

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM NATIONAL FOLKLORE SUPPORT CENTRE

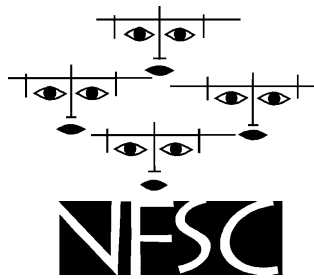
INDIAN FOLKLIFE

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Time stands still

National Folklore Support Centre (NFSC) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, registered in Chennai dedicated to the promotion of Indian folklore research, education, training, networking and publications. The aim of the centre is to integrate scholarship with activism, aesthetic appreciation with community development, comparative folklore studies with cultural diversities and identities, dissemination of information with multi-disciplinary dialogues, folklore fieldwork with developmental issues and folklore advocacy with public programming events. Folklore is a tradition based on any expressive behaviour that brings a group together, creates a convention and commits it to cultural memory. NFSC aims to achieve its goals through cooperative and experimental activities at various levels. NFSC is supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation.



INDIAN FOLKLIFE - EDITORIAL TEAM

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In this issue, we have initiated discussion on our cultural - social landscape and its relation to vibrant community life. We believe the idea of ecological citizenship makes a strong persuasive care for the importance of this. It can be achieved only by our collective volition and sustainable work. What we need today is not *technological managerialism* but new forms of ecological thinking which is based on the community participation and management. The idea of citizenship conceived along these lines is seen as leading to the creation of a culture of democracy.

We invite submissions of articles, illustrations, reports, reviews offering historical, fieldwork oriented, articles in English on works in other languages, multi-disciplinary and cultural approaches to folklore. Articles should confirm to the latest edition of *MLA style manual*.



NEXT ISSUE

Theme of the January issue of Indian Folklife is *Arts, Crafts and Folklife*. Closing date for submission of articles for the next issue is 15 January, 2001. All Communications should be addressed to:

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Finding ecological citizenship inside the archives of pain: Famine Folklore

M.D.Muthukumaraswamy

With the disturbing reports appearing recently in the newspapers that signs of disastrous famines are visible in western Orissa, Rajasthan and Gujarat my thoughts wander back to my fieldwork days encountering famine folklore. In the year 1989, Shivaji Rao, a wandering puppeteer and a consummate artist of highest order reintroduced me to the intricacies of haunting tale of *Nallathangal*, an example of Tamil famine folklore. According to Shivaji Rao there existed a folk belief that conducting shadow theatre performance of famine stricken *Nallathangal* killing her seven children and committing suicide would move the hearts of cruel gods and bring rain and the belief acted as a reminder to the incurable wound in the peasant consciousness. With the fading of this folk belief in the changing times the cause of wound shifted from famine to kinship rivalry in viewing *Nallathangal* performance, to the absolute disapproval of Shivaji Rao. For him, the relationship between natural disaster of famine and cultural disaster of human betrayals was evidenced by the linkage between the story and belief, a view that merits a close analysis.

Here, I must admit my extreme unease with the subject itself, as I have never been able to see the mad moments of *Nallathangal* drowning her seven children one after another. Shivaji Rao would make fun of my inability to watch his puppets perform the gory acts in extreme details and advise me that a *citizen* should have the artistic courage to see death, decay and decadence. As a performer, his goals were to fix the divine responsibility of bringing rain on the citizens of a sick society that produced *Nallathangal* and constituted his audience. With a godly vengeance, his puppets would make everyone weep inconsolably. Shivaji Rao himself was living in extreme poverty and as a proud artist he refused to accept any form charity. Looking back, I suspect now that he identified himself with *Nallathangal*, a name that translates itself into English as Good Younger Sister. Once he remarked the loss of dignity in front of famine and the villainous sister-in-law, *Moolialankari* is the real cause of *Nallathangal's* tragedy.

In the year 1991, I had the opportunity to run into Shivaji Rao when he was performing an episode from *Ramayana*, 'abduction of Sita' on the exhibition grounds in Tirunelveli. This time he compared Sita, the daughter of earth with *Nallathangal*, the daughter of famine and concluded that together they stand a symbol of endless suffering. Sita, the daughter of bountiful, had to ask her mother earth, *Bhoomadevi* to swallow her was an act of suicide similar to that of *Nallathangal*. Mother Sita or sister *Nallathangal*, women are inherently and intimately connected to nature and their suffering is a metaphor

for deep rooted deterioration of natural resources and cultural values, he would muse. Shivaji Rao had an intimate knowledge of the entire Deccan plateau, a landscape he wandered throughout his nomadic performing life.

Following the discussion we had, he asked me to travel with him to the native village of *Nallathangal*, Vathrayiruppu, a small village in south Tamil Nadu. Situated in the district of Virudhunagar, Vathrayiruppu has a small folk shrine for *Nallathangal*. The seven children of *Nallathangal* are also deified and worshipped in the shrine. Bushes surround the ancient well where *Nallathangal* is believed to have drowned her children. The wicked sister-in law *Moolialankari* also has a statute in her honour on which the villagers spit, urinate and defecate religiously. The clowns of shadow puppet performances, *Uccikudumi* and *Uluvaithalayan* execute a scathing scatological attack on *Mooli alankari* tagging

along the village practices. Shivaji Rao took me to the river Arjuna, which had gone completely dry for decades in the vicinity of Vathrayiruppu. According to Shivaji Rao, several small rivers like Arjuna had gone completely dry throughout Deccan plateau as water harvesting and conservation techniques have been totally forgotten over the years. He recalled that during his childhood days there existed a practice

named *Kudi maramathu* (literal translation would be – community repair) in which all the villagers participated. Immediately after the post harvest festival of *Pongal* every year (in the month of January) the villagers from Vathrayiruppu and its surroundings used to go the nearby Western Ghats and cleared the ways of small rivers as part of their *Kudi maramathu* undertaking. Discontinuity with such practices could have resulted in monsoon waters from the Western Ghats being wasted into the Arabian Sea instead of flowing into the mainland of Tamil Nadu. Dried up Deccan plateau is always a potential site for famines.

After our visits to Vathrayiruppu I did not have any chance to meet with Shivaji Rao till 1992. Meanwhile I educated myself with the textual histories of *Nallathangal* story, a trajectory that spotted sensitive minds tackling injuries of mass psyche. My speculation would be that *Nallathangal* story must have emerged as a narrative scream in the history of Deccan plateau after the Madras famine in 1876. David Arnold's well-researched essay *Famine in Peasant Consciousness and Peasant Action: Madras 1876-8* (see Subaltern Studies volume III) does not refer to *Nallathangal* at all. Sa. Su. Sankaralingan, author of musical drama of *Nallathangal*, in his introduction written in 1932 contests the notion of attributing mythical authorship of Pukalenti Pulaver to this tale also. For Sankaralingan the tale was of recent origin



King of Kasi, *Nallathangal* and her children

and it propagated a moral code for behaviour of chaste women subjected to extreme conditions. In 1936 P.Sambanda Mudaliar wrote a stage play and movie script on *Nallathangal*. Another version of the play written by Mayilam A. Va. Duraisamy Mudaliar in 1937 was published in 1964. The excerpts of *Nallathangal* shadow puppet theatre performance published in M.Ramaswamy's excellent thesis on the subject also have minor variations. In all these versions, the story begins with *Nallathangal* being given away in marriage to King of Kasi and moves forward with famine striking kingdom of Kasi, the king giving away all his wealth and food to his subjects, the king sending his wife, *Nallathangal* and their seven children to her brother's house, on their way *Nallathangal* escaping the attacks of robbers and rapists, she reaching her brother's household in absolute destitute conditions, in the absence of her brother *Moolialankari*, her sister-in law refusing to feed *Nallathangal* and her children, unable to bear hunger and humiliations *Nallathangal* killing all her seven children and committing suicide and ends with *Nallathangal's* husband and brother punishing *Moolialankari* and resurrecting *Nallathangal* and her children.

For Shivaji Rao transposing the site of famine from Deccan plateau to the kingdom Kasi is a corruption in literate texts in contrast to the purity of oral texts. In 1992 I caught him boarding a town bus with a bagful of puppets slung on his shoulder and again travelled with him to a village called Vasudevanallur to see him perform *Nallathangal*. While discussing the published versions of *Nallathangal* he never showed any signs of annoyance but when he performed the puppet clowns had a heyday of beating up all the literate authors. Great ventriloquist he was, he imitated my voice and manners of speaking for the beaten up literate authors. In a freshly construed scene *Moolialankari* complains of deceitful headache and

the puppet clowns offer to massage her hips. For that *Moolialankari* furiously asks: *Will you massage hips if it pains in the head?* The clowns reply: *If the famine of Dhakshina bharatham (Deccan plateau) can be called the famine of Kasi kingdom then, head can be transposed as hips and so massaging hips must cure the head also.* Throughout the performance Shivaji Rao kept on referring to our discussion and the clowns subjected a *scholar puppet* to meanest scatological humiliation possible. After the performance, with the gate collection of thirty-three rupees Shivaji Rao insisted on buying me a meal at the village hotel.

