

## Folktales of Bihar: A Study of the Animal Characters

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v6i2.1677>

**APA Citation:** Mahato, A., & Singh, N. (2024). Folktales of Bihar: A Study of the Animal Characters. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 6(2), 185–196. <https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v6i2.1677>

**Received:**

14/03/2024

**Accepted:**

16/05/2024

**Keywords:**

Folktales, folk culture, Bihar, tradition, animal characters, customs .

**Abstract**

Cultural elements in folktales can manifest through idiomatic expressions, metaphors, proverbs, or references to specific historical events or figures. Each of these elements holds significant cultural value, enriching the story and providing insights into the community's collective experiences and values. In India, folktales are cherished by millions for their entertainment and aesthetic value. These tales are typically passed down orally from one generation to the next, and in more recent times, they may also be found in written form. Folktales from different regions reflect the thoughts, traditions, and culture of their people, providing both entertainment and insight into their past and present customs. Bihar is one of the most important states of India, located in the eastern region of the country, and has a rich tradition of folk culture. We often observe the representation of animal characters in folktales. In the context of the folktales of Bihar, we can also observe the depiction of different types of animal beings. The purpose of this study is to analyze how the animals are represented in the context of folktales of Bihar. To undertake this study, we need to utilize the descriptive analysis approach. To undertake this study, we need to utilize the descriptive analysis approach.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Folktales, passed down from generation to generation across the world capture the imagination and convey profound lessons. These folktales are full of animal characters through which these tales express important messages of life. Whether realistic or fantastical, these creatures take centre stage, revealing aspects of the human condition and offering life lessons rooted in culture and tradition. According to Melson (2001, p. 14), “featured animals, usually humanized or fantasy creatures, as main characters...” Indeed, animal characters transcend cultural and linguistic boundaries, embodying universal archetypes that resonate with human experiences and values.

These animals are not simply extras in the stories, but essential actors who shape the narrative and give it symbolic depth. Through their actions, interactions, and characteristics, they carry within them a broader, often metaphorical meaning, revealing truths about human nature, moral dilemmas, and cultural values. Thompson (1951, P. 217) stated that Animal characters’ features

also vary from culture to culture. The animal which is favoured in one culture is not necessarily in another. The folk tradition is very careful in its choice of animals, so as to make the human actions as nearly appropriate as possible.

Beyond their narrative role, animal characters establish a relationship between the animal world and the human world. Thompson (1951, p. 217) noted that the world of the human and the animal are never far apart as far as tale-telling is concerned. Many folktales told from all over the world are, as Werner (1995, p. 25) suggests, concerned with animals speaking and acting as if they were human beings. They offer mirrors in which we can see ourselves, reflecting our qualities, our faults and our aspirations. Okafor (1990, p. 191) noted that in these narratives, the animal characters have all the physical features of animals. Yet, everything else about them is anthropomorphic; they certainly behave like human beings. Thus, they are regarded as masks for making social comments on contemporary issues. By exploring these human-animal relationships, folklore stories invite us to reflect on our place in the universe, our responsibility to other living beings, and our deep connection to the natural world. Le Guin (2004, p. 22) stated that the relationship between animals and humans is mostly positive, involving the growth of trust, dependence companionship even redemption for the animal, the human, or both.

Thus, delving into the world of animal characters in folkloric stories is like undertaking a fascinating journey through cultures and eras. It is an exploration of the symbols, hidden meanings and timeless truths that continue to resonate in humanity's collective imagination.

Folktales often serve as vehicles for conveying moral messages or lessons. Thompson (1946, p. 10), stated that the moral purpose is the essential quality which distinguishes the fable from the other animal tales. Whether they are ancient myths, fairy tales, or modern novels, narratives frequently contain moral themes that teach readers about right and wrong, good and evil, and the consequences of one's actions. These moral lessons are woven into the fabric of the story, sometimes overtly and sometimes subtly, shaping characters' decisions and influencing the plot's direction. Through the experiences of the characters and the outcomes of their choices, readers learn valuable insights into ethical behaviour and the complexities of human nature. Coetzee (2003, p. 91) studied that rational accounts are merely a consequence of the human mind... animals have their own accounts in accordance with the structure of their own minds.

