



Back issues of and single articles published in *New York Folklore Quarterly*, *New York Folklore*, and *Voices* are available for purchase. Check the tables of contents for availability and titles. To request an article for purchase, contact us at info@nyfolklore.org. Please be aware that some issues are sold out, but most articles are still available.

Copyright of NEW YORK FOLKLORE. Further reproduction prohibited without permission of copyright holder. This PDF or any part of its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv or website without the copyright holder's express permission. Users may print or download article for individual use.

NEW YORK FOLKLORE
129 Jay Street
Schenectady, NY 12305
518/346-7008
Fax 518/346-6617
Email: info@nyfolklore.org
<http://www.nyfolklore.org>

From the Director



We are pleased and honored to introduce Rasel Ahmed, our Fall-Winter 2023 special issue editor. Rasel holds a Master's degree in Folkloristics and Applied

Heritage Studies from the University of Tartu, Estonia. Originally from Bangladesh, Rasel worked in Estonia as an editor and proofreader.

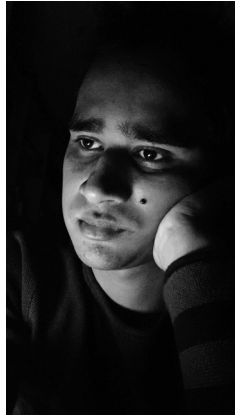
In early 2023, New York Folklore (NYF) issued a Call for Proposals for guest editors and identified two talented emerging folklorists. Each proposed a specific theme or focus, with Rasel Ahmed's issue focusing on folklore in a transnational context.

I also acknowledge mentoring and editorial assistance provided by Associate Editor Patti Mason, who worked with Rasel, and Spring 2023 guest editor, Sarah Shultz, to help them develop their volumes—as they learned to manage solicitation of potential articles and the peer review process for an academic journal. Some authors were non-Native English speakers, writing for an English language journal. This mentoring experiment with new folklore scholars benefitted NYF, expanding our networks, introducing us and our readers to folklore studies beyond our borders and to a wider array of folklore scholars.

NYF celebrates its 80th anniversaries in 2024 and 2025. Founded in 1944, our original purpose of supporting the maintenance, cultivation, and nurturing of diverse cultural heritages of New York State continues. Our second anniversary is dedicated to our journal's founding in 1945. Originally conceived as *New York Folklore Quarterly*, it has consistently “plowed back” folklore of New York's diverse communities to our readers in accessible, non-academic language. Our readership extends beyond national boundaries, as *Voices* is mailed to North America and Europe and available at www.nyfolklore.org. Please celebrate with us!

Ellen McHale, PhD, Executive Director
New York Folklore
info@nyfolklore.org
www.nyfolklore.org

From the Editor



Time, as an underpinning concept, plays a critical role in how folklore is studied and perceived. Historically, the discipline has concentrated on preserving artifacts of the past—songs, narratives, rituals, and traditions—as if static entities—or focused

on (re)defining folks, viewing performances as defining factors of identity. Such approaches are rooted in a sense of loss, a longing to protect cultural forms from the encroachment of modernity, rationalism, and Enlightenment ideals that often marginalized nondominant cultures. Yet, this institutional framework inadvertently positions folklore at the disposal of politics and philosophy of those who define and design folk and folklore, keeping folklore in existential crisis in transitional moments.

We now witness a transformative moment as the dominance of literacy (with modernity, rationalism, Enlightenment, and secularism as components) gives way to the virtual era, reshaping how traditions are practiced, shared, and understood. Folklore, not confined to boundaries of nationalism, homogeneity, and diversity, manifests across digital platforms, like TikTok, YouTube, and Facebook, shaping how people navigate in the virtual era. These platforms enable rapid dissemination of cultural expressions, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries. The shift challenges the approach to studying and defining folklore.

In this context, folkloristics must grapple with temporality of expressive forms. The past, present, and future are interconnected, each influencing the others in a continuous cycle. For example, preservation of folk traditions in digital archives does not ensure their sustenance, unless archives are actively used and reinterpreted in contemporary contexts, influencing new forms of cultural expression. Similarly, narratives and past practices

often resurface in the virtual landscape, reimagined and repurposed for contemporary needs. This dynamic interplay underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the relationship among folk, folklore, and temporality within the discipline.