Reflecting now, I am inclined to think that oral traditions have a way of communicating and perpetuating sense of immediacy and urgency and Shivaji Rao was attempting to draw my attention to the lack of it in literate traditions. The here and now proposition for famine has other implications as well. The subject position one is forced to take or the citizenship inside these oral archives of pain is not one of rights and entitlements but of ethical responsibility and legitimate action. No one can escape famine, if there is one. Environmental refugees we are, we the city dwellers tend to think we are at a safe distance from famines and other disasters for which famines stand as metaphor of. The ecological truth is that nobody flees. Perhaps there is a way out if we study our oral traditions closely and listen to what Amartya Sen, the analyst of Bengal famine, proposes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge my colleague Murugan's help in sourcing all the published materials on *Nallathangal* for my ready reference. My gratitude is also due to my colleague Venugopalan for familiarising me with current scholarship on environmental studies.

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H O M A G E

Loss is ours: A tribute to a doyen

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Professor K.S.Haridasa Bhat, Founder-Director of the Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts (RRC) at Udupi, Karnataka, passed away on August 20, 2000 after a brief illness. In the sudden demise of Professor Bhat, the Karnataka State and the innumerable persons who knew him as his students, friends, admirers, scholars in the literary and folklore fields, have lost a devoted teacher, a dynamic achiever, a renowned educationist, a gifted innovator, a noted litterateur, a versatile columnist, an able administrator, and above all a great humanist. He was mostly responsible for transforming a moderately active pilgrim centre like his hometown Udupi into a bustling centre of cultural and literary activities. He devoted his lifetime to the task of building up men and institutions of repute. The Rashtrakavi Govinda Pai Samshodhana Kendra, the Yakshagana Kendra and the Regional Resources Centre at Udupi which have won national and international recognition are standing monuments to the creative and innovative facet of his talent. Biographies, travelogues, essays and articles, which flowed out of his pen, have enriched the coastal Kannada literature. As a veritable humanist he could respond with great sensitivity and affection to the needs of his fellow men, young and old. He was strict yet sympathetic, commanding yet friendly, eminent yet simple and serious yet witty. The void his departure has created can never be filled. But the great institutions, which he built, will serve to remind posterity of the lasting contribution he made to the enrichment of the life of his fellowmen. Of all the honours and awards showered on him during his life-time and also posthumously the *Vishwa Manava* award presented to him by the DeJagow Trust of Mysore and the *Loka-Mitra* title awarded to him by the citizens of Udupi describe him fully in single phrases. He was a *Vishwa Manava* and *Loka Mitra* in the real sense! He was indeed a great bridge-builder between humans and cultures.



Bridging man and lore

In the Forest Hangs a Bridge: Direction: *Sanjay Kak*, Camera: *Ranjan Palit*, Editor: *Reena Mohan*, Produced for CAPART by Octave Communications, 39 mins/1999/English

Indu M.G. is Communications Coordinator, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, Chennai

The Siang Valley in Arunachal Pradesh (India), is dotted with many a marvellous structure of cane and bamboo. These suspension bridges are trademarks of the *Adi* tribe inhabiting the area. The video unravels the tribe's socio-ecological and traditional skills in building these bonds with their habitat.

When man masters to weave his delicate web of life around the codes of nature, there is a precarious beauty in his relationship with the outside world. The visuals of the suspension bridge is a reminder of that charm.

The film examines the intricate relationship between communities and their environment of Damro village while building a suspension bridge across river Yamne. This involves a close understanding of the rhythms of nature, for they should know which types of cane and bamboo are used and when and where they found. Generally the bridge building activity is taken up around February after the winter and just before the monsoon. This is the season when houses and fences are also re-built.

The Logeng Bridge in Damro was built thirteen generations ago, but it needs to be re-built annually. The village council sets the date for the building of the bridge and discusses the sharing of responsibility of work between the four clans – Borang, Yirang, Lego and Pemo. It is a work of men – between old and young. A feat of skills versus strength, experience against energy. A product of skills and labour; a balance between man and nature. The young gather the material from the forests; the old cut and shape the cane and bamboo. Each member of the clans contributes his labour, to finish the thousand feet long bridge in three days. No one will be paid wages; no one will be in charge.

Earlier those who did not participate in the bridge making were

fined. Now the number of persons abstaining from this community task is on the rise, because the youngsters go to schools, colleges, and work outside the village. As one elder put it, *In our youth the bridge building was a chance to show our strength and we used to crave for admiration and praise; but now the young ones are physically lazy.* The knowledge base of the younger generation is weak too. There is a fear of losing traditions.

The bridge is a symbol of the community pride in their traditional expertise and their self-respect. They cannot ignore the bridge because people get educated; the bridge will be there as long as there is life in Damro. They will have to keep building the bridge every year because, *If you do not build the bridge, you are not human, you are not a clan, you are not a society. Till there is earth and till there is self-respect, the bridge will be there.* They cannot abandon what had belonged to their ancestors.

But will technological changes let the bridge and its makers be? Already the long cane wires are replaced with steel wires provided by the government. So, only part of the bridge needs to be re-constructed, and fewer people turn out for this annual display of collective knowledge, physical strength and community pride. What happens to the community when it no longer needs to make the bridge, when the government replaces it with a concrete one?

At another level, it is a recital of the lore as a visual event. The collective nature of the activity painted in the film is communicated to the viewer in a like manner. One can almost feel the dragging of the unusual lengths of the cane that move along like a wiry agile snake among the undergrowth. Similarly the scenes where the men pull the taut wires that fasten the suspension bridge summarise the spirit of the entire film. Such images speak not only of what is seen or heard, but also of the distinct narrative form that is offered by digital technology. This is a storytelling with the listeners nearly joining in the recounting. Thus the film weaves itself into another work – vis-à-vis the theme of the film.

In the Forest Hangs a Bridge, is not only an attempt at exploring indigenous wisdom, it delves into the tribal community practices that define the notion of a people.



Arvari Born Anew: Towards a new citizen initiative

A Late 20th Century Folktale, Executive Producer: Pradip Saha, Camera: *Monica Narula*, Produced by the Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, 13 minutes/ 2000/ English

Indu M.G. is *Communications Coordinator, International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, Chennai*

Rivers are pointers to the communities those live by them. Only a live society can keep a live river. To bring a dead river to life is akin to a miracle, a theme fit for folk tales. *A Late 20th Century Folktale* is the story of how drought prone communities of Bhaonta-Kolyala village in the Alwar district of Rajasthan, India had rejuvenated their traditional water harvesting systems. And how in the process they brought back to life a river doomed dead.

The revival of river Arvari is the result of people's participation at the village levels at water conservation, employing traditional practices. Momentum to the efforts was provided by Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS), an NGO working in the area, who since 1985 had mobilised the people at every village in the district to conserve water.

6 *Johads* are crescent-shaped mud dams for the collection of water between two hills. These water harvesting structures were much in use until some 200-400 years

when the hills around the area were green and full of wildlife. TBS had advocated the people to repair old *johads* and to make new ones. These, built in the watershed of the river Arvari, were an effort to catch the sparse rain that falls in the region. The *johads* were aimed at re-charging ground water levels, but these check dams not only enhanced the water table, it made the seasonal rivulet flow perennially. Arvari has been flowing continually since 1995.

With the water bodies re-charged, the once arid lands now can grow two crops. Ground water level has come upto 20 meters from 200 meters. Diesel consumption for pumping water has also gone down. A sound ecology translates directly into a sound economy.

All the glory for the work goes to the people. They did everything without any help from the government. Seventy *gram sabhas* (village assemblies) in the watershed of the river have formed the *Arvari Sansad* (Arvari River Parliament) for the management of its water. Now they have realised that everything in the area is related to the river and they do not want to forfeit it once more.

The Centre for Science and Environment video is an attempt to show how communities reclaim their traditional knowledge to their economic and larger environmental advantage.