In this study, our intention is to deepen our understanding of this particular area by exploring animal characters in folklore stories. We aspire to dive into the heart of this fascinating universe where animals come to life, where they become much more than simple creatures, but living symbols imbued with cultural and moral meanings. Our exploration aims to reveal the multiple facets of these characters, to grasp their deep symbolism and to analyze their role in the transmission of ancestral traditions and values through folkloric stories from Bihar particularly.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Many of the folktales that developed in Bihar raised the origin of a place, the basis of a society, and the source of creatures in the universe. However, not many studies raise the animal phenomenon found in the folktales of Bihar. Therefore, this study provides an overview of the representation of animal characters in the folktales of Bihar.

Sabina Magliocco in her article *Folklore and the Animal Turn* (2018) explores the ethical aspects of the human-animal relationship. Authors use a folkloristic approach to investigate informal beliefs and scientific viewpoints, aiming to broaden the scope of folklore studies. They delve into vernacular understandings, cultural frameworks, and animal behaviours, inviting folklorists to contribute to discussions on post-humanism and the implications of the animal turn.

Hans-Jörg, in his study *The Fox in World Literature: Reflections on a "Fictional Animal"* (2006) discusses the role of the fox in international folktales. The animal is taken to be the incarnation of cunning, slyness, perfidy, and even wickedness. However, more positive qualities and faculties, such as an ingenious mind, a readiness to care for and help others, quickness, and circumspection are also recognized.

Pallabee Dasgupta in her work *Myth, Mystery and Animism: A Reading of the Animal Presence in Select Short Stories in English from North-East India* (2018) explains the presence of animal characters in short stories of the north-east of India. The stories also reveal the concepts of totemism and animality. The narratives become useful not only for exploring the representation of nature in it but also for the representation of animals, sometimes biological and often symbolic and conceptual.

After reviewing existing literature on Indian/Asian folktales, it becomes evident that while numerous studies have been undertaken, there exists a notable gap in the exploration of the representation of animals within these narratives. This aspect is crucial for understanding the intricate relationship between humans and animals as depicted in folktales. Given the limited attention this area has received, conducting a study focusing specifically on the portrayal of animals in Indian folktales holds significant importance. By delving into this subject, we aim to shed light on the nuanced roles, symbolism, and cultural significance attributed to animals within these traditional narratives. Our research endeavours to bridge this gap in scholarly inquiry, offering fresh insights into the ways in which animals are portrayed and the underlying meanings they convey within the rich tapestry of Indian folklore with special reference to Bihar.

### **3.1.Objective**

The present study aims to analyze the representation of animal characters in the folktales of Bihar.

- i. Type of animal characters
- ii. Significance of animal characters
- iii. Relation of animal and human being

### **3.2.Research questions**

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, we formulated the following questions:

- i. What role do animal characters play in the folktales of Bihar?
- ii. How do the depicted relationships between animals and humans contribute to the cultural significance of these narratives?
- iii. What lesson can be derived from the studied folktales of Bihar having the animal characters?

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study deals with folk literature with special references to the folktales of Bihar, an eastern Indian region. The state of Bihar from where the data was collected because it's based on initial observation; the place is rich in oral literature. The descriptive analysis method is used in this

research to accomplish the study. The steps are carried out in two ways, namely literature study by looking for folklore reference sources. We executed interviews in accordance with pre-established guidelines. We studied and analyzed the folklore data related to the animals. The data collected were meticulously scrutinized using a qualitative interactive model. This comprehensive approach involved three essential steps: firstly, data reduction, where the information was condensed to focus on the most pertinent aspects; secondly, data presentation, where the condensed data were organized and presented coherently; and finally, drawing conclusions or verification, where the findings were synthesized and validated to derive meaningful insights.