Consider the philosophical dimensions of folklore as related to temporality. Folklore, with its particularist approach, offers a worldview distinct from universalist claims of dominant philosophical traditions. While these traditions often construct linear, progress-oriented narratives of history and culture, emphasizing the creative faculties of humans, folklore emphasizes the cyclical, iterative, and lived experiences of communities (see “Tradition, Social Media and Community: Viewing the Virtual from a Folkloric Perspective” in this issue). The emphasis on lived experience challenges the notion that folklore belongs solely to the past. Instead, it positions folklore as a critical lens through which to understand the present and imagine alternative futures.

The tension between nostalgia and innovation is particularly evident in the digital era. The tendency to romanticize and politicize the past idealizes folk traditions as pure, untainted by modern influences, and radicalizes people of the present as expressing a “mass lack of taste.” Yet, digital platforms enable unprecedented creativity and reinterpretation, allowing individuals to engage with folklore in ways deeply rooted in the present. This duality reflects the complex relationship between tradition and modernity, as well as the role of time in shaping cultural practices.

Fairy tales of agrarian times illustrate the temporality of perceptions in the face of changing material and metaphorical reality. Fairy tales, deeply embedded in local cultural and spiritual life, ensured that they flourished; similar scenarios dictate the appearance of such tales based on the longing of people (see “Fairy Tales for the Queer Desi: The Shifting Paradigms of Indian Storytelling Traditions in the Virtual Era”). Today, these traditions are often celebrated as independent art forms,

continued on page 2

“The past does not just emerge of its own accord; it is the result of a cultural process of construction and representation.”

—Jan Assmann (*Cultural Memory and Early Civilization*, p. 71, Cambridge University Press, 2011)

detached from their original contexts and justified from the philosophical parlance of secularism to discredit the society as its oppressor. This shift raises important questions: Are forms of folklore independent of their spatiotemporal origins? How do prevailing narratives and rhetoric shape our understanding of these traditions? And how can we reconcile the loss of context with the emergence of new meanings and practices?

Outside boundaries created by philosophical politics, there are philosophical instances in memories of people, neither solely good nor evil, and as such, they carry the mystical and the material in their memory (see the translation of a Bengali folk song demonstrating the regret of a farmer who utilizes the cow as a machinery). Another example is the division of human life into “*Dulav Janam* (precious life before a baby learns to crawl)” and “*Kukur Janam* (dog life, after a baby crawls, denoting an endless hankering after material gains)” in Sylhet, Bangladesh, further illustrating philosophical and temporal dimensions of folklore and its inherent structural harmony. The expression, dividing human life into two stages based on activity and purpose, reflects a deep engagement with life cycles and the human condition—suggesting that even everyday beliefs and practices contain profound philosophical insights, challenging the notion that folkloristics is opposed to creative work. By examining such expressive forms, folkloristics can uncover temporal complexities embedded in cultural practices, highlighting their relevance to contemporary life and how people are interconnected with and dependent on nature and one another for knowledge and experience sharing (see “Digital Phenology: An Elderflower Walk with Sara Lynch”).

As the discipline of folklore navigates the virtual era, it must also address implications of digital media for the study of time as a temporal condition facing toward present and future. The rapid circulation of digital information often collapses traditional temporal boundaries, creating a sense of immediacy and simultaneity—reshaping how individuals experience and interpret folklore, and how scholars approach its components near extinction. For example, the article, “Taking the Wheel: The Antique Spinning Wheel Collectors’ Collaborative,” demonstrates the necessity of preservation beyond archival preservation,

presenting a humane handling of sense of loss without shaping the politics of identity.

The reduction in attention spans and pressure to create captivating content also leads to oversimplification or commodification of folklore, without relevance in virtual life other than as a commodity. As digital platforms prioritize immediacy and engagement, there is risk in utilizing analytical and expressive forms that are only components of virtual culture. Focusing only on those forms may overshadow deeper, more nuanced understandings of cultural practices (see “Toppling the Tables: Navigating from the Periphery to the Center through (Inter)sectional Subalternity in Regional South Asian Films”). Folkloristics must adapt its methodologies and frameworks to the realities of the virtual era, embracing the complexity of time while resisting pressures of superficiality and mundaneness.

Ultimately, folklore study must move beyond traditional association with nostalgia and loss, embracing a practical perspective. By recognizing interconnectedness of past, present, and future, folkloristics can shed its image as a discipline focused solely on preservation of diversity, and instead, position itself as a vital field of inquiry for understanding contemporary cultural dynamics that preserve diversity. This shift requires a reevaluation of philosophical foundations of the discipline and a commitment to engaging with the diverse ways folklore is practiced and experienced in the present.

