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Item Type	Article (Accepted Version)
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Full Citation	Magotra, A. and Singh, Varsha (2025) Re-conceptualizing transmedia storytelling: a theoretical model for Indian narratives. International Journal of Digital Humanities. pp. 1-20. ISSN Electronic ISSN 2524-7840
DOI/ISBN	https://doi.org/10.1007/s42803-025-00098-5
Journal/Publisher	International Journal of Digital Humanities Springer Nature
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Link to item	https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s42803-025-00098-5

Re-Conceptualizing Transmedia Storytelling: A Theoretical Model for Indian Narratives

Abstract:- The concept of transmedia storytelling delves into how stories travel beyond the media boundaries. The most popular theoretical framework to categorize a work as a transmedia story is based on Jenkins' definition which is based on media-franchise. According to this model, each medium offers an extension of the storyworld. However, the franchise-based theoretical model of transmedia storytelling restricts its comprehension as a global concept. On that note, this research paper aims to develop a working model of transmedia storytelling for Indian narratives which exhibit the form of a *banzome*, a neologism derived from the combination of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome juxtaposed with banyan tree, which is popularly known as the Indian tree of knowledge. Additionally, different media representations of *Panchatantra* are used as an example to illustrate the *banzomic* transmedia storytelling model as observed in the Indian narratives.

Keywords Indian Narratives, Media, Narratives, Panchatantra, Rhizome, Transmedia storytelling

1 Introduction

Storytelling has, since time immemorial, been an essential means through which people share a vast array of diverse stories with one another. It has been suggested that stories may not serve a biological purpose but emerge as an evolutionary by-product of imagination in humans (Gottschall, 2012, p. 29). This by-product has the potential to initiate “effective intervention for increasing empathy, reinforcing human connection, and decreasing stress” and plays a lead role in the “human's ability to bond and navigate challenging social settings throughout our evolution” (Brockington et al., 2021). Put another way, stories are essential for the normal operation of the

human mind because they directly affect our cognitive capacities, which in turn affect how we behave as individuals.

Historically, oral media were prevalent for the dissemination of stories around the world. In the Indian context, dissemination of stories occurred through oral media in the form of *kathas*, which were texts intended to be read or performed aloud (Orsini, 2015, p. 327). In the western part of the globe, the tradition of oral narration, if not ceased, reformed itself in the written medium with the introduction of the printing press in 1440 by Johannes Gutenberg in Germany (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 3). In India, the first printing press was set-up under the colonial rule of the Portuguese in 1556 at Goa (Ranganathan, 2021).

Post the invention of the printing press and with the advent of advanced technologies, a variety of media has emerged, and this process is ongoing. There is a morass of media types which have been used since time immemorial for storytelling where some media types have become redundant, and some have become defunct. In an endeavor to document various media technologies which have historically served the function of media transmission, Bruce Sterling (1995) began a colossal project titled the *Dead Media Project*. For this project, he launched a manifesto with an open invitation to collaborators on the internet to create a repository for three kinds of media: dead media, media that has been subsequently replaced, and media currently in vogue. The project sounded lucrative until the idea of across and beyond the media boundaries swept into the production of stories in different media paving a way into the academic squabble and emerging as a popular term ‘transmedia storytelling’ (from here on TMS). This concept showcases a story-type which has the potential of dissemination in various media types, thereby acknowledging the necessity and the importance of older media at par with the emerging media. In other words, the concept of TMS brings both the old media and the new media on the same

forum where TMS presents an amalgamation of media types which are used in the process of storytelling. It is important to note from the outset that the texts which possess transmedia characteristics are inherently different from cross-media texts. In case of cross-media texts, the “content is posted once and it is available on other channels” (Veglis, 2012, p. 315). In other words, the same story content surfaces in different media with the intent to increase the out-reach of the text. Albeit, the concept of transmedia also underscores the wider reach of the text, it happens across the media boundaries. It is different from cross-media as each medium contributes to an enhanced experience of the storyworld which gets represented in a particular medium. Moreover, it happens gradually over the years instead of simultaneous production.

Although many scholars have myriads of perspectives on how to take forward the case of TMS, most of the critique is focused on Henry Jenkins’ propositions on it which was published in his seminal work *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006). Jenkins’ concurrently published his ruminations on TMS as “Transmedia Storytelling 101” in his famous blog posts which initially ran by the title *Confessions of an Aca-Fan* and are now known as *Pop Junctions*.

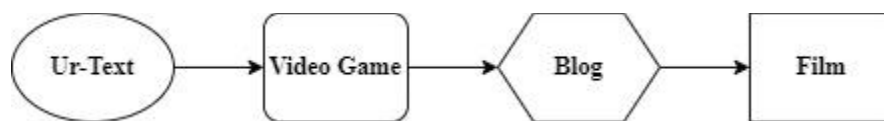


Fig.1. A Representation of Jenkin’s Franchise-based Model of TMS

The most prevalent model of TMS for the dissemination of stories is franchise-based. If one focuses on this franchise model of TMS, the story from a particular storyworld functions as an amalgamation of each media component involved. The most quoted example of this phenomenon is Wachowski sisters’ (earlier brothers) *The Matrix* franchise where the sisters as creative directors tactfully launched the first part of the film in order to gain a fan-base, and subsequently launched

web comic, anime, and games before the release of the second part (Jenkins, 2006, p. 97). The endeavor of Wachowski sisters emerged as a poignant representation of what Jenkins terms as a transmedia project.