The Hindu Survey of the Environment 2000 Gopal Sunger

Traditional water harvesting in Rajasthan

Bovine lore and forgotten landscapes

Komal Kothari is Director, Rupayan Sansthan, Folklore Institute of Rajasthan, Jodhpur, Rajasthan and Chairman, NFSC

It may be a better idea to go from scene of desert to human life followed by the lore. People have divided the vast expanse of Thar desert in various ethnogeographic regions. A few of these area-names have been collected from the people. They identify different regions as: *Dhat, Thali, Tharda, Chitrang, Khadal, Khabdal, Maad, Kantha* and *Goglati* etc. Usually one region covers 80 to 125 villages only. These proper names have only geographic significance and no other traits can be attached to them like history, dominant group of people or a caste. A lot of areas are recognised as *Sodhan* and *Bhatipa* (based on *Sodha* and *Bhati* Rajput clans) or *Marwar* (based on historical ex-state). Such names do not have any geographic or physiographic specificities. It is important to note that ethnogeographic traits are recognised through the types of grasses which grow in respective regions. There is now need to identify all types of soil cover (grasses) of the region to follow the people's division from the point of view of physiographic elements. Major constituents like soil or water is not the basis of this ethnogeographic divisions.

But, true it is that *grass* is life line of the desert people whose major economic activity is based on breeding rearing and maintenance of cow, sheep, goat, camel and horse. Agriculture is minimal as compared to pastoral way of life whether sedentary or migratory. Can this be the cause of creating a phenomena of ethnogeography? Do other societies also categorise their regions on similar basis? As far as present Rajasthan is concerned it prevails all over the state.

Extreme arid zones gave birth to phenomena like *Oran* (sacred groves of trees) and *Aan* (large grass lands). Both of these large patches of land formed the Common Property. All people are free to bring their herds in these areas. *Oran* and *Aan* have been declared in the name of some gods, goddesses, saints and few religious cults. But sanctity of such groves are religiously adhered, though there was never any legal authority to look after them. People owned them and kept them intact. However, present land revenue laws and laws governing religious properties are encroaching on such common properties. During period of second settlement, the land categories of *Oran* and *Aan* was shown as *agricultural allotable land* by government revenue disposition. Though people continue to accept sanctity of such sacred groves but a legal way has been found to enter into such common properties. A few *Orans* and *Aans* have been converted for other purposes by government on the one hand and few legally formed committees of the local people on the other. The Devasthan Acts (religious property) provides the status of *perpetual minority* to

the gods or goddesses which means that people can form committees, get registered with government and can use the *property* in different way. This means the *land type* can be changed. However, the result is that sacred groves or common property can slowly be eroded or encroached which in itself represents a specific cultural phenomena in desert's way of life.

One of the phenomena of grass land is designated as *Pali*. There grows a type of grass known as *Sevan*. It grows to great height and spreads through the roots. It hardly needs 3 to 5 inches of rains in a year and flowers in abundance. The large cattle herds survive on such grass. The quality of grass is rich in protein content. It is particularly good for cows. In the villages around *Pali* grasslands, people own cows in hundreds. Those who owns more than 400 cows are known as *Baghela* owners. It is important to note that all such cows are never stable-bound, they freely move in grazing areas. It so happens that no milk is taken from these cows. Their economic surplus is the male progeny which is sold in big cattle fares of western Rajasthan. Nobody ever sells cow outside the region. Such non stable-bound cows have different cycle of life. All births of calves take place in the same month. Each herd has one selected bull which give birth to one type of male calves, with similarity of height, color and horns. All male calves are sold as herd (a unit) and not separately. Such herd is known as *Haid*. The upkeep of such cows has a discipline of its own. The cows understand different calls of their *Gwala* (upkeeper) and follow the voice command.

This type of herd keeping tradition is going on for many centuries. People have developed skills to govern, keep and manipulate the breeds. It is in the region of desert that breeds like *Tharpakar, Rath* and *Kankrej* have been developed. These breeds are country's best bovine cattle. There are two sets of cows, one which is dependent of *Sevan* grass land with no milk and second which is stable bound and fed on rich content of food and fodder that provides 10 to 15 litres of milk at a time. The health of such bovine animals are regularly recharged from the herds of non-stable bound cows.

Similarly rearing of sheeps, goat and camel has their own stories and disciplines. In all cases breeding male is the surplus. Folklore needs to take all such traditional practices in their studies and they are always available in oral culture, with their wisdom and technological knowledge. It is only when folklore would involve in such in depth studies, it would be able to prove its big role in the field of environment and ecology. All such factors are part of people's life and the concerned knowledge get transmitted from generation to generation.

Folklore of Sacred Groves

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Sacred Groves can be considered as a part of forests left untouched by the local inhabitants, and protected in the name of the local village folk deities. Several such groves are reported in Assam, Bihar, Meghalaya, Manipur, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and in other parts of India and Western Ghats. The tracts of Sacred groves have been guarded from human interference on the grounds of religious beliefs. Gadgil and Vartak (1975), state that these traditional practices owe their origin to the hunting-gathering stage of the society. Sacred groves harbour vegetation in its climatic formation, and probably constitute the only representation of forest in near-virgin condition in many parts of India (Gadgil and Vartak, 1976).

The sacred groves are the repositories of unique and rare plants. They are the home for myriad's of insects, birds, reptiles, animals and store houses of the country's diverse natural wealth. Scrub jungles, which have disappeared in most regions of the Tamil Nadu are protected in these sacred groves due to religious and traditional beliefs. Sacred groves help to retain the sub-soil water of the area, providing life sustenance for the villagers. These groves are left untouched by the local inhabitants and protected by the local deity. They may be preserved out of belief, fear or reverence, but the practice of conserving them is deep-rooted and cuts across caste and communal barriers. Sacred groves probably represent the single most important ecological heritage of the ancient culture of the India. They are a kind of conservation area as well as a spiritual retreat. These small thickets of wooded area which remain undisturbed amidst development are the last remnants of rural biodiversity (Conserving our Ecological Heritage, 1995). From ancient times to till today, the village people believed that anyone damaging these groves would be punished by the gods. Women folk, in particularly, were afraid even to go near to these groves.

In Tamil Nadu, these groves are found in Dharmapuri, Erode, Perambalur, Pudukkottai, Salem, Sivaganga, Namakkal, Nilgiri, Tiruchirappalli and Tiruvannamalai districts. *Kovil Kaadus* (temple forests) are found in every village settlement in Tamil Nadu and are regarded as the abode of the Mother Goddess and the guardian spirits of the village such as *Aiyanar*, *Muniswarar*, *Karuppuswami*, *Veeran*, and so on, who are powerful and can fulfil wishes. These deities are generally of an extremely primitive nature. The deities, are often in the form of an anthropomorphic slab of stone, a hero stone, *sati* stone or a trident even, irregular lumps of stone serve as the deity in some places. Mostly, they lie under a tree / shrub or open to the sky, smeared with

vermillion and turmeric powder. Often a thread is tied around a tree or miniature cradles are hung from the branches. The first is a form of prayer, while the second is a prayer for a child, particularly male. The cults are often associated with ancestor worship. A hero stone, *sati* stone, or a small round stone representing ancestors are generally placed by the side of deities. The worshippers of these deities fear that even breaking a dead wood in a grove may result in a serious illness or in violent death. Such strict taboos indirectly preserved these sacred groves in their virgin form, relics of the forest that must have once covered much of the Peninsular India. These sacred groves are the only remnants of the original forest maintained in many parts of Tamil Nadu. As such, these groves now play a vital role in the conservation and preservation of species diversity. The sacred groves represent a variety of vegetation types from semi-evergreen to dry deciduous, corresponding to climatic regions, with annual rainfall of 930 mm per year. In Tamil Nadu, they range from a clump of few trees to 20 hectares, though the majority are fairly small, being only about 1.5 hectares. Most of them are distributed over the plains of the districts as well as in the hill regions of the eastern and western ghats.

Folklore plays an important role in the conservation of sacred groves. Not only the tribal people, the rural people also preserved the sacred groves by their traditional customs, rituals, ceremonies and folk-beliefs. Folklore gives rewards and blessings for good behaviour, and punishes the non-believers or atheist. Several stories depict various facets of life and culture of the people. The annual festival is celebrated in all the groves of all districts accompanied by community offerings of *pongal* and animal sacrifice. As against the animal sacrifice, *Aiyanar* who lives in a temple, is happy with the offering of a coconut and *pongal*. In all the districts, offering *pongal* to the associated deity is either by individuals or by the community. Sacrifice of fowl, goat, sheep is offered to all the deities except *Aiyanar*. In some groves associated with *Karuppu* / *Karuppuswami*, pig is sacrificed. During the festival, the villagers organise a form of folkart called *terukoothu* at night.

The people of Keelvanakkambodi in Chengam taluk of Tiruvannamalai district worship a hero stone in the name of *Ammacharu*. The name suggests a Telugu origin. A festival is celebrated once a year during the summer months. They sacrifice goat and fowl as an offering to the deity. According to local belief, *Ammacharu* is a goddess who has the power to protect people from evil spirits. During the festival of *Aiyanar*, the people of Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts make offerings of an image of a crawling baby in order to fulfil their vows, to protect their children from evil forces and to ensure health and prosperity. Next to *Aiyanar*, the most favoured deity of the district is *Karuppuswami*.