#### **4. Theoretical Framework**

Literature reflects language, culture, and conventions, offering new experiences and insights into the human psyche. It is shaped by socio-political, cultural, and aesthetic contexts. Folktales, whether spoken or written, depict the intricate spiritual, intellectual, and emotional aspects of any society. They explore humanity's origins, development, interests, emotions, endeavours, successes, and failures, as well as feelings of love, hate, faith, loyalty, and passion, encapsulating human behaviour, virtues, and vices. Folktales delve into the complexities of society. Language fosters social cohesion and cultural identity, with dominant languages serving as social connectors in various cultural backgrounds. They are a vital aspect of oral storytelling, constituting a fundamental genre of folk literature. They emerged during times of great creativity and are passed down orally, reflecting the thoughts and emotions of ordinary people naturally and spontaneously.

Folklore, like all human creative endeavours, reflects human imagination and ideology. It encompasses myths, legends, folktales, songs, riddles, proverbs, and superstitions. Like other aspects of culture, folklore is not merely a product of chance.

India's diverse tapestry of religions, languages, and cultures encourages a rich array of stories and legends, from the *Panchatantra* to the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. These narratives are not just tales but profound repositories of moral and instructional wisdom, offering themes ripe for deeper exploration.

A folktale is a narrative passed down orally, representing a culture rather than an individual. These tales, integral to oral tradition, carry historical imprints and offer insights into their originating cultures. They reflect societal norms and embody human experiences, rooted in a profound belief cherished by each culture. While not strictly historical accounts, folktales serve as windows into a culture's perspectives, activities, and beliefs. They are fundamental elements of imagination and creativity, comprising mythic symbols that resonate across cultures.

Folktales, myths, and legends are sacred narratives that delve into the ancient past, offering explanations for natural phenomena and the origins of civilizations, social structures, and religious practices. These tales passed down through oral tradition, represent a diverse array of cultures and are among humanity's oldest shared records. Exploring these stories is an exploration of human nature—our strengths, flaws, fears, and aspirations. They endure through time, reflecting the essence of human existence and serving as mirrors reflecting both the echoes of the past and the hints of the future.

Folktales are orally transmitted stories passed down through generations, with each storyteller adding their own nuances over time, enriching the narratives. These tales embody the culture, folklore, and traditions of their originating societies, reflecting communal values and moral expressions. Folktales are more than mere stories; they serve as benchmarks of goodness and

correctness, representing collective moral viewpoints. Their most distinct characteristic is their oral tradition.

Folktales have endured for centuries, originating from individuals with limited formal education. Over time, these tales were refined and enhanced by the community. However, they also draw inspiration from great works such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. The *Jatakas*, which are the birth stories of *Buddha*, are examples of ancient tales that have persisted through the ages.

Indian folktales are incredibly diverse, with each region showcasing its unique style, contributing to a vast collection for both familial and communal use. The evolution of Indian folklore can be traced through five stages:

- i. Initially dominated by scholars with limited understanding of India's culture and languages.
- ii. Followed by English authorities and missionaries who collected local knowledge for governance and religious purposes.
- iii. A period marked by Western and national researchers adopting a comprehensive approach, prioritizing the collection and classification of folktales.
- iv. Post-independence, saw increased academic interest in folklore, aiming to explore national identity and cultural preservation.
- v. Recent developments have led to interdisciplinary studies, integrating folklore with semantics, anthropology, social sciences, and economics. Folklore's significance in contemporary ideologies has grown, with its relevance extending beyond academic realms to resonate within communities, enriching modern discourse and meaning-making processes.

Richard M. Dorson provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the various forms and manifestations of folklore across different cultures and societies. He proposed a classification system for folklore that categorizes it into four main types:

**Verbal folklore:** This includes myths, legends, folktales, ballads, proverbs, riddles, and jokes—any form of folklore transmitted through speech.

**Material folklore:** This encompasses tangible aspects of culture, such as folk art, crafts, architecture, clothing, and other physical manifestations of folk culture.

**Customary folklore:** This refers to traditional practices, rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations observed within a culture, often passed down through generations.

**Behavioural folklore:** This category includes folk customs related to gestures, body language, social interactions, and everyday behaviours within a community.





