written works among the traditional story lovers. Later, modern authors like Premchand and Rabindranath Tagore contributed to the written storytelling culture, making narratives more accessible to wider audiences. Premchand once remarked, "Literature is the mirror of society, and through storytelling, we reflect upon the changes within it" (*Godaan*). In India people prefer to read story books while travelling somewhere and it imparts smugness in a good way. It becomes their regular activity; they are addicted to the stories because there is no other entertainment.

The 20th century brought a new dimension to Indian storytelling with the rise of cinema and television. The cinema and television have played a vital role to incorporate the storytelling tradition into the colourful world. It paints the scenarios of the audience's minds. Early films like *Raja Harishchandra* (1913) adapted traditional stories for the big screen, while later productions like *Maya Bazaar* (1957) reinterpreted mythological themes. The *Maya Bazaar* is an interesting movie. It has existed in the theatres for a year. In India, people are giving more essence to the films and theatres. The advent of television in the 1980s has increased by the popular serials like *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, which became household phenomena, reinforcing traditional narratives through visual storytelling. As Shekhar Kapur notes, "Cinema is the new epic storytelling format, bringing myths and legends to life for a modern audience" (*The Rise of Indian Mythology in Digital Media*).

The folks are more curious to watch the updated version through the digital technologies. It makes them realize the scenes with realistic perspective.

The transition from folk tales to digital narratives is reflected in society. According to Alan Dundes, "Folklore is a mirror of culture, reflecting the values, beliefs, and concerns of the society in which it exists" (*The Study of Folklore*). The Children grasp the mythological ideals through cartoons and animations like *Little Krishna, Ganesha, etc.* It helps to know and learn the elevated style and moral values from the epic characters. The substitution causes and gives the awareness about the folktales to the impending younger generations.

In the present time, digital storytelling has transcended conventional boundaries, adapting to new platforms such as podcasting, audio books, web series, animation, and short-form digital content, which have further globalized Indian narratives, blending tradition with modern sensibilities. The storytelling tradition had started evolving through the ages. As Suman Gupta states, "Digital storytelling has redefined audience engagement, making stories more interactive and inclusive" (*Digital India and the Transformation of Narratives*).

It has started with the oral narration later; it has come as text and after that, a metamorphosis happens in movies and animated series. Through the mythological stories, people get to know the mythological characters, their virtues and vices, their attire, their tradition, their firm hold of morality, etc., The stories include history that transmits its contents to the future generations and makes them aware of the history. History plays a vital role in the lives of every single human being in the world. The texture of History through the narration creates a huge impact on the listeners however, in the cyborg world the narration modules itself and becomes a movie or an animated movie. Movies create a profound impression in the audience than oral narration and it makes sense concerning the evolution of the storytelling.

While digital storytelling offers new opportunities, it also poses challenges. The rapid digitization of stories raises concerns about the authenticity and commercialization of traditional narratives. Additionally, many indigenous storytelling forms risk being overshadowed by modern adaptations. "The challenge of modern storytelling is not just to

entertain but to preserve the integrity of cultural narratives," writes Deepa Sreenivas (*Traditional Storytelling and Modern Media in India*).

However, digital platforms provide an opportunity for regional and marginalized voices to reach wider audiences, ensuring inclusivity in the storytelling landscape. Despite rapid digital transformation, efforts to document and preserve India's rich storytelling traditions continue. Initiatives by cultural organizations, online archives, and digital platforms play a crucial role in keeping traditional narratives alive. Animated adaptations of folk tales, virtual storytelling festivals, and digitized manuscripts ensure that India's storytelling heritage remains relevant for future generations.

Conclusion:

The storytelling tradition has endured its incredible growth and that growth has brought immense change in the world. The oral tradition is a zero-cost entertainment but the evolution of oral tradition has brought and become a million-dollar business. There are separate channels to telecast the content for children in the scenario. These channels telecast animated and cartoonish contents to gather the attention of the young generation, and they use traditional folklore and mythologies as their content. By such ways people hand over their tradition and culture to the future generations. Apart from these channels, there is another colossal industry that deals with these mythologies and folklore, which is the film industry. They invest a colossal amount in this film industry and they acquire a double of it.

In this way, the oral folklore has transformed into an advanced digital narrative. In this way, the oral folklore transformed into an advanced digital narrative. Indian stories are basically filled with moralities, virtues and vices. For example, Ramayana has the oral form at first; later it has turned into a readable text; after that it becomes movies and serials. The modes have changed, but the story remains the same. As a cessation, folklore and folktales are immortal they exist and become a part in the lives of every single person in the world in multidisciplinary fields.

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