Sacred Groves dedicated to Karuppuswami

It is believed that if cut coins are offered to deity, he will punish one's enemy. People of Puthupet near Pondicherry believe that a string tied below the knee of the horse has the power to do good or to cause harm to an adversary. The sacred *Puthu* (termite mount) is situated under an ironwood tree (*Memexylon umbellatum*), on which numerous cradles are tied with cloth. This practice is followed in order to be blessed with a child. In all the districts of Tamil Nadu, the votive offerings of terracotta figures are made to *Aiyandar* in fulfilment of a vow. The terracotta figures are usually domestic animals like the horse or bull. Sometimes, terracotta figures of elephants are also offered. For other deities such as *Karuppuswami*, *Muniyappa*, *Veeran*, *Kaliyamman* and *Selliyamman*, animals are sacrificed. For *Karuppuswami*, the ram and young she-goats are sacrificed before the deity, and for *Kaliyamman*, goats are sacrificed by either decapitation (*tullumari*) or impaling (*kalupodudhal*). The sacrifices are particularly gory and cruel, involving live impalement, throwing animals from heights, tearing them apart with bare hands or biting of live animals by the devotees.

A village named Nakkambodi in Perambalur district has a grove dedicated to *Manjamuthaiyah*, where no villager dares to remove even dead wood. It is believed that a person disturbing the groves will vomit blood as punishment meted out by *Manjamuthaiyah*. In a village named Kanapadi of Turaiyur taluk in Tiruchirappalli

district, in a small grove dedicated to *Karuppuswami* has a coir with about twenty dried fowl hanging. According to the *pujari*, if anybody loses anything or has a theft in their home, they come with a live fowl and worship the deity. The belief is that the lost one will come back home soon. If successful, they return with a fowl, sacrifice it and make *pongol* as an offering to the deity. Conservation of Sacred Groves is of vital importance to the ecological balance specially in our times where unsustainable development is happening at a rapid speed. At the same time the sacrifice of animals needs to be stopped.

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Nanditha C. Krishna, Director, C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre, for her encouragement and valuable guidance.

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Recovering Place-based Knowledge and Cosmogenic Agency in Struggles for a Sustainable World

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The Apatani, a tribal group of about 40,000 in Arunachal Pradesh, is renowned for their unique system of fish cum paddy rice cultivation. Tourists visiting the beautiful Ziro Valley are regaled with tales of this agriculture, and much else, as examples of *ancient* folkways. On a visit to Arunachal University in 1997, we were fascinated to hear from Dr. Pura Tado of the Political Science Department, that it was, in fact, a recent creation. We offer this tale of how fish came to paddy, as an exemplar of good partnership between expert and local knowledges.

As described by Dr Tado, the fish cum paddy system evolved gradually in the 1950s and 1960s. A deeply committed village level agricultural extension agent urged the Apatani to start fish ponds. Several farmers experimented, without much success. It seems that it was local people who first suggested that it did not make sense to build new ponds in the midst of already existing terraced paddies. However, when they experimented with putting the fish in the paddies, they faced innumerable problems — requiring one small inventive solution after another. First, the fishlings ate up the young rice plants. Gradually, after experimentation, the Apatani figured out how to introduce the fishlings at the time when the rice plants were strong enough to withstand their gnawing. It also took years of experimentation to find the right plants and small creatures to introduce into the paddies, in the right amounts and mixtures — to provide food for the fish without harming the rice — all with a constant exchange of ideas and mutual support between the local people and this remarkably humble and creative village extension agent.

This really is an inspiring tale, as told by Dr Tado. If this pattern had been duplicated around the world in the 1950s and '60s, we might now live on a much healthier planet. Somehow, at the heart of this success was a long-term partnership that brought together an outside government expert with local people who not only maintained their local folk ways, but participated actively and creatively in technical innovation that improved material well-being, while reinforcing local culture and an indigenous ethic of sustainability. There's a great deal of lip service these days to *holistic, multisectoral, community-based development*. But, we have few models for expert/community partnerships that truly nurture these goals.

What were the micro-processes in this partnership that encouraged holistic and multisectoral development? Too often, extension agents come in with a *blueprint* — a fixed plan for *progress*. Again and again, we have seen such approaches introduce alien factors that take over and destabilise local culture and ecosystems like an

invasive weed (or the first rice-devouring fish in the paddies). When this happens there's an imbalance between the innovation and the local context. However, in the Apatani example, the local people were able to keep control over the relationship between thing and context. The secret of their success was in the way that they kept designing micro-experiments — placing and replacing the new thing (the fish) in a variety of local contexts (multiple reinventions of the paddy) — until they could get a relationship between thing and context that satisfied them. We call this kind of local creativity *cosmogenic agency*. *Cosmos* is *universe* made habitable. Cosmogenic agency is the recognition that human being emerges from the interplay of diverse yet overlapping forms of bioaesthetic growth grounded by a body/earth nexus of changing persons and places. Today, the fate of humanity hinges on the claim, a necessarily political one, that human life requires a life-world facilitating the ability to weave levels and facets of reality into holistic coherence, such that the earth recovers its generative status as *place*, not merely *economic space*. The *bija satyagraha*, non-cooperation movement against patents on seeds and plants (a coalition of more than 2,000 groups including Vandana Shiva's *Navadanya*) clearly indicates how food democracy is central to this struggle.

Let us look closely at this, because it is the point where culture meets agriculture, *folk* ways meet *expert* ways, global meets local. What is it that makes something *folk* rather than *expert*? Again, the dialectic of thing and context is all important. To bring something within folk ways, is to establish a dialectic of thing and context in the way in which the Apatani established a balance between fish and paddy. This dialectic between fish and paddy resonates with the cosmogenic agency of culture-making in general. In Apatani society, there's a tight articulation between paddy maintenance, kinship and clan structure, the elaborate and ingenious irrigation systems, gender (women are the primary farmers and paddy builders), religious ritual (closely tied to agricultural cycles and landscape), political and juridical order (clan governance is still central to politics in Ziro Valley), etc. Because of the slow way that the fish were introduced, with a healthy degree of local control and creativity, these multiple horizons of socio-cultural-political systems could be kept in some kind of alignment with agricultural innovation. (It is important to note that this local reality is not a simple harmonious world. Apatani society is shot through with its own local tensions – including significant inequalities of gender and landownership). We also see this place-based approach as a more sustainable alternative to the industrialised shrimp-farming tied to global export markets in other states of India currently under critical discussion.

There's a great deal of lip service to *local knowledge*, but have we thought deeply enough about how much we would have to change if we were to build partnerships between local and expert knowledges? In our recent writing, we have been arguing that such partnerships

are necessary to build the ecological citizenship needed for political mobilization to combat *globalisation from above* (see our article in the December issue of the international journal *Alternatives*). Why are such partnerships necessary? We argue that they can combat the underlying causes of the environmental crises and social inequities that are increasing globally. The term globalisation is misleading. In many ways, it is better to think of it as a process of delocalisation — in which control over economic processes of extraction, production and distribution are increasingly centralised in long commodity chains — determined by transnational elites and global markets, and, removed from social and political negotiation among ordinary people. Global market forces are increasingly able to *write the script* of geo-biological processes, superseding ecosystemic feedback mechanisms, and local and national democratic debate. To what extent are we, as scholars, complicit in this? In recent writings, we have argued that, for over 100 years, academic systems of research and teaching have been key actors in propagating *technocratic managerialism* — a way of thinking that sees the world as a machine that can be controlled by instrumentally rational thought — thought that is put under the control of guilds of elite, educated experts. Technocratic managerialism is key to legitimating the processes of economic and political delocalisation that are over-writing natural ecological mechanisms of homeostatic control, and, democratic politics and local cosmogenic agency.

The heartfelt call, from many and diverse quarters, for new forms of community-academic partnership, and a revaluing of *local knowledge*, can be seen as an important and sincere effort to combat technocratic managerialism and its ecological and political abuses. What is local knowledge? Too often, local knowledge is thought of as what uneducated people do. We would argue that local knowledge is better thought of as thinking that is *placed* — that is at least potentially rooted in cosmogenic agency. It is thought that is rooted in particular lives, grounded in actually existing locales and histories. It is thought that is deeply existential — thought that cannot escape from givenness, from the unfolding pressures of time itself as it is inevitably experienced within personal and collective narratives.