Figure 1

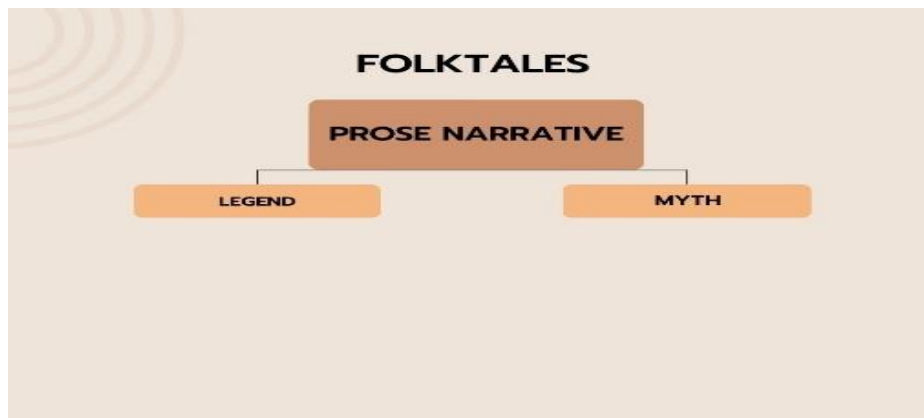


Figure 2



Figure 3

## 5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The languages spoken in Bihar form a diverse group of Indo-Aryan dialects primarily heard within the state's borders. Among them, Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Magahi stand out as the most prevalent. Acting as a common thread, Hindi bridges communication across the region. Magahi finds its stronghold south of the Ganges and east of the *Sone* rivers. Maithili, influenced by Nepali and Bengali, flourishes in North Bihar and extends into southern Nepal. Bhojpuri, with its unique characteristics, thrives in western Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh, border areas of *Jharkhand*, *Chattisgarh*, *Madhya Pradesh*, and even *Nepal*, sharing linguistic ties with Awadhi.

Folklore is an ideological manifestation of human creativity. Folklore includes myths, legends, folktales, ballads, riddles, proverbs, and superstitions. The term folklore was first coined by William J. Thomas in 1846. Folk tales are a significant part of folklore, serving as a key form of entertainment and education for many people worldwide. In India, folk tales are cherished by millions for their entertainment and aesthetic value. These tales are typically passed down orally from one generation to the next, and in more recent times, they may also be found in written form.

Folktales from different regions reflect the thoughts, traditions, and culture of their people, providing both entertainment and insight into their past and present customs. Bihar is one of the most important states of India, located in the eastern region of the country, and has a rich tradition of folk culture. Besides folk tales, Bihar owns a wealth of ballads and folk songs. Additionally, its proverbs and riddles reflect a profound understanding of worldly affairs. But unfortunately, whatever literature is found in it, is mostly available only in oral form.

Folktales commonly revolve around supernatural, mythological, devotional, historical, and social themes. The objects of folktales are panoramic: they may be romantic, imaginative, and humorous, based on local traditions, bizarre and might even protest against injustices committed in the past.

Throughout Bihar's folklore, animals hold significant roles within human societies. In the Indian context, particularly in Bihar, each creature embodies specific meanings, often highlighting distinct characteristics. This deep connection between the people of Bihar and the animals surrounding them stems from reliance on these creatures for sustenance, clothing, and artistic expression. While customs may differ among tribes, a common thread of reverence and interdependence between humans and animals pervades their beliefs. This notion underscores the importance of maintaining harmony and equality between the two realms.

In pursuit of our study's objective, we structured our analysis around three key parameters. Firstly, we meticulously examined folktales to discern various animal characters that held significance within them. Secondly, we delved into understanding the importance attributed to these animal characters in the folktales, aiming to elucidate the dynamics of the relationship between animals and humans.

### **5.1.Type of animal characters:**

Folktales in Bihar are rich with a diverse array of animal characters, many of whom play a significant role in the stories, often serving as protagonists or antagonists. Here are some notable animals which we found in our study in the folktales such as Elephant, Tiger, Snake, Lion, Jackal, Birds, Cow, Tortoise and Rats. These are just a few examples of the diverse array of animals found in folktales of Bihar. Each animal often carries symbolic significance and serves to impart moral lessons or cultural values within the narrative context.