According to Jenkins' definition of TMS on the blog post titled 'Transmedia Storytelling 101,' TMS is a process where constitutive parts of a work of fiction "get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience" (2007, para. 2). As he opines, TMS is a franchise-based storytelling for which the creator of the stories plan to keep the audience engaged in such a way that it leads to the process of "additive comprehension," a term coined by Neil Young, for enhanced experience rejoiced by the audience especially the fan-base of the franchise (2006, p. 127). With a vast array of writing of Jenkins available, media enthusiasts and media scholars often focus on Jenkins' understanding of TMS which he considers a "new mode of storytelling" (2006, p. 99). However, the newness of this concept is contradictory to the fact that mythological texts or texts which have sustained the wrath of time with varied authorships and unplanned structures show the properties of a TMS with a pseudo-franchise model. So, if such texts are read as a transmedia story, then definition popularized by Jenkins limits and restricts any addition or any modification on how the concept can be perceived.

Scholars like Jason Mittel (2015), Marie-Laure Ryan (2015), Jan Noel Thon (2016), Lars Ellestrom (2019), Barabara Wall (2019), to name a few, have often indulged in theoretical and critical squabbles to either bring the concept of TMS under one umbrella or problematise the concept as a whole. For instance, in an article Marie-Laure Ryan (2015) initially questions the notion of Jenkins' definition of TMS, however, she gradually accepts Jenkins' definition. She succinctly provides a categorization of what is and what is not TMS which aligns with Jenkins'

proposition. This wide acceptance of the theory propagated by Jenkins, with minute changes here and there, paints a picture of a theoretical model which accepts the stereotypical notion that one size fits all. Nevertheless, there are research articles which point out the pitfalls and the lacunae in Jenkins' model and acknowledge that Jenkins' definition is essentially franchise based where an ur-text takes birth with the preconceived notion that it will be forerunner of a so called TMS project. Moreover, the concept of TMS is presented in such a way that it is considered to be an endeavor with the intent of producing novelty. While this is true for franchise based projects like *The Matrix*, and for the storyworlds created by DC and Marvel, however, it has been observed that the phenomenon may not after all be so novel. To bolster this claim, Jared Gardner (2017) notes that adhering to the prevailing interpretation of Jenkins' TMS results in "a very narrow bandwidth of corporate-controlled productions," which leaves out the spontaneous TMS initiatives (p. 79). Albeit the definition of TMS by Jenkins opens an avenue for intrigue and curiosity for a phenomenon which encapsulates multiple media, Gardner peeps into the drawbacks of such a phenomenon where the creator of the text is bound to be sidelined. Gardner equivocally questions the validity of Jenkins' definition of TMS by noting that the definition is valid essentially for the "horizontally integrated multinational media conglomerates in the twenty-first century" because horizontally integrated multinational media conglomerates are the only entity which have the means and the way for the dispersal of a narrative in a "coordinated and systematic" way (p. 77). In addition, Jason Mittell (2015) suggests that the term TMS assigned for "the strategy of adapting and expanding a narrative into other media" is new, however, the concept is ancient (p. 292). Similarly, Barbara Wall (2019) in a case study of the popular Chinese story *Journey to the West* demonstrates through tree diagrams the shortcomings of the definition of TMS provided by Jenkins. She elaborates on the idea of dynamic texts, that is, texts which follow a property of

radical intertextuality and multimodality using Barthes' concept of dynamic texts, and asserts that TMS is both a novel concept yet at the same time a significant component of historical phenomena as evidenced in Chinese literary texts such as *Journey to the West* (p. 2117).

Stories often undergo the process of adaptation which can either be through repetition or variation for their propagation (Huncheon, 2013, p. 177). It is important to note here that TMS can possibly be a subcategory of adaptation where stories propagate themselves through variation instead of mere repetition. If there are instances of repetition, it is an advanced case of multifaceted repetition where the text which has evolved from the ur-text has an independent nature. In the Deleuzian thought of the concept of repetition, the idea of repetition as is generally agreed upon "is not the recurrence of the same old thing over and over again" (Colebrook, 2002, p. 7). The act of repetition is possible through the ideas of "difference" and becoming" which happens in such a way in case of repetitions where "to repeat something is to begin again, to renew, to question, and to refuse remaining the same" (Colebrook, 2002, p. 8). Such a text presents the audience a new direction on how to approach a non-originary text. Similarly, in the case of TMS in Indian narratives, although there are instances of repetition in the same medium, there are instances of repetition across the media where there is an import of the plotline with varied intensity of representation where the intent of repetition is to refresh, renew, question and present one direction to the multifaceted form from the ur-text. Of course, there is a primordial agenda of the preservation of the text behind the requirement of its change or repetition. Contrary to Huncheon's assertion, Ryan (2015) classifies any text which follows the pattern of "a deliberate attempt to make media converge around a shared narrative content" as true TMS (p. 2). Her distinction of adaptation from TMS is dependent on Jenkins' proposition that "adaptation tries to tell the same story in a different medium, while transmedia storytelling tells different stories about a given

storyworld” (p. 2). So, Ryan’s article highly deviates from the intent of questioning the position of TMS whether it is a buzzword or a real game-changer in the field of storytelling. Moreover, Ryan’s arguments set a condescending tone to draw boundaries of distinction which oftentimes appear equivocal and ambiguous.

