

brother adopting a passive role that allows a younger sibling to excel, the remainder depict open aggression (66%), or at least some form of competition (14%). Usually the elder male (who should exercise restraint according to moral norms) initiates this struggle.

The emphasis on male sibling cooperation, which seems to be nearly universal in Indic epics, is therefore less predictable in folktales. If epics tend to reflect ideals, and also class or caste norms, the shorter tales told by ordinary persons make more of social irregularities or *faux pas*. Like gossip, folktales often focus on key interpersonal relationships that tend to generate anxiety. Folktales point to tensions that excite the moral (and the immoral) imagination. Hence many brother/brother dyads (56%) involve arguments or jealousies between elder and younger siblings. As in the case of sisters, the younger brothers are almost always a source of envy. A younger sister's success story will concern her fine marriage, while a younger brother will excel by virtue of his great skill, cleverness, or exciting adventures. This final pattern links closely to the general Indic preoccupation (in folktales) with small, youthful, or socially inferior heroes.

In further research we must begin to ask about specific regions (North and South, coastal and interior) within this culture area and how they contribute differing emphases to this broad overview. The variations characteristic of important social groups (tribes and peasants, the religious and caste communities, and various linguistic groups) also need study. Most important, a careful examination of plot patterns is needed. This must involve the study of the particular motifs that characterize specific dyad types. Only through examining variations in concrete tale elements—plates of cooked rice, clever jackals, or shaven heads—can we uncover the more subtle differences in story figures that relate to differing social contexts or geographic regions. Such small details, in turn, will attain their full significance only when studied in the context of wider themes.

### Conclusion

The general patterns outlined in this essay can now be summarized. South Asian tales told about humans and about

animals both stress relationships of inequality. The great majority of these bonds depict distrust: fear either of abandonment by a superior, or of rebellion on the part of an aggressive inferior. In all contexts, furthermore, the junior character is generally favored, for beauty, for cleverness, or for sheer adventurism. Many young women are successfully married to princes, yet these brides later become ogres. Eventually they either eat young males or cause misfortune in other ways. Hasty violence by a master, coupled with later regret, is the parallel pattern for males.

This study of the Thompson and Roberts Indic tale-type index provides one small entry point into the vast South Asian folklore world. As the above discussion suggests, counting dyad types can help answer basic questions about the frequency of certain key themes. If this approach tends to oversimplify human bonds, it also has its rewards. Folktales often do depict simplistic relationships. It is in ballads and in epics (Schuldiner 1978) that greater pathos, greater ambivalence, and more human complexity are encountered. Such additional intricacy partly relates to added length, but in part it also appears to be genre-related. Folktales are told mainly by amateurs, and are usually not accompanied by ritual, by musical rhythm, or by other multimedia performance traditions (see Ramanujan, this volume). South Asian folktales rather than expressing specific communal ideals, reflect widespread suspicion about the structures and motivations that underpin daily life.

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