### **5.2.Significance of animal characters:**

Animals' characters play an important role in the folktales of many cultures. While certain folktales solely feature animal characters, a significant number highlight collaborative partnerships between humans and animals, showcasing mutually advantageous relationships. Others demonstrate the consequences when people and animals fail to peacefully coexist. In the folktales of Bihar, we observe the prominent place of animals wherein different images

have been presented. We have represented below a few of them to understand the essence of the animals' characters represented.

**Sparrow:** This little familiar bird, is commonly seen in our houses, towns and countryside. In Indian culture and literature, the sparrow bird has been an integral part of folklore which is revered as a symbol of love, devotion, companionship, and struggle and its significance can be found in many Indian folktales. This bird is known as the guardian deity of homes and pantries, providing protection and domestic blessings. The sparrow's struggle and perseverance can be seen in the story of *Chidia ka Sanghars* wherein we see his determination, hard work and struggle to get a piece of chickpea stuck in a wooden pole. He begged various people to get the chickpea out but he did not get any help from anyone but he was not disappointed and finally asked the ant for help which symbolizes the firm determination to achieve the target and finally with the help and wisdom of this small creature, the sparrow was able to save the rest of his chickpea. We can learn from this that one should never give up on something in life when they are hopeless.

In the same narrative, the character of the ant emerges as a helpful presence. However, such altruistic behaviour from the ant is not a common occurrence in every tale.

**Tiger and Tigress:** The character of the tiger and tigress has been unveiled variably throughout the narrative. At times, they are shown as good and helpful creatures, while at other times, they are seen as aggressive and wild. Sometimes they are seen as helpers of human beings and sometimes as violent as ferocious animals. In the story named *The Sons of the Tigress*, we notice that the Tigress unexpectedly killed and ate her childhood friend, the cow, for unknown reasons. Upon learning this truth, her own son abandoned her, fearing that if she could harm her friend, she might harm them as well. On the other hand, in another story, *The Potter's Son*, The Tiger and Tigress nurture abandoned human child as their own children. We can find sympathetic and antipathetic types of characters of the Tiger in the folklore of Bihar.

**Serpent:** Snakes play a very important role in folklore and are common characters in Indian folklore precisely in the Folktales of Bihar, often associated with mysticism, fertility, and transformation. They may appear as deities, or guardians in various stories. Moreover, according to Indian folklore and Vedic literature, snakes are also admired and worshipped. In the story *The River Snake*, we observe that a girl was compelled by her mother's promise to marry a snake. She had no choice but to coexist with the serpent in her married life. Subsequently, her brothers killed the snake to return his sister to his house since they could not accept the snake as their brother-in-law. We can remark that the snakes are considered to coexist with the humans in the folktales of Bihar.

**Jackal:** We see the character of jackal in various forms of folklore. It can be seen in a clever character which is very symbolic, in different stories. His ingenuity is explained by almost everyone. For example, we can mention the names of some stories such as *The Jackal and the Dog*, *The Tortoise and the Jackal*, and *The Camel and the Jackel*. In the stories stated above, we saw a jackal posed as a priest who is cunning, clever and opportunist.

**Cow:** In Hinduism, the cow is the symbol of non-violence and benevolence. It is associated with different deities, such as *Shiva*, *Indra* and *Krishna*. The Cows hold sacred status in Hinduism and are often depicted in Indian folktales as symbols of abundance, fertility, and motherhood. They may feature in stories about rural life, kindness, and compassion. It is also revered for the hope and peace it is believed to bring to humanity. The Cow symbolizes Mother Earth as she is a source of various benefits and her milk nourishes all creatures. We find this type of character of a cow in the story named *The Grateful Cow* in which two brothers found a



cow. They nurture the cow, and in return, the cow provides them with milk and several calves. After the marriage of one of the brothers, the other one was forced to live in the nearby forest with a herd of cows. One day his sister-in-law killed him because of greed. But that cow divinely saved him.