If we look into the process of propagation of narratives in TMS, it is similar to Genette’s (1997) theory of hypertextuality. According to this theory, the hypotext A from which the hypertext B and hypertext C are derived are related to hypotext A in such a way that even though the new texts are derived from the source text, they possess the capacity to exist independently (p. 5). According to Gerald Prince’s (1997) understanding of Genette’s concept of hypertextuality, any “text is a hypertext, grafting itself onto a hypotext, any earlier text that it imitates or transforms; any writing is rewriting; and literature is always in the second degree” (p. ix). So, it can be asserted that in the case of TMS, Genette’s ‘hypotext’ becomes ‘hypomedia’ and his ‘hypertext’ becomes ‘hypermedia.’ In the case of Indian narratives, the sets of hypermedia form a web of narratives and this web is configured in such a way that each narrative in different media has the potential of individual existence yet there is a correlation on the basis of derivation of important characteristic properties of the characters and the structure of major incidents which can be traced in the ur-text. One way to picture this phenomenon is through a juxtaposed image of a rhizome and a banyan tree since both showcase a visual theoretical model which fits to the concept of TMS especially TMS in the case of the Indian narratives. There is no hierarchy yet a traceable starting point such as in the case of *Panchatantra*, a text popularly known as a collection of beast-fables.

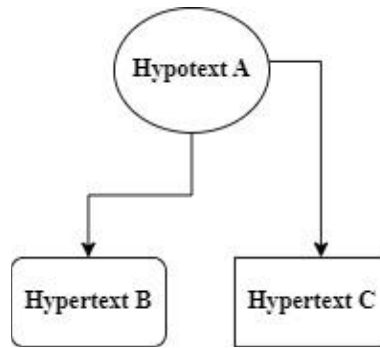


Fig. 2 Genette's Hypotext and Hypertext

2 Banzome: A Hybrid TMS Model

In the book *The Art of Storytelling* (2011), Amy Spaulding writes an introductory quote, “Truth nor story can be written in stone; each dies when petrified.” Through this quote, Spaulding sets the tone towards the raising concerns about the lifespan of a story which is susceptible to “death” if it becomes too concretized. In other words, the permanence of a story relies heavily on its ability to be fluid. Similarly, for a theory to thrive, the property of fluidity becomes a proponent which sets the base for its exploration. On that note, it is amenable to bring the concept of TMS under the scanner of exploration. The following section builds a case for the banyan tree as a tree of knowledge based on its appearance in various texts in Hindu mythology, and states the properties of rhizomes as discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (from here on D and G). Followed by this, the properties of both the banyan tree and the rhizome are combined to showcase how TMS follows the pattern of a *banzome* in case of the Indian narratives.

2.1 The case of banyan tree as the tree of knowledge

The banyan tree is known as the national tree of India because of its ecological merit and mythological significance, and it belongs to the class of fig trees (Ram, 2016). It is also known as *nyagrodha*, *kalpavriksha*, and *bahupada* in Sanskrit; *vad*, *bargad* and *ber* in Hindi; and as *sacred fig* in English (Earthstoriez, n.d.). Before India became a colony under British rule, the banyan tree was popularly known as the *vatavriksha*. During British rule, the Britishers named this fig tree as “banyan” tree after observing that the members of the *baniya* community or the merchant caste/class (vaisya) frequently gathered under its shade (Pattanaik, 2008). In general, banyan trees hold a significant religious sanctity across various faiths including Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. The reverence for the banyan trees stems from their prominent presence in ancient sacred texts, mythologies and diverse folktales which extol their enduring nature as well as symbolic associations with longevity and fertility. With these qualities associated with the banyan trees, in ritual practices performed by Hindus across India, married women venerate this tree for its associations with longevity and fertility by presenting offerings to it to receive the blessings for their children and husbands, as well as for a sustained and prosperous married life (Mukherjee, 2014). Moreover, the folktales of the tribal people who are located at different demographics in India, especially Odisha, Maharashtra and Telangana, celebrate the sacredness of this tree where cutting it is considered inauspicious (Ramakantha, 2022) (Image 1).



Image 1 Banyan Tree at Bua Rani Temple, Jammu, India © Aditi Magotra (2024)

The banyan tree also features in the first four verses of chapter fifteenth “The Yoga of the Supreme Person” in the holy book of Hindus, the *Bhagavad Gita* (Prabhupada, 1973). In the verses 15.1 and 15.2, Lord Krishna says that there is a tree which has its roots run upwards and branches downwards known as the banyan tree whose leaves are the source of *Vedas*, or knowledge, and a person who has the knowledge about this tree possesses the knowledge of the *Vedas*. In the verses 15.3 and 15.4, Lord Krishna further says that nobody knows where this tree begins, and where this tree ends. It has no center from which one can deduce the place of origin. Although Lord Krishna portrays the banyan tree as an entangled puzzle or a maze, the first verse highlights the significance of the banyan tree as a tree of knowledge since it is impregnated with an abundance of sections where each section is endowed with immense knowledge.