In the United States, one of the most powerful ongoing arguments for reorienting academic knowledge (e.g. in university schools of agriculture) in ways that facilitate place-based projects that recover and respect the generative promise of cosmogenic agency as well as the principle of community choice is being made by Kentucky farmer-writer Wendell Berry. Nevertheless, many U.S. academicians continue to propagate technomanagerial systems of abstract thought linked to the prevailing structures of power that dominate an earth reduced to economic space. Western developmentalism's thoroughgoing critique by the world's changing realities, social movements, and critical

intellectuals in India, the U.S., and elsewhere is now commonplace. But the ideology is persistent in halls of power that, pumping millions of dollars into Public relation tactics, invoke the semblance of change. The contradictions between revolutionary ideals of sustainability and bastardised notions of *sustainable development* are now internalised in the professional education of youth. It is difficult for a student to chart a career at the World Bank without awareness of the critique lodged by ecological economist Herman Daly on his way out of the Bank. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that in the years ahead *ecological citizenship* and its meaning will be a contested terrain in Western universities and elsewhere.

When we were at Arunachal University in early 1997, we found among faculty and students a great deal of interest in the history, culture, and politics of the U.S. region known as *Appalachia*. For example, the deforestation several decades ago in several parts of the region, a process now resurgent and involving current struggles over the practice of clearcutting trees for chip mills, garnered much interest. Southern Appalachia's subordination to absentee owners of its minerals and lands and various recent forms of resistance invited comparative discussion especially from those interested in the Jharkhand agitation.

Likewise, at the University of Kentucky students and faculty have been very interested in forest politics and the struggle for sustainable policies in these two global regions, the Indian Himalayas and U.S. Appalachia. At the UK Appalachian Center we have initiated a *Project for a Civic and Environmental Commons*. (see <http://www.uky.edu/appalcenter/research>). For example, community leaders active in Kentucky's Mountain Tradition Herb Cooperative have joined faculty and students in discussions both on campus and off in Leslie County where the coop is based. Technomanagerial approaches by the U.S. Forest Service and by academicians have evoked considerable critical attention and discussion. Efforts to blend the place-rooted knowledge of local ecologists and the technical or *expert* knowledge of academicians are seldom harmonious or tension-free. Differences grounded in history, culture, and class require thoughtful recognition and negotiation by all concerned with such efforts. One challenge is the mutual generation of a new, practically relevant rhetoric of cooperative knowledge and action for the groups involved. Here the folklorist trained in ethnographic discourse and steeped in regional and local cultures can have a very effective role. We need to note also that in our contemporary world dominated by transnational corporate power one aim of these endeavours is the creation of global regional publics that promise to help recover and strengthen place-based knowledge and cosmogenic agency in our various yet related struggles for a more sustainable, humane, and democratic world.



What is *Sahit* in *Sahitya*

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The word *sahitya* in Sanskrit has a somewhat different purport than what literature in English has. I want to start with that. Etymologically, the root word of *Sahitya* is said to be *sahit*. The Sanskrit dictionary gives approximately the following meanings to *sahitya*: To be together; joining together various *dharmas* in one deed; participation of a large number of people on equal basis in one act; a kind of *kavya*. We see that the first set of meanings talk about a collective activity involving different kinds of people with different roles and attributes. A specific form of writeup, namely *kavya* also is mentioned in the end, but what an ocean, deep and unbound, lies ahead of it!

Now, let us come to the word literature, which has been accepted as the equivalent of *sahitya*. The English dictionary gives the Latin words *literatura* or *litera* as its roots. Meanings are: the art of composition in prose and verse; the whole body of literary composition universally, or in any language, or on a given subject, etc.: literary matter: printed matter: humane learning: literary culture or knowledge. While literature of English deals with letters, language, compositions expressed through writing etc., *sahitya* of Sanskrit denotes a social activity. Interestingly, matters like letters, writing or even language fail to find a mention under the Sanskrit word. In other words, literature inclines towards form and techniques, and *sahitya* to actual activities. And yet, we invariably mean literature when *sahitya* is mentioned today, or shall we say we have accepted the conversion of *sahitya* to literature without a question?

At this stage, I am reminded of a story I have read somewhere about a nomadic tribe. These people had been carrying with them their sacred book, but had, in the course of their wanderings, forgotten the language and script of it. They had picked up the gifts of civilisation and changed their life style, but were unable to decipher their history; that is, where they started their journey, how they started, and why they started at all. We are perhaps in a similar predicament, as far as our *sahitya* is concerned, I think. We have developed our languages and improved our expression in the past centuries. We talk with ease about literary styles and movements, of classicism, romanticism, structuralism, modernism, post modernism etc. –but, what is *sahitya* itself about?

I think the Indian epics, themselves compiled from the folklore and mythology of the land, hold the key to the etymology of *sahitya*, as they could be considered as the prototype of our traditional *sahitya*. The first thing to be understood about the epics is their vast spatial expanse. Cutting across the geographical and climatic barriers, the compilers of these marvellous works have

ensured the participation of almost every category and class of people of the land in them—followers of all vocations, migrants alongside the natives, the settled people and vagabonds, the powerful as well as the oppressed. They did not seek to suppress any fact or incident. Everything is here, let the reader judge, was the attitude. We read in them the stories of man's greed for riches and power and his ego and prejudices letting loose deception and cruelties all around. They tell us how the strong persistently used the weak for their selfish exploits. How *Ekalavya*, the *Nishada* was first disabled by a Brahmin and then killed by dark-skinned tribal chief, *Krishna* himself and another *Nishada*, Ghatotkacha was sacrificed so that a Kshatriya, *Arjuna* could live. The son of *Dasaratha* who was caused to be banished from his state by his brother, abhorred the idea of brotherhood. He could not tolerate the sight of two brothers coming together anywhere, and avenged his depredation by making them fight each other. When a Brahmin and a Kshatriya fought over *Kamadhenu*, the holy cow, we find the whole tribal population of the land, *Dravidas*, *Kiratas*, *Poundras*, *Sabaras*, *Barbaras*, *Simhalas*, *Pulindas*, *Hunas*, and *Keralas* are made to carry out the actual fighting for them. The same thing is repeated in *Kurukshetra* where the dispute between the *Kurus*, *Pandavas*, and *Panchalas* is settled with the blood of the same lot of people.

How could the epics achieve this seemingly impossible task? One point should be immediately noted: the epics were the collective products of a large number of people. The compilers were few, but the actual authors were many. The compilers themselves came from the subaltern level. *Ramayana* was compiled, according to the legend, by an erstwhile dacoit and *Mahabharata* by a fisherman. There again, we find these two men entering into the text and taking part in the story as prominent characters. I remember, once Mahasveta Devi, reflecting that the activism of the author could sometimes affect the quality of the work. I think one important factor which accounted for the totality and quality of the epics was the active participation or involvement of the authors in the events of their own works, or shall I call it their activism? The truth is that these two compilers were not alone in this respect. Most of the characters of these works were no doubt actual authors too who, like sculptors engaged in the work of a mammoth sculpture, added their own portions of the stories to it. Like coral reefs, the epics that came out of these people turned into their abodes.

Another unmistakable feature of epics is the presence of irreverence or profanity in an extensive scale in them. The internal questioning and reluctance to accept anything as sacrosanct. The epics have no real heroes or heroines. Every character is created and then demolished. Why, even the philosophy of *Gita*, considered to be central to the whole of *Mahabharata*

does not remain so in the end. What the philosopher had created was demolished by the artist. In fact, *Mahabharata* is not just a story of the war at Kurukshetra. In every episode of it, in every corner, in every character, you see a war raging. In fact, the whole epic is at war with itself. The dividing lines between mythology and *sahitya* were very faint in those days. The same creative minds were at work in both the activities, the epicising of history as well as mythicising the same. Through epics they attempted to document history, and by constructing myths, they metaphorised the absurdity of reality, criticised or lampooned the powerful as they could not take on them in other ways. So the two trends, documentation and criticism co-existed in the early *sahitya*. The transition from old *sahitya* to current literature was perhaps marked by the appearance of individual works which replaced the collective works. This happened along with the written tradition taking over from the oral. When an individual writes a work, it is fixed at a particular crossing of time and space coordinates. We are not complaining on this. The changes taking place in human life, social structure and levels of technology had certainly made this unavoidable. But my point is that unavoidable was not the changes happened in the substance or contents of literature.

Literature is, in a wider perspective, a social activity. An uninterrupted social phenomenon in which people living in different places and different times continuously participate. Whether it is an epic created by a large number of people, or the contemporary work of individual writer, this character of literature remains. The contemporary literature distanced from epics when the individual works started losing the *sahit* character in them. The process of moving away from larger contexts to narrower domains was also caused by the social and technological changes. The written form of literature needed certain technological skill which could be acquired only by a section of the society. Naturally, it became in an elitist activity. As history became increasingly identified with the history of a section of the society, the dominating section of the society became the main subject of literature too—the powerful, the rich and the male. Whatever was outside of them faded out from the screen. A large section of the society was those retired to the world of silence, a number of paths were abandoned for jungle to grow over them. New maps were drawn; imaginary maps, with large tracts in dark or grey.