**Rat:** In Hindu mythology, the rat is a symbol of wisdom and intelligence; it is associated with the divinity *Ganesha* of whom the rat is his mount. *Rat* and mouse are sometimes the object of local cults, they are sometimes considered sacred and are very often linked to Hindu and Buddhist deities. According to P. C. Roy Chaudhury, (2017, P. 112), Rat is one of the totems honoured by the *Oraons*, a tribe of Chota Nagpur. Those who honour this totem have the surname or Triki, a Uraon word meaning a small mouse.

The Story of the Mouse reveals that a mouse planting a flower tree. And every day a girl used to pick flowers from that tree. The girl ignored the rat's advice despite his insistence. One day the rat told her if you pick more flowers from the tree, I will put vermilion on your forehead. And one day it happened. Subsequently, the rat applied vermilion on the girl's forehead, symbolizing marriage, and she was compelled to accompany him as his wife.

Roy Chaudhury (2017, p. 112) stated that this tribal story underlines the custom that *Sindurdan* or applying vermilion on the forehead of the girl means she is married to the boy who does so. There are many cases where marriages are forced this way. This custom is also cleverly used by the pair that has already fallen in love, and at the weekly markets suddenly the boy will pounce on the girl and put vermilion and the parents are forced to recognize the marriage.

**Monkey:** In Indian mythology, the monkey, God *Hanuman* is a prominent figure known for his strength, loyalty, and devotion. He appears in various folktales, particularly those related to the *Ramayana*. With reference to the folktales of Bihar, Monkey is considered as wise, clever and opportunist. In the story *Monkey and Crocodile*, it represents the themes of friendship, betrayal, and wit. The clever monkey outsmarts the cunning crocodile.

### 5.3.Relation between animal and human being

We can see the relationship of man with nature in various stories. In the story *Chidia ka Sanghars*, when a part of the chickpea falls into a wooden pole, the sparrow goes to people from different classes of society and begs for that part of the chickpea.

In the story, *The Evil Demon*, the parrot is seen as a friend of the princess. Throughout the day, her constant companion was the parrot. She used to share her feelings and thoughts with the parrot. Even after marriage, she takes the parrot to her husband's house. And that parrot finally saves her from the unfavourable situation. Parrots remain popular pets in India, known for their ability to communicate with humans.

In the story *The Rivers Snake*, the occurrence of a girl marrying a snake is witnessed. However, these types of events have no connection with reality but such kinds of stories are found in Indian folklore. The creation of these types of stories can be attributed to the fact that they were intended to amuse or frighten children. In earlier days, grandmothers used to entertain children by telling such stories.

The relationship between cows and humans is very harmonious. The cow provides nourishment to humans, and humans reciprocate by taking care of cows. The cow is a representation of kindness and nonviolence in Hinduism. The motherhood relationship is reflected in the story named *The Grateful Cow* wherein two brothers receive nourishment from the cow, while in

return, they tend to the well-being of the cow. At the end of the story, we noticed also that the cow also played a role in saving one of the brothers' lives.

Monkeys have held a special place in India's rich culture and spirituality for centuries. Their presence is woven into myths, folktales and even towns and villages across the country. As we explore the role of monkeys in Indian culture, we discover a deep connection between these intelligent creatures and Indian society. The relationship between monkeys and Indian culture dates back to the times of ancient texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Apart from mythological stories, monkeys are also present in the daily lives of Indians. They are often associated with gods and considered divine messengers. Monkeys occupy a unique and revered place in Indian culture. Their presence is at once mythological, spiritual and every day, symbolizing the diversity and complexity of Indian society. In many stories of folklore of Bihar, we can find the presence of monkey in different manner.

In our exploration of animal characters within the folktales of Bihar, we discovered a rich and diverse tapestry of cultural significance and timeless wisdom. Our journey was guided by three central research questions, each of which led us to uncover profound insights into the role, significance, and lessons embedded within these narratives.

Firstly, we delved into the question: What role do animal characters play in the folktales of Bihar? Our analysis revealed that these animals are not merely fictional creations but rather embodiments of deeply rooted cultural archetypes. As Melson (2001, p. 14) suggests, they often serve as central figures in the narratives, functioning as conduits through which the stories unfold. Their characteristics and behaviors represent human traits, allowing readers to relate to and learn from their experiences.