On observing the morphological features of the banyan tree, it is noted that the tree forms an interlocking connection of aerial roots along with a wide canopy forming a forest of its own. For instance, the great banyan tree in Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Botanical Garden located in Howrah, India is the oldest banyan tree in the world which appears like a forest (Atlas Obscura, 2011). Michelle Konstantinovsky (2023) says that the tree has the size of a block in Manhattan city and it is not a collection of trees, instead it is “one massive tree” with more than three thousand aerial roots giving it an appearance of a walking tree. In Sanskrit, the banyan tree is also known as *bahu paada* which means a tree which has many feet (Ramakantha, 2022). This appearance of a walking tree functions as a metaphor for the knowledge body which grows with the passage of time and extends itself in multifarious directions. On account of this imagery, the verses 15.1, 15.2, 15.3 and 15.4 in *Bhagavad-Gita* metaphorically showcase that in this world a vast array of knowledge gets arranged as the leaves on the branches of a banyan tree, and such an arrangement forms in a widespread canopy of knowledge which is at the dispersal of the seeker. In other words, the gigantic form of the banyan tree implicitly showcases the vastness of knowledge that is available. Apart from *Bhagavad-Gita*, there are many references to the banyan tree in the Hindu mythology. For instance, the anecdote of cosmology where the sacred Mount Meru was sandwiched between the middle of the heavens and the underworld in such a way that it gave the appearance of a banyan tree, “smaller at its base and larger above” (Williams, 2003, p. 40). In one of the myths on *pralaya* or the dissolution of the world (similar to the Christian concept of doomsday or apocalypse), a sage named Markandeya who was endowed with the “boon of immortality” by Lord Shiva roams around the endlessly destructed universe where he sees a “radiant child” suckling his toe while lying on a banyan branch or a banyan leaf afloat on the vast cosmic waters (Desai, 2016, p. 295). This radiant child is Bala Gopala or the younger Lord Krishna

who is famously known as *Vaṭapatrasāyī* or the lord of the banyan leaf. This myth appears in the *Mahabharata*, the *Matsya-purana* and the *Bhagavata-purana* with slight variations (Desai, 2013; Gail, 2014). The spectacle of Bala Gopala on a banyan leaf has been demonstrated on the walls of temples, on the ancient temple sculptures and the miniature paintings dating from the seventh century CE to the sixteenth century CE (Desai, 2016). These artifacts depict that at a time when the entire cosmos was destroyed, the only flora which survived was the banyan tree. Another myth associated with the banyan tree which features the saint Markandeya is when the saint takes refuge in a banyan tree during a conflagration all over the earth which chars all the living creatures except for the banyan tree (Serv Dharm, 2022).

From the examples of instances mentioned above, it becomes evident that in the Hindu mythological tradition the banyan tree holds a pivotal place and possesses the property of immortality which runs parallel to the notion that knowledge does not cease to be. On another note, it is unfortunate that during the colonial period in India the Britishers used the banyan trees as the instruments of terror by hanging dissenters from branches of these sacred trees (Shanahan, 2018). Such an act morphed the tree of immortality into a gallow which functioned as an “agent of death” (Shanahan, 2018).

Moving forward, in an article, Jonardon Ganeri (2017) denotes the banyan tree as the tree of knowledge and argues about the validity of the tag of “tree of knowledge” for the banyan tree in comparison with the prevalent depiction of the apple tree or the oak tree as the trees of knowledge in the Western paradigm. In the Western paradigm, the tree of knowledge comes with a unison of set parameters which are quintessentially based on the notion of, as Ganeri notes, a “center-periphery” approach where the center is the epicenter of knowledge, and the branches are the peripheral knowledge bodies. In simple words, there is one main body of knowledge which

has its dominance over the other bodies of knowledge. He gives an example of pure sciences which are accompanied with secondary domains. Ganeri finds flaw in such a depiction of the model of knowledge with center and periphery and suggests that a tree of knowledge is similar to the banyan tree because

Rather than the European fruiter with its single trunk, knowledge should be pictured as a banyan tree, in which a multiplicity of aerial roots sustains a centerless organic system. The tree of knowledge has a plurality of roots, and structures of knowledge are multiply grounded in the earth: the body of knowledge is a single organic whole, no part of which is more or less dispensable than any other (para. 2).

In other words, the centerless organic system of a banyan tree represents the knowledge which is devoid of periphery and center. Such a model of knowledge which is based on the banyan tree holds an importance for the multiple sections as each section has its own unique capability to dispense knowledge as a singular whole resembling a quagmire of immense knowledge denuded of any hierarchy. The hierarchy-less system of knowledge leads to a case of epistemic multiplicity that has space from multiple pathways which all lead to a one goal, that is, to gain knowledge. So, it can be deduced from the examples stated above that there are five noticeable properties of the banyan tree as a tree of knowledge which are: antiquity, ability to spread, ability to form alliances, non-hierarchical nature, and multiplicity.