I remember someone asking Mahasveta Devi in a gathering about bringing the *adivasis* into the mainstream of life. Her piqued reply was: Are you asking me to bring the ocean to a canal? However main it is, the mainstream is just one stream. Geographically, every water course has its own catchment area and command area—the land which drains into a river is its catchment area, and the land it can serve the command area. When you restrict the ocean of literature to a stream, the population who inspires it and the people whom it serves both are defined by the contours of the society.

When literature is narrowed down to serve the interests of a particular section of people, the alternatives within it disappear, questioning from inside stops. The aspects of irreverence which provided energy to earlier literature was lost in the bargain. Blind loyalty and flattery took its place. Heroes and heroines became total heroes and heroines. Coming from the privileged classes, all their deeds and actions were right. Writers worked hard to justify them. When the epic *Ramayana* was reborn in the form of several new Ramayanas, *Rama* became an ideal hero, the *maryada purushottama*. The activist Valmiki was retired to the background to be worshipped only by the *Doms* and sweepers.

In order to preserve the newly acquired character of writing, rules and laws were constructed. Systems and styles were formulated and defined. *Sastras* not only codified the forms and methods of writing, but also went on to elaborate what an ideal writer should follow from morning to evening, what dress he should wear, what food he should consume etc: Leave aside the life and problems of people, a literary work came to be judged only by these rules and standards. The road to fundamentalism and purity is stained with the blood of sacrificed realities. Even the mainstream could not remain a stream in these circumstances. It had to be further shaped and polished and made into a canal, cut in proper shape with prescribed slopes and gradients and lined on both sides with concrete, as the flow in a canal depends on these factors. In a world of designs and performance, it was natural to create model works and model writers. Kalidasa was defined as an ideal poet beyond any faults. If a stanza or line in his poems was found faulty aesthetically, critics immediately jumped to the conclusion that it was not original. In the days of *sahit sahitya*, no work was considered a complete work or the last work. But here a full stop is put after every work.

From this angle, today's alternative writing, a description often attached to Mahasveta Devi's writings, can only be described as an attempt to put *sahitya* back on its *sahit* tracks. What is significant is that this is being done, in an age of high technological advance, hard stratification of society, and when almost all areas of expression have been captured by the dominant classes. Mahasveta Devi is called an activist writer perhaps because of her activism outside her literary work flowing freely into it and merging well with it. Earlier in this paper, I tried to explain the activism of the authors of epics. We observe certain other positive characteristics of epic *sahitya* too, like totality of life expressed, presence of alternatives within, irreverence to established values etc. returning in this form of writing, but I wouldn't call it epic literature. Nor, I like to call it subaltern writing, as such descriptions do not help me. What is important to my mind is to make resonant a large territory which had been silent for a very long time, several centuries, in our literary activity and to recapture the togetherness of the society which used to be

preserved through *sahitya* or folklore or myth-making, whatever one may call it, once upon a time. Coining more terms or discovering more streams like feminist writing, dalit writing etc., I fear, may distract us from the path. There are of course a large number of women, the hunted *Doulati*, the hunter *Mary*, the unclothed *Droupadi*, the breast giver *Jasoda*, the photogenic *Gangor*, all irresistible in their own ways, in her works. We also have *Birsa* the *bhagavan* of Mundas, a whole block *Pirtha* facing extermination. These are attempts to plot territories which remained uncharted for a long time, to make the map complete. Finding more streams in these would be improper, as, however important the streams are, they cannot substitute the ocean. We cannot see streams and miss the water.

I would once again like to go back to the story of the nomadic tribe. If their forgotten language deprived them of their history, the lost script cost them their culture. It is culture that initiates history. What was the script of culture? The language of civilisation is written in the script of justice. Literature grows, undergoes changes, but the script remains the same, the thirst for justice. The question is therefore the recovery of the language of history and the script of civilisation through the rediscovery of *sahitya*, once again.

[We reproduce Anand's article here with author's permission in order to make oral epics central to our scholarship. Originally the article was published in Kakatiya journal of English Studies, volume 18, 1998. — Editor]

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| | 7.40pm | Akram Khan (UK) CONTEMPORARY DANCE - India Premiere |
| Sun, Dec 3, 2000 | 7.15pm | Veenapani Chawla (Pondicherry) "GANAPATI" - THEATRE |
| Mon, Dec 4, 2000 | 7.15pm | Ramli Ibrahim(Malaysia) & Sabira Sheik (Malaysia) DANCE & THEATRE |
| Tues, Dec 5, 2000 | 7.15pm | Sapphire DanceCreations (Calcutta) - "POST- MORTEM"-CONTEM- PORARY DANCE |
| | 7.40pm | Dish Mariwala (Chennai) SOLO THEATRE |
| | 8.15pm | Auroville Music Group (Auroville) - MUSIC |
| Wed, Dec 6, 2000 | 7.15pm | Peter Chin (Canada) "DAG" - CONTEMPORARY DANCE |
| | 7.40pm | Kaveri Lalchand (Chennai) - THEATRE |
| | 8.00pm | Susan McNaughton (Canada) - CONTEMPORARY DANCE |
| Thurs, Dec 7, 2000 | 7.15pm | Aruna Sayeeram (Mumbai) & Domnique Vellard (France) - MUSIC |

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Building the Commons: Folklore, Citizen Science, and the Ecological Imagination

Mary Hufford is a *Folklife specialist with the American Folklife Centre at the Library of Congress*

I spent a November morning two years ago at the counter in Butch's Convenience Store in the small central Appalachian mountain community of Ameagle, West Virginia in the eastern United States. As part of a fieldwork project on folklore and the Appalachian forest, I was interviewing Paul Fitzwater, the proprietor, about hunting, gathering, and farming on Sycamore Creek. Located at the mouth of Sycamore Creek, Butch's is a small hub where people can pick up a few provisions, eat a meal, or stop in for coffee and conversation. Paul Fitzwater and I were poring over a topographic quad, identifying the names of all the side hollows on Sycamore Creek, a tributary of the Big Coal River in southern West Virginia. For every name, Paul Fitzwater had a memory or story, and when memory failed he would ask the next person who stopped in. "What's the name of the next hollow up from Andrew?" he asked Phil Pettry. "See Phil and Nick and us we would rabbit hunt in there. Are those trees still up there?" "Yeah, the apple trees are still up at Little Andrew's," Phil informed him.

Talk in such places is nearly a social obligation. "Everybody who comes in here," emphasised a proprietor of another store, "Speaks." The tiny exchange cited above teems with information about locale, and in fact grants a glimpse of how talk on Coal River functions as a major means of "producing locality" (Appadurai 1986). Invoking memories of an elderly farmer who once lived in this now emptied-out space, the name of Andrew itself functions as a mnemonic peg on which the community hangs its history (Basso, 1984). Old apple orchards serve as historic indicators of the farms that once covered the slopes on Sycamore. Tracking the status of the old orchards is important, not only because they still bear a variety of old-time apples — many of them named for local people and events — but apple orchards seem to enhance the habitat for *molly moochers*, gourmet morel mushrooms that grow wild in the mountains.

This talk is so productive of locality that absence of talk is liable to become evidence of absence. "Someone must have cut those soft-shelled walnut trees down," Fitzwater commented on another occasion. "I haven't heard anyone mention them lately." This kind of talk, in spaces known for such talk, is essential to the maintenance of a commons known locally as *the mountains*. The genres of talk that conjure the commons are the familiar stuff of folklore: stories, anecdotes, etiological accounts, genealogical digressions, place name etymologies, aphorisms, laments, musical performances and so forth.

Saturated with information connecting spaces, times, natural patterns, and social practices, this talk opens a window onto an ecological imagination, an imagination that measures everything relationally within a dynamic system that does not arbitrarily separate *nature* from culture and society. To find molly moochers, people think about where farmers put their orchards; to find squirrels, people think about where the nut trees are and which nuts are ripe at a given point in the cycle of nuts; to find ginseng, people think about where the animals that eat seng berries spend their time. "Squirrels are in the hickories, and squirrels eat the seng berries, so I look for seng around the hickories," one man said. Apple orchards and hickory groves form signposts for navigating around the times and spaces of a forest in constant flux.