Furthermore, our examination of these folktales illuminated the intricate relationships between animals and humans, addressing our second research question: How do these relationships contribute to the cultural significance of the narratives? Thompson (1951: 217) pointed out that the choice of animals in folk tales is deliberate, with each species representing specific human qualities or moral principles. This deliberate selection adds depth to the storytelling, enriching the narratives with layers of meaning that resonate with the audience. Moreover, as Okafor (1990, p. 191) observed, while these animals may possess physical attributes of their species, their actions and behaviors are often anthropomorphized, blurring the lines between the animal and human worlds. Through these depictions, the folktales of Bihar offer profound insights into the human condition, societal norms, and ethical dilemmas.

In addressing our third research question - What lessons can be derived from these narratives featuring animal characters? We discovered that the tales of Bihar's folklore transcend mere moral instruction. While they undoubtedly impart valuable lessons, these narratives offer much more: they provide a window into the values, beliefs, and traditions of the communities that created them. As Thompson (1946, p. 10) noted, the primary purpose of these tales is to impart moral lessons, but their significance goes beyond simple didacticism. Through the experiences of animal characters like the sparrow, tiger, cow, snake, jackal, and rat, readers are offered profound reflections on the human condition and the fundamental values that guide our choices and actions.

The sparrow, with its humility and cleverness, teaches us the value of resourcefulness and determination. The tiger, symbolizing power and strength, reminds us to face challenges with courage while recognizing the dual nature of humanity. The cow, representing fertility and generosity, encourages harmony with nature and gratitude for the world around us. The serpent, with its cunning and agility, warns us of hidden dangers and the importance of discernment. The jackal, with its intelligence and cunning, cautions against greed and self-centeredness. And

the rat, symbolizing perseverance and resilience, inspires us to overcome obstacles with patience and determination. Together, these animal characters form a captivating array of teachers and guides, offering profound reflections on the human experience and the interconnectedness of all life. Their presence in folk tales serves as a reminder of our shared humanity and our intimate connection to the natural world.

In essence, our study not only sheds light on the cultural richness of Bihar's folktales but also underscores the enduring wisdom encapsulated within these narratives. Through our exploration, we gain a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics between humans and animals, offering guiding principles for leading lives imbued with meaning and empathy. As we navigate the complexities of existence, the tales of Bihar's folk tradition stand as timeless beacons, urging us to embrace the wisdom of the ages and to cherish the enduring bond between man and nature.

## **5.4.CONCLUSION**

In Bihar's folk stories, animal characters serve as profound reflections of human experiences, embodying virtues, vices, and timeless wisdom. The cunning fox, mighty tiger, generous cow, and other creatures symbolize various aspects of human nature, emphasizing our interconnectedness with the animal kingdom. These animals transcend mere storytelling to become teachers and guides, offering lessons on morality and wisdom. Their presence reflects the values and traditions of Bihar's culture, with each representing specific characteristics that reflect human traits. The sparrow, tiger, cow, snake, jackal, and rat, among others, impart lessons on modesty, courage, generosity, and perseverance. Through their actions and traits, they teach us about the complexities of life and the importance of respecting nature.

Bihar's folk tales resonate with profound insights into human existence and the guiding principles we adhere to. These tales shed light on the intricate bond between humans and nature, advocating for a life led by wisdom and empathy. In delving into Bihar's folk tales, we uncover the significant cultural role played by its animal characters. Through careful examination, we reveal a range of relationships between humans and animals, offering valuable perspectives on the complexities of these interactions. By delving into the depths of these narratives, we deepen our understanding and appreciation of Bihar's cultural heritage and the timeless wisdom woven into its stories. Such understanding inspires us to embrace life's richness and approach it with compassion and empathy.

Further research in this field could explore the evolution of animal characters in folk tales across different cultures and their enduring relevance in contemporary society. Understanding the cultural significance of these characters can provide valuable insights into human-animal relationships and the universal themes they represent. Such studies would enrich our understanding of folklore and its role in shaping collective consciousness.

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