2.2 The case of rhizome as a model of knowledge and its usage

Derived from the Greek *rhizōma* which means “mass of tree roots”, the earliest use of the word ‘rhizome’ can be traced back to 1832 (Etymonline 2011; Oxford, 2023). In botany, the word

‘rhizome’ means ‘root-like’ (Coulter, 1913, p. 156). According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, a rhizome is a “horizontal underground plant stem” which has the capability to produce the roots and shoots in a plant. Used as an umbrella term for the various varieties of underground stems, for instance, ginger, turmeric, and iris, recent studies in the field of rhizomes indicate that there are varieties of rhizomes which also grow vertically and in multi directions (Kraehmer and Hesse, 2024, p. 12). Rhizomes are perennial in nature and have the capability to spread in the soil. This quality of a rhizome endows it with a unique property through which it can grow a root system or a shoot system in any direction. On that note, Deleuze and Guattari (written as D and G, hereafter), in their work *Mille Plateaux* (1980), later translated into English as *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), borrow the concept of rhizome and use it metaphorically in the introductory chapter. They describe knowledge as inherently multidirectional, without a central point or hierarchy. Through this concept of rhizome, D and G deviate from the common practice where the model of knowledge is represented in the binary form, for instance as seen in the case of a tree, where there is a designated center which has a control over the functioning of the other parts in the periphery (Gartler, 2004). D and G propose that the knowledge exists in non-binary form, it is spread in all the directions which are interconnected in such a way that there is no hierarchy.

To build their argument, D and G emphasize on a significant botanical distinction between rhizomes and trees. A rhizome “has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*” and it grows in a pattern where there is a formation of alliances devoid of hierarchy (p. 25, italicized in original). On the other hand, a “tree is filiation” showcasing the traceable chart of a pedigree (p. 25). In simple words, D and G describe a rhizome as an alliance which gets formed by a unison of connections or bonds creating an impression that the entire body

is *in media res*. Whereas in the case of a tree, there is signification of a figure of totality showing dependency and hierarchy. Each section in a tree, namely, stem, root, branches, and leaves, work systematically in such a way that each section performs a designated role to sustain the whole body of a tree. These connections are formed in such a way that if something is amiss the entire structure will break. There is an interdependency of each section in the whole body of a tree. Additionally, a tree gives birth to a new tree which is detached from the parent body, and the new tree is wholesome on its own. Contrary to this, a rhizome can sustain itself by making alliances which can develop in any direction diluting and eventually eliminating the space for a parent body, eventually enshrining the middle with the property of multiplicity. D and G attribute six characteristic principles to a rhizome. These are: connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania (pp. 7-14). These principles suggest that the knowledge system has multiple points of entry leading to a diversity of understanding which is exclusively devoid of a central guiding frame which ascribes it to a non-hierarchical frame that is modifiable in nature. With these properties, the concept of rhizome has seeped well into the various domains of knowledge. Cronje et al. (2016), and Mackness et al. (2016) in separate studies highlight D and G's six principles to establish its relevance and pitfalls in modern day education. A volume of critical essays titled *Rhizome Metaphor* edited by Khine (2023) elaborates on the metaphor of rhizomes with the usage of the concept in the field of education. Thayer-Bacon (2017) uses the example of crabgrass for the theory of rhizome to differentiate between grass and trees and develop a usage of these terms in the field of higher education. In the literary paradigm on the study of text on the web, Klei (2002) grows the concept of rhizome as a "concept of differentiation" (p. 48). A media scholar, Jakubisko (2018), in a conference paper writes about the relation between a transmedia narrative and the concept of rhizome where his paper contours a case study of a

transmedial project called *East Grimm* which was created with a prime objective to make a transmedial world based on the ancient European heritage, traditions and mythology. Jakubisko briefly winds up the notion of a rhizome and equates it to the transmedia narrative and writes that a transmedia narrative like a rhizome represents a hypertext model along with “a limitless structure without any hierarchy” (p. 247). However, his paper barely touches on the concept of rhizome. In an article, Ryan (2017) uses the metaphor of a rhizome to illustrate the organic branching and growth of stories, suggesting that the phenomenon of proliferation has long been present and only recently brought to the forefront of aesthetics (p. 43). However, her use of “rhizome” does not delve into the nuances of D and G’s more elaborate concept, despite a vague connection. Another scholar, O’ Daniel (2013), has used D and G’s concept of rhizome to understand the nuances of children’s literature and transmedia storytelling. O’ Daniel looks at the rhizome as part of an awareness instead of a phenomenon to understand how transmedia storytelling has taken place in the case of the *Harry Potter* story world. However, there is a dearth of literature which is focused on deconstructing the model of rhizome to exclusively understand the concept of TMS.

2.3 Properties of a banzome

When we look at the images of a banyan tree and a rhizome (for instance, ginger), while they differ anatomically, they share structural similarities (~) yet they are not the same (=). In simple words, both banyan tree and rhizome are analogous in nature. D and G acknowledge that trees which possess “roots and radicals may be rhizomorphic” (p. 6). Nevertheless, they show their contention towards trees as a wholesome body of knowledge by making remarks such as “we’re tired of trees,” “they’ve made us suffer too much” (p. 15). These remarks are an outcome of a rebellion towards

the set paradigm binary relations and hierarchy acknowledged in the model for knowledge system in Western philosophy. However, this approach to categorize knowledge as a rhizome caters to a selective examination of various arborescent forms where the banyan tree stands as an exceptional case.