The condition of nut trees, and especially hickories, is linked to the health of the forest and the status of the commons. In the system of forest farming historically practiced in the mountains, people conserved the nut trees both for domestic use and as sources of fodder for game and other wild animals. But because hickory wood is not commercially valuable, foresters have been known to advise cutting out hickories when managing stands of timber. Hickory, then, makes visible a boundary between local collective ways of knowing and being that are grounded in relational systems of measurement on the one hand, and global techno-managerial principals grounded in an abstract, absolute system of measurement on the other (see Taylor and Reid's article in this issue of *Indian Folklife*). Hickory becomes a site of resistance, where a woodcutter employed by an absentee timber corporation might draw the line: "I worked with a man in Hazy who would not cut a hickory," one man told me. "He would not cut a hickory. I had to go along behind him and cut down the hickories."

The boundary separating *trash* species from *survival* species is the boundary between the one-time (economic) Productivity of the state's imaginary of extraction and the ongoing (ecological) Reciprocity that sustains the local imaginary of the commons. In the extractive industry's imaginary of Productivity, the substances of soil, water, and forest — gift resources which sustain the local commons — are lumped together as *overburden* (which the U.S. Department of the Interior's *Dictionary of Mining, Mineral and Related Terms* defines as *Material of any nature. . . that lies on top of a deposit of useful materials, ores, or coal* (Squillace, 1990).) Conversely, the state's programmes of reclamation and fish stocking introduces into the commons elements locally regarded as *trash*. *Trash species* like *field locust* and trout undermine the local system of Reciprocity. As one fisherman explained it to me, trout, raised by the state and introduced into streams as a way of monitoring stream quality in the presence of acid mine

drainage, are dismissed locally as *trash* fish because they don't reproduce and they eat the eggs of *survival fish* like catfish and bass. Running counter to the state's programme, a local stocking practice involves catching bass, catfish and other *survivors* in a nearby national park and releasing them into Coal River.

The talk taking shape in public establishments around Coal River illuminates this boundary between a corporate state's imaginary of economic Productivity and the local collective imaginary of ecological Reciprocity. Expert systems in which scientists and humanists participate (foresters and folklorists alike) developed around the project of nation-building, and most often in the service of Productivity. In the present context of escalating global market-building, tracking the contours of these clashing imaginaries becomes more urgent as does the question of how to divert expert systems to the service of local systems of Reciprocity, and linking those systems within regional and global matrices.

On Coal River, this work began with local talk about forest decline, which was particularly obvious in the hickories. None of this decline was registered in government reports on forest health. John Flynn, a local science writer, heeded the talk and laid the groundwork for a regional coalition of ecologists and forest activists, the Lucy Braun Association for the Mixed Mesophytic Forest (LBA). The LBA designed a *citizen science* monitoring project to test the hypothesis that mortality rates are on the rise in forest species throughout the mixed mesophytic forest system.

After three years of monitoring, the Lucy Braun Association published its finding that trees are dying at three to five times historic rates, especially oaks and hickories. The report also concluded that the increased mortality is consistent with the deposition patterns of sulfates, nitrogen oxides, and ground-level ozone — an effect of fossil fuel combustion, especially from coal-fired utility plants upwind. These findings, the report goes on to say, should be of concern not only to private owners of timber, but to those who benefit from the forest's *common ecosystem services*.

For the American scholars, activists, and communities who participated, the significant thing about this project is a model it suggests for linking local commons within a regional commons that provides a global service. On the surface it looks as though *citizen science* organises citizens to gather data for scientists, but the project itself was conceived to investigate claims about the health of the substantive goods forming a local commons. The citizen science project formed a response of experts to a local system of monitoring the health of that commons, through talk.

This talk is immensely productive not only of the mountains conjured as a realm beyond the time and space of the conversation, but of a civic commons formed by the speakers themselves. The folklife project,

which complemented the citizen science, formed at heart an investigation of what anthropologist Beverly Brown terms the *civic commons* produced through talk (Brown, 1994). Much of this talk takes the form of spoken genres that are the object of folklore research. As fieldworkers participating in this talk, we became implicated in this civic commons, and in the labour of making it visible, through scholarly practices of writing, and through membership in the associations that incorporate and make palpable the forest's constituency: the Lucy Braun Association and the Coal River Mountain Watch, a grassroots organisation that formed during our work, under the leadership of Randy Sprouse, a former coal miner who had worked as a field coordinator for the citizen science monitoring and folklife projects.

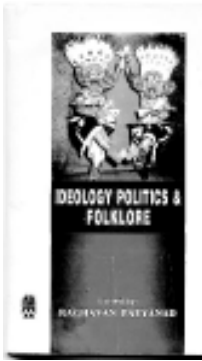
To colleagues in India, the birthplace of the Chipko movement which continues to inspire forest activism throughout the world, these outcomes could hardly seem radical, but I offer this account in the spirit of linking commons grounded in the world's forested mountains. I offer it as a report from one quarter on the status of that multi-sectoral civic commons for which Taylor and Reid are calling. Grounded in local systems of Reciprocity, nurtured by the talk that has historically formed folklore's disciplinary object, this commons is rife with implication and possibility for the work of folklorists.

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Conservation of Culture: Folklore, the Subsoil



Ideology, Politics and Folklore, (ed.) Raghavan Payyanad, Payyannur: FFM Publications, 1999, Pp.140

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There is an expression in Malayalam which goes somewhat like this: *Oh, you can buy anything in the world except your father and mother from there.* The comment is about the market that has sprung up on a special occasion like the village temple festival or feast in the local church. The rural mind is completely captivated by the display of wares beyond imagination. Culture should not be converted into a mere commodity and should be recognised as the lifeline of civilised existence. And culture draws its daily sustenance from the subsoil of an authentic folk tradition.

Ideology, Politics and Folklore, edited by Raghavan Payyanad, is a collection of six essays with an *Introduction* by the editor, (translated from the original Malayalam by T.M.A.Jaleel), looking at folklore studies from the angles of ideology and politics. The *Introduction* spells out clearly almost all the questions raised in these essays. He shows how *knowledge, power and ideology are interlinked and inter-dependent*, in the wake of the necessity to *reorient human civilisational development* following the dismal show of man's inability to handle knowledge and power properly as demonstrated in the human folly that led to two World Wars in the twentieth century. He then proceeds to trace the origin or western superiority and control in folklore studies and exposes the efforts of international capitalism, which, *with its concepts of Globalisation and Liberalisation, is making giant efforts to spread and establish, throughout the length and breadth of*

India, a uniform cultural identity designed to boost up market culture and consumerism. However, what still stands in its way is tradition. Accordingly, its massive crusade is oriented towards sacking and undoing all traces of tradition still lingering on in India. The editor goes on to expose the revivalists who swears by tradition as well. *As for India, it has been engaged in hectic attempts and schemes aimed at unifying its people through the Hindutwa ideology. The main objective of this has been the attainment of political power and authority. What militates against this process has been the varied folklores. The central concern in the Hindutwa camp, therefore, has been how to subsume and assimilate folklore into the Hindutwa ideology. Its is as a consequence of this that one Ramayana text alone has been laboriously invested with credibility, historicity and authenticity, to the exclusion of a multiplicity of other Ramayana texts. The attempts at converting into temples the shrines of Kerala with their differing cultural heritage have also been part of this assimilative strategy.* He asserts that instead of cultural unification, what is needed is to conserve diversity. *The existence of textual variety is in fact what makes an entity a folklore. The unification process, which is at bottom a denial and rejection of texts, of the differing versions of a text, is antithetical to the spirit of folklore. Folklore study thus inevitably assumes, consciously or unconsciously, political complicity and involvement.* He further explains that *ideology is essential to build up a power structure and, then, to maintain and preserve it. The current phase of human history is undoubtedly one in which*

ideology is being manufactured and exploited on an unprecedented scale to suit and serve the requirements of capitalism and neo-colonialism.