Temporality and particularity are not merely a backdrop for the study of folklore, but central components profoundly shaping the discipline. Acknowledging folklore’s limited nature and its impact on cultural practices, folkloristics can show a way out of contemporary issues, embracing a world based on practice and lived experience, rather than on theoretical deductions and universalist claims to problems, religion, territory, and identity. This perspective enriches our understanding of folklore, while also equipping the discipline to address complex challenges and opportunities of the digital age.

I sincerely thank the contributors for sharing their time, knowledge, and perspectives to enrich the dialogue and enhance our understanding of folklore’s evolving role in the virtual world.

Rasel Ahmed
Folklorist and Author
rajurasels@gmail.com

Voices

Fall-Winter 2023 · Volume 49: 3-4

Editor Rasel Ahmed

Associate Editor Patricia Mason

Administrative Manager Laurie Longfield

Design Mary Beth Malmsheimer

Printer Dupli Envelope & Graphics

Editorial Board Todd DeGarmo, Chair;

Edward Y. J. Millar, NYF Board Liaison;

Eric Ball, Maria Kennedy, James Kimball,

Elena Martinez, T. C. Owens, David J. Puglia,

Nancy Solomon, Elizabeth Tucker

Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore

is published twice a year by

New York Folklore

129 Jay Street, Schenectady, NY 12305

Voice (518) 346-7008 / **Fax** (518) 346-6617

Website www.nyfolklore.org

Executive Director Ellen McHale

Gallery and Publications Manager

Laurie Longfield

Gallery Assistant Ellen La Que

NYF/Local Learning Folk Arts in

Education Network Coordinator

Mira Johnson

Mentoring and Professional

Development Elinor Levy

Staff Folklorist: Upstate Regional

Project Anne Rappaport Berliner

Community Fieldworkers:

Upstate Regional Project: Ladan Nikravan,

Edgar Betelu. **Binghamton:** Akiilah Briggs-Melvin

Board of Directors

President Maria Kennedy

Vice President Kay Turner

Treasurer James Hall

Secretary Mira C. Johnson

Past President Tom van Buren

Sandra A. M. Bell, Devesh Chandra, Evelyn

D’Agostino, Mackenzie Kwok, Edward Y. J. Millar,

Nada Odeh, Aaron Paige, Vicie Rolling, Will Walker

Advertisers: To inquire, please call NYF

(518) 346-7008 or fax (518) 346-6617.



Voices is available in Braille and recorded versions. Call NYF at (518) 346-7008.

New York Folklore is committed to providing services with integrity, in a manner that conveys respect for the dignity of the individuals and communities that NYF serves, as well as for their cultures, including ethnic, religious, occupational, and regional traditions.

The programs and activities of NYF and the publication of *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore* are made possible in part by funds from the New York State Council on the Arts.

Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore is indexed in *Arts & Humanities Citation Index* and *Music Index* and abstracted in *Historical Abstracts* and *America: History and Life*.

Reprints of articles and items from *Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore* are available by contacting NYF or visiting the NYF website.

ISSN 0361-204X

© 2025 by New York Folklore. All rights reserved.

Join or Renew your New York Folklore Membership to Receive *Voices* and other Member Benefits

For the General Public

Voices is a peer-reviewed scholarly journal, published twice annually. Join New York Folklore and become part of a community that will deepen your involvement with folklore, folklife, the traditional arts, and contemporary culture. As a member, you'll have early notice of Gallery special exhibits and NYF-sponsored key events. Members receive a discount on NYF Gallery items.

For Artists and Professionals

Become a member and learn about technical assistance programs that will get you the help you may need in your work:

Mentoring and Professional Development

Folk Artists Self-Management Project

Folk Archives Project

Consulting and Referral

Advocacy

A Public Voice

Membership Levels

Individual

\$ 50.00	Basic Membership
\$100.00	Harold W. Thompson Circle
\$150.00	Edith Cutting Folklore in Education

Organizations/Institutions

\$ 75.00	Subscriber
\$100.00	Partner
\$150.00	Edith Cutting Folklore in Education

Please add \$20.00 for non-US addresses.

For payment, choose the option that works best for you:

Use our website, www.nyfolklore.org

or mail a check to us at 129 Jay St., Schenectady NY 12305;

or call the NYF business office, 518-346-7008, to pay with a credit card over the phone.