As stated in the sections above, the banyan tree exhibits the properties of antiquity, ability to spread, ability to form alliances, and multiplicity. D and G's rhizome exhibits the six principles, namely, principles of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, cartography and decalcomania. The principles of connection and heterogeneity encapsulate the notion that each point in a rhizome can be connected to any other point and there is no fixed order, that is, there is no hierarchy. While the concept of rhizome exclusively embargo on the idea of hierarchy, it puts antiquity on the same plane of heterogeneity. This means that in order to grow, even though there is a lack of hierarchy, a rhizome will have an initial point of growth which later subsumes in the developed form of the growing rhizome in intermezzo. However, D and G neglect this aspect of the core from which the whole rhizome grows: up, down, left and right. In a banyan tree, antiquity is acknowledged in such a way that from the core roots and shoots emerge which with time transform into a full-fledged tree. This happens in a subtle pattern leading to a formation of heterogeneous forest-like propagation of the banyan tree. D and G propose that rhizomes are "antigenealogy" leading to a "short-term memory or antimemory" (p. 21). On the contrary, banyan trees possess a long-term memory. To elaborate, while the rhizomes have short-term memory, the banyan trees have a historical memory which veritably extends spatiotemporally. In simple words, despite being a full-fledged tree, a banyan tree expands both vertically and horizontally akin to a rhizome, with the exception that there is a trace of non-hierarchical antiquity. This case is similar to the ur-text or the core text of the narratives which follow TMS surrounded by multifaceted texts

essentially devoid of any franchise. In such a case, a *banzome* presents a case for a theoretical hybrid which possesses a long term-memory as well as a short term memory. In contrast to the assertion made by D and G regarding the imposition of the verb “to be” for a tree, the banyan tree demonstrates a property akin to conjunction “and” which is a characteristic commonly associated with rhizomes. A banyan tree expands as “and” and “and” and so on similar to a rhizome.



Image 2 Ginger Rhizome, as cited from Jenna Rich (2023)



Image 3 Banyan tree, Haleakala National Park, Maui, Hawaii © Thomas James Caldwell (2015)

When we juxtapose the images along with the properties of a rhizome over a banyan tree, they converge into a theoretical hybrid, a *banzome*. The theoretical model of *banzome* acts as a useful aid in demonstrating and understanding the concept of TMS in the Indian narratives.



Image 4 *A Banzome* (created via *Overlay Images*)

A *banzomic* model represents a structure that is grounded in its roots yet it showcases the extensions as holistic entities both below and above the surface. In other words, the narratives which follow a *banzomic* model of TMS have a wider outreach through certain media as compared to another. In such a case, TMS extends in familiar and unfamiliar media based on the popularity of a medium. Moreover, a *banzome* represents a banyan tree exhibiting rhizomatic properties but it essentially has a core where all the “ands” sum up and retain the principles of a rhizome, a principle observed in the case of TMS in the Indian narratives. To elaborate, when we go through the Indian narratives like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and *Panchatantra*, these texts possess a long-term memory in the medium of their initial dissemination and over the years, the narratives from these texts take a shape across or beyond the media in the form of short-term memory as seen in their TMS projects. For instance, in *Panchatantra*, a text usually attributed to Vishnu Sharma, the core-text or the ur-text was lost in the annals of time. However, its various extensions, remediations, or modifications have retained the text in time and space, paving a model for it which is in fact a *banzomic* form of TMS.

3 *Panchatantra* — a banzome model of TMS

The word ‘panchatantra’ is a combination of two Sanskrit words, पंच or *panch* and तंत्र or *tantra* which roughly translates to “pentateuch” (Ryder, 1925, p. 11); “five treatises” (Alphonso-Karakala, 1975, p. 75); or “the five codes of conduct” (Varkey, 2013, p. 93). *Panchatantra* is known as a *nitishastra*, where *niti* means “ethics,” “right or wise or moral conduct or behavior,” or simply “behavior” and *shastra* means “compendium of rules,” “scientific treatise,” “any religious or scientific treatise,” or “indoctrinations” (LearnSanskrit, n.d.). This implies that the term *nitishastra* refers to a compendium of rules governing right, wise, or moral conduct or behavior where each section is based on a theme which is related to the vices of human nature (Gautam, 2014, p. 66). So, *Panchatantra* as a *nitishastra* provides a compendium of rules in five sections which come along with a *kathamukh* or a preamble. These sections are (Table 1):

S. No.	Sanskrit Title	English Translation
1.	<i>Mitra-bheda</i>	The Loss of Friends
2.	<i>Mitra-labha</i>	The Winning of Friends
3.	<i>Kakolookiyam</i>	Crows and Owls
4.	<i>Labdhapranasam</i>	Loss of Gains
5.	<i>Apariksitakarakam</i>	Ill-Considered Action

Table 1. Five Sections in *Panchatantra*

The narrative style in these sections is uniquely complex. It does not follow a straightforward narration with one narrator telling multiple stories. Instead, there are frame stories where within the main story there are embedded stories called “emboxt” narrated by a character in the frame story to another character in the same frame story (Edgerton, 1924, p. 4). Additionally,

there are instances of “double emboxment,” where a character in one emboxt story narrates another story (Edgerton, 1924, p. 4). This style of narration is similar to a maze puzzle. The player in a maze puzzle has to reach the other end of the maze to receive a reward. Similarly, the reader or listener of *Panchatantra* fables receives the reward in the form of morals towards the end of each fable.