The essays, *Evolution of Folklore Studies* (tr. Usha Nambudiripad) and *Folklore as Discipline: Its Politics* (tr. T.M.A.Jaleel) are by the editor himself, dealing with the discipline of Folklore in its various aspects. *Mythic Metaphor: Argument and Ideology* by Jawaharlal Handoo and *Tradition and Folk Identity in the Changing World* by K.M.Anil (tr.P.K.Sajan) delineate the interplay of ideology and politics on the one hand and folklore on the other, in contemporary Indian society. K.M.Anil particularly deals with the Kerala scene, revealing how the *Udayamperoor Sunnahadose* (The Synod of Diamper) in 1599, carried out at the behest of the Portuguese, was an attempt to impose a *global* (Catholic) religious discipline on a local community (the community of St.Thomas Christians, who presumably, were flourishing during the fifteen preceding centuries, without changing their Kerala culture a bit), by imposing the authority of the *Patriarkese of Rome* (Patriarch of Rome, meaning the Pope) over them. According to him, *local cultures have got little significance in the concept of 'national culture' held by fascists.* He goes on to show how the *Kavus* or sacred woods of Kerala are being converted into temples under the influence of the fascist Hindutwavadis trying to push forward a pseudo national culture. He says, *while the Brahmin priest observes certain rituals, the local priest has to go out and keep away.* In the essay, *Modernity and Identity* by Ramanthali Ravi(tr.C.A.Assif) also, there is a vivid picture of this takeover. He says, *there is a wide-spread attempt in North Kerala to transform Kavus and Kazhakams into temples. Altering the rituals bearing the signs of Dravidian culture and changing ritualistic (sic) rites and strictly adhering to Brahminical rites the deities of the lower class(sic) have become toys in the hands of (the) dominant class. Teyyams*

that showed ferocity in drinking toddy, eating fish and killing chicken are under the grip of the tricks of Brahmins and Sanskritisation. Recently there were attempts to reinstall the deities using brahminical rites. Renovation of Kavus was also done in (on a) large scale. He further traces similar processes that plague Muslims of Kerala also. Muslims of Kerala have never agreed or acknowledged the peculiar practices of a movement called Global Islam.... Muslim fundamentalist forces order the Muslim ladies to walk fully covered (wearing a burqa) and want them not to go out for employment. He claims that Kerala Muslims have a specific folklore which is a result of their assimilation of local culture and it offers stiff resistance to all attempts at Globalisation of Islam in Kerala. *The Impact of Ideology on Kerala Folklore* by K.M.Bharathan (tr.C.P.Satheesan) traces the history of Kerala Folklore studies. He shows how colonial powers have shown local cultures in a poor light and tried to condescendingly civilise the savages, and then goes on to outline the main

features through the twentieth century till date.

As Ramanthali Ravi rightly points out, ... *Folklore in Kerala context becomes ...an integral part of the very existence of the lower class (sic) and their society. In early days, even those who formed organisations for helping them did not approve of their folklores...* This is a clear reference to Christian Missionaries of various hues, right from the eighteenth century, as well as political ideologies like Marxism, and the several organisations it spawned. No one really took the trouble to find out what was life really like among ordinary people and to take cognisance of their everyday expressions, their versions of myths and legends and so on. In the zeal to propagate one ideology or the other, or to be politically correct and do *the right thing* the intellectuals and elite always alienated themselves from the folk. Even practitioners of literature took pride in hobnobbing with academics rather than mixing with the common

people. The so-called *professionals* are anyway cut off from a holistic approach to life, more so now thanks to globalisation. In view of this grim situation, conserving folklore is the only means of preserving our own cultural identity.

Raghvan Payyanad, has done a commendable job, putting these essays together and bringing it out in book form. In the present scenario, it is essential that one should identify the ideological and political moorings of any development, cultural or otherwise. Moreover these elements are placed in proper perspective in this slim, little volume. My only complaint, though, is that more care should have gone into the language editing. Obvious mistakes could have been avoided and the language toned up, to unleash the vigour of conviction. Also the format, the *pocket size* of Oxford Dictionary fame, the absence of ISBN number and so on could be taken note of, for improvement in future publications.

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Culture Conservation: A new path finder



Conserving Culture: A New Discourse on Heritage, Mary Hufford, American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994, Pp.264, ISBN 0-252-06354-6

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community in the discourse and decision – so that there can be local interpretations and local decisions on what constitutes something worth preserving. Thus from being an imposed idea, conservation and preservation could become something that belongs to the people.

A review of *Conserving Culture* edited by Mary Hufford for the Indian context has to keep in mind that this book emerged out of a conference held in the Library of Congress in 1990, on cultural conservation. It is firmly rooted in the experience of the United States of America and of American conservationists who have done work outside the country. The book, in three sections (Conserving History, Protecting Biocultural Diversity and Encouraging Folklife), is a collection of essays and grows out of two kinds of situations (concerns). The first one tries to

widen the definition of conservation and preservation, looking at it more holistically, going beyond physical structures and nature to talk about conserving culture, which is much more of a people centred/oriented activity. The second issue deals with the question of who decides what to conserve and what to preserve. In the American context they are talking about federal actions institutionalised in the various national foundations and the writers suggest a reorientation, not by eliminating the federal or central role but by including the other stakeholders, including the local

The discussion poses an inbuilt dilemma. When decision-making is opened up to all stakeholders including the local community there will be differing opinions between experts, states, nations and local peoples as to what should or should not be preserved. So it becomes a negotiated agreement, often a complex, time consuming and even a vexing business. To put it in the Indian context, a classic example would be to take *Silent Valley* as an environmental heritage that deserves to be conserved. The local people might have voted against its conservation if the option was to get

access to electricity and improve the quality of their lives. The government might have worried about choosing between economic development for people and the value of the environment and the services it provides, which would be lost in the process. Scientists looked at it from an entirely different point of view. In the wrangling that followed media pressure and international pressures among others played a part and swung the balance. Opening up the decision-making process does not necessarily make it more democratic nor does it avoid the heavy hand of external pressures.

The book raises the point that we can't claim to be talking about the voice of a community when the voice to begin with had to be brought out by advocacy (and therefore external means). Clarence Mondale in his chapter, *Conserving a Problematic Past* says, *When we conserve a past, we make history. We make history because we must, to understand our present circumstances and ourselves. Because the past we conserve is necessarily problematic, we need to be self-critical and self-reflective in coming to collective decisions about what to remember and what to forget. Selecting particular pasts to conserve is necessarily a matter of continuous negotiations among all interested parties. Our pasts have consequences: if we celebrate a meretricious past, we cheapen ourselves.* We need to heed this carefully. Therefore, there is a need to get more and more people from

diverse backgrounds to start thinking about their communities, their environment, their culture and their history so that the discourse can be vigorous and peoples and their past don't get stepped on by default. And this raises another issue. While taking decisions on natural and physical heritages is still problematic it is at least reasonable to think through because one can talk about preserving an aesthetic from the past or even economically justify the act by figuring new uses for old structures. A growing body of scientific knowledge is evolving which helps to evaluate the importance and even set a value to an environment and its ecological services. All these make such decisions relatively less problematic. The more difficult part of the challenge is dealing with cultural heritage.

A good way of concretising the fairly vague idea of cultural heritage would be to read Steven Zeitlin's chapter *Conserving Our Cities: Endangered Spaces*. He has an interesting way of describing what makes the spaces in the city a cultural heritage. Many of these endangered spaces, be they pubs, eating places, youth clubs and hang-outs or even social clubs, are important because they serve or served as a locus for a community, often providing more than a simple service. These become gathering points where people get to know one another, discuss issues and share in one another's lives. The chapter also points a finger at what

we are losing rapidly in our urban areas where our society is getting so atomised that the concept of community is itself endangered. And public discourse, the stuff of community building and democracy, is being reduced to nothing. However, conserving cultural heritages may have its own problems: some of these heritages are tied into economic and social activities that may not be either economically or socially viable anymore. So what would we conserve?

The book makes interesting reading primarily because it nudges us into looking at things a little differently, with new meanings and possibilities of new opportunities. We cannot look at this book as a how-to manual in the Indian context because it deals with completely different societies. Even in the American context it was meant to be a thinking-piece, which gets people thinking about (a) a more holistic definition of what constitutes culture and what deserves to be preserved or conserved and (b) who determines what this culture is and what should be preserved/conserved. These questions are equally relevant to us, except that for us the discourse has not seriously begun. It is important that it begins and when it does it involves all concerned and involved sections of society.



Warli wall painting

Event-1**Series on Visual Art Traditions of India:
Workshop on Kalamkari**

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NFSC's Public Programming division has been organising a series of research-based public programmes, on Visual Art Traditions of India in collaboration with Government Museum, Chennai from May, 2000 onwards. It began with Thanjavur painting, and in the month of July a workshop on Srikalahasti style of Kalamkari painting was held. This was followed by a third workshop on Madhubani painting. These programmes are conceived of as a wholesome exposure consisting of research, fieldwork, practical training, lecture demonstration, exhibition, and hands on experience with the artist. Extensive research is done before preparing a brochure to educate the public and participants about the trajectory of this art form. The lecture-cum-demonstrations helped the participant to further explore the challenges and possibilities these art forms provide. There were fifty participants, both men and women, between the age group of 14 and 70 who took part in the workshop.

The word *Kalamkari* derives its name from *Kalam* meaning *Pen*, and *Kari* meaning *work*, literally *Pen-work*. It is a hand painting as well as block printing with vegetable dyes. Techniques of craftsmanship in *Kalamkari* were handed down within the families. In Andhra Pradesh, both the Masulipatnam and Srikalahasti village are recognised as major centers for Kalamkari painting. They differ in their styles. For Srikalahasti style of painