

the Western Scholars. Detail study of individual tale-type will amply reward the scholars in finding out new facts. Kaarle Krohn (1863-1933), who first applied the historic-geographic method to the study of the folktale held that only by special studies of each story, based on as a large number of versions as possible, could one hope to approach a real knowledge of the facts.

The type-motif classification of Indian folklore materials will lead to another stimulating study in which the late Professor Maurice Bloomfield, the doyen of Indologists and his co-workers are pioneers. This relates to the study of some significant traits in a group of tales as in Bloomfield's *On Talking Bird in Hindu Fiction*; on recurring psychic motifs in Hindu fiction of laughter and cry motif; on art of entering another's body; Dohada or craving of pregnant woman; on overhearing as a motif of Hindu fiction etc.

It is true that a tale primarily provides entertainment or gives aesthetic pleasure. On careful analysis, however, it will be apparent that many tales contain elements which may have been "survivals" of beliefs, customs, superstitions, rituals, magic and earlier age. Professor Eberhard considers folktale materials a fossilised social and religious history. To him folktale is a key to unlock the door of intellectual and spiritual history of a nation and a tool to interpret many of the concepts and technique propounded by Freud and other psychoanalysts. Stith Thomson observes that when the folklorists has done his best to discover all the facts about the life history of the tale, there may be room for the psychologists, the sociologists and the anthropologists. Although folktale cannot be substituted for history, it can nevertheless contribute valuable information about people and their way of life and thought which the historian is not likely to obtain in any other way. History interpreted through myth, legend, and anecdote reveals basic emotional elements of fear, hatred, love, affection, pride and courage. It needs no emphasis to illustrate that folktale and folklore in all countries keep the past alive as it was felt by common folk. By its very nature myth, legend and tale constitute living cultural history of a country.

16

Vowel assimilation in Bengali and Munda

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From the earliest times Bengali has had a predilection for assimilation of vowels. There are two main types. The first type converts *ə* into *o*, when the vowel of the next syllable is either *i* or *u* (*bhəkto* "devoted", but *bhokti* "devotion", *kəre* "makes", but *koruk* "he shall make"), and *e* becomes *æ* before all other vowels,

except before *i* and *u* (*dækhe* "he sees", *dækho* "see!", but *dekhi* "I see", *dekhuk* "he shall see"). The second type, which is much older and arose as early as in Early Middle Bengali, converts *o* and *e* into *u* and *i* before *u* and *i*, and *u* and *i* become *o* and *e* before other vowels, except before *i* and *u*. This change affects especially the verbal system (cf. *curi* "I steal", but *core* "he steals", *kinuk* "he shall buy", but *kene* "he buys" etc.). Both types are remarkable for the fact that with them it is not the palatal or labial articulation which are assimilated—as in other systems of vowel harmony (f. i. in Old High German or Turkish)—, but the degree of the aperture of the mouth. Close phenomena corresponding to these are found in Munda. In Santali special vowels occur before *i* and *u*, which P. O. Boddington calls "resultant vowels" and which seem to be articulated with a narrower aperture of the mouth (which is actually caused by the raising of the tongue) than the ordinary vowels. The second type is already Proto-Munda. In the Proto-Munda words reconstructed by H. J. Pinnow in his "Kharia Phonology" there are many examples of the sequence *u-i*, *i-u* etc. and *o-e*, *o-a* etc., but very few of *o-i*, *i-o*, *o-u*, *u-o* and no case at all of *e-i*, *i-e*, *e-u*, *u-e*. As at least the second type of assimilation is much older in Munda than in Bengali, it is clear that the latter has been influenced by Munda and not the way round.

17

The Legend of Suparṇa through the Ages

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The purpose of my approach to the subject Suparṇa is to trace the development of the legend and conceptions of Suparṇa from the Veda to Classical period, thereby ascribing a divine origin and definite and independent position to Suparṇa in the whole of Indian Literature. The following points are examined:—

- I. References to Suparṇa in the Vedic Texts — Conception of the word Suparṇa — The bird that brings Soma from heaven (also called Śyena).
- II. References to Suparṇa in Post-Vedic texts namely Epics (the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*) and Purāṇas—their narration of the legend — Suparṇādhyāya — In what respects they are different from each other and their development in comparison with the Vedic data—Change in conception of Suparṇa — Garuḍa that brings *Amṛta* — Father of Sampāti and Jaṭāyu of *Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa* — Various phases of Suparṇa.