The text of *Panchatantra* has outreach in native India as well as in countries like “Persia, Arabia, Syria and the civilized countries of Europe” which became possible through its translations and “translations of translations” over the centuries (Ryder, 1925, p. 3). Comments, assertions and research attempts by scholars have led to a creation of a customised pedigree of *Panchatantra* which even though has flaws yet is sufficient to remind the reader about the antiquity of the text in different media and its influence through the ages. There are fifty translations of this text in different languages around the world (Chandiramani, 2011, p. iii). Moreover, there are two hundred versions of *Panchatantra* found in languages ranging from “Greek, Latin, German, Spanish, French, English, Armenian and Slavonic languages; and Hebrew and Malay” (Rajan, 1993, p. xvi). With regional, linguistic and cultural diversity, the text of *Panchatantra* follows the *banzomic* principles of multiplicity and heterogeneity and at the same time shows the preservation of the essence of antiquity. Hertel (1912) consolidates a pedigree chart of twenty-five recensions of *Panchatantra*, tracing its origin to Kashmir in India. With an extensive pedigree chart followed by a survey of twenty-five recensions, Hertel establishes how these recensions were “contaminated” over the years (p. 17). He explains that as the oral narrative reached divergent religious sects and traveled to different territorial regions over the centuries, it underwent significant changes (p. 17). He uses the word “contaminated” especially for Purnabhadra’s recensions which were altered in Jain recensions. In a 1897 report, R G Bhandarkar writes that the

“text of the *Pancatantra* [...] has become corrupt, and he corrected every letter, word, sentence, story and verse” (Hertel, p. 21). Nevertheless, all these versions have roots in Vishnu Sharma’s corpus.

While it is important to note that the authorial rights of *Panchatantra* are usually attributed to Vishnu Sharma, “we know nothing about this gifted author” (Rajan, 1993, p. xi). There are speculations that the work is a compilation by anonymous contributors (Yolen, 2006). Also, according to Singh (2011), Indian narratives reach us through the “cumulative efforts” of those whose name is attached to the text along with the compilers who add, edit, or omit the contents of the text, unlike the Western paradigm where individual authors claim the texts (p. 156). Based on this, Singh writes that *Panchatantra* is an apt example to support the Barthsian notion of the death of the author and birth of the scriptor where Vishnu Sharma adorns the role of scriptor to amass the knowledge gained over the years (p. 163). Because of this dilution of the author-centric approach, he further notes, *Panchatantra* possesses a mutable nature making it highly intertextual in nature for a wider audience

in all its versions and adaptations, [which] is a typical instance of the Indian text that is primarily about the circulation of the text itself, regardless of the particular importance of the author or the reader (p. 158).

Singh further writes that in the preamble to the fables of *Panchatantra*, Vishnu Sharma acknowledges the source of ancient knowledge and wisdom which forms the content of fables and this gathered knowledge is attributed to renowned sages like “Manu, Brhaspati, Sukracarya, Parasara, and Vyasa” (p. 161). Moreover, the reminiscence of *Panchatantra* fables can be found as engravings in the artifacts like pots recovered from the sites of ancient Harappan civilisation (Gautam, 2014, p. 68). In such a case, it is evident that the text has crossed the cultural as well as

the regional boundaries along with media boundaries through “translations, transcreations and adaptations” (Rajan, 1993, p. xv).

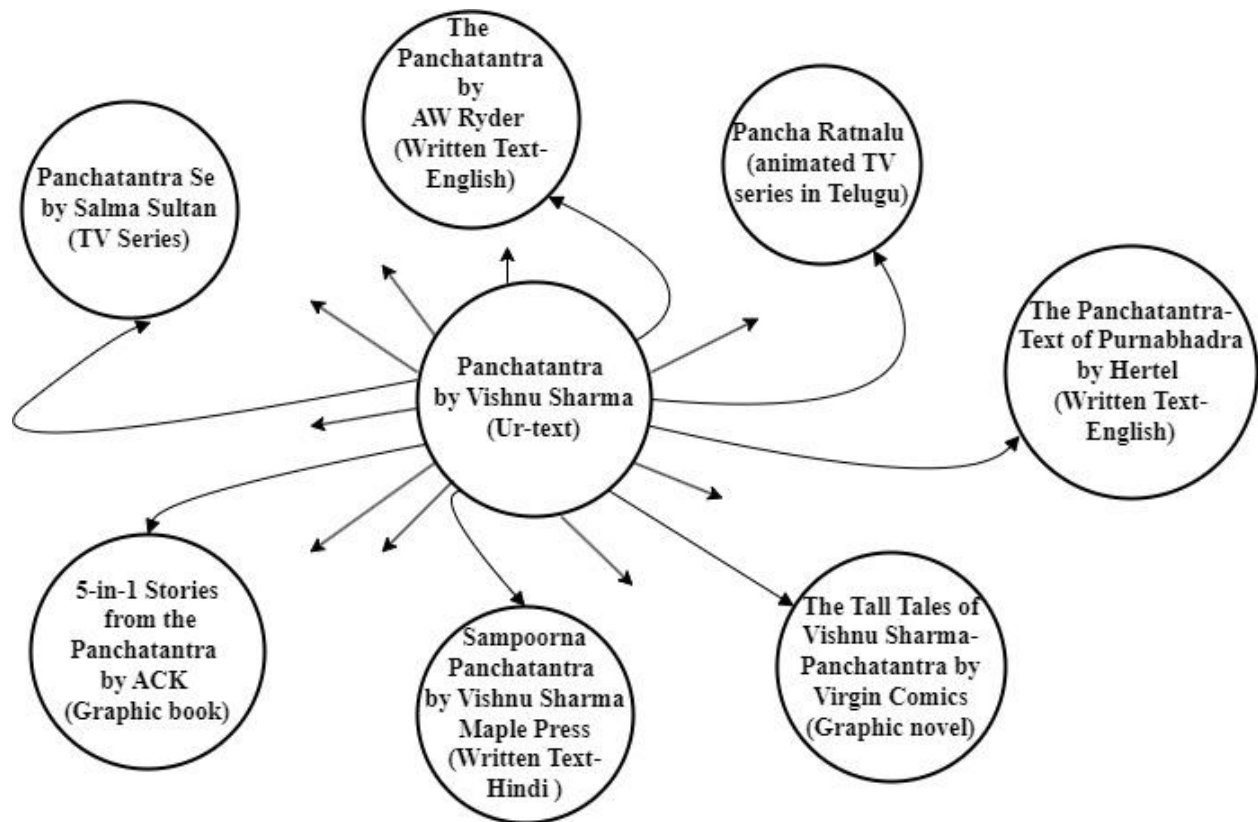


Fig. 3 A Banzomic Model of TMS for *Panchatantra*

There are numerous renditions of *Panchatantra* which are available for the audience irrespective of the age groups. Some of the written textual options which entice the interested readers are *Sampoorna Panchatantra* (Sharma, 2020), *Panchatantra: Manav Jeewan Ka Gyaankosh* (K. Sharma, 2017), *The Pañcatantra by Visnu Sarma* (Rajan, 1993), *The Panchatantra* (Ryder, 1925), and *Panchatantra by Pandit Vishnu Sharma* (Chandiramani, 2011). In the oral medium, podcasts and audiobooks have surfaced in the modern realm bringing back the medium of orality in the vagaries of media. For instance, the podcast *Panchatantra Ki Paathshala* narrated by Dash and Kadam (2022) available on Audible. In the television industry, apart from famous

animation series produced to indulge the young audience, Salma Sultan's attempt in the form of *Panchatantra Se* (1989) emerged as a show with wider outreach (Prasar Bharti, 2016). Telecasted on the national channel Daily Doorshan, Sultan's series is till date used as an educational tool and the series is available pro bono on apps like Youtube. One of the most peculiar television renditions is *Pancha Ratnalu* (2003) in Telugu language which was telecast on ETV. This television show uniquely used various forms of puppetry, including rod, string, and glove puppetry, to depict the fables. There are graphic novels derived from the *Panchatantra*. For instance, Amar Chitra Katha's attempt to encapsulate the famous *Panchatantra* stories in *5-in-1 Stories from the Panchatantra* (2020). While the stories in Amar Chitra Katha's graphic novel are direct adaptations of the written text, an attempt to extend the storyworld is seen in Basu's *The Tall Tales of Vishnu Sharma Panchatantra* (2015) published by Virgin Comics. In Basu's graphic novel, the storyworld from Vishnu Sharma's *Panchatantra* is extended beyond the realms of the five sections. The written text of Sharma's *Panchatantra* is personified as a character in the story of this graphic novel which needs to be rescued from the commercial story books. While these are some of the prominent examples of the renditions of Vishnu Sharma's *Panchatantra* available in the public domain, it becomes conspicuous that *Panchatantra* has the attributes of a *banzomic* model of TMS.

4 Conclusion

It can be inferred from the examples of *Panchatantra* stated above that from the core text or the ur-text of *Panchatantra* the narrative is either modified, remediated, adapted or glazed-up with time in various media across time and space, thus, emulating the tapestry of the *banzomic* model of TMS for Indian narratives. Similar trends of *banzomic* pattern are observed in mythological

texts like Valmiki's *Ramayana* and Vyasa's *Mahabharata*. There are two main reasons behind the perennial nature of these texts which essentially traces the tracks in a *banzomic* form. First is the ability to produce a sense of verisimilitude through numerous accounts and second, the ability of these accounts to possess a fluid nature. It is because of this fluid nature, that is, ability to morph spatiotemporally instead of following a strict structure and pattern, that even though the text is derived from a core text, the new text has an independent nature. When the independent texts cross the media boundaries, their transmedial nature evolves in each media in one way or another. Thus, Jenkins' franchise model of TMS restricts the understanding of texts which have existed since time immemorial and have become a pivotal part in the vagaries of lives of people around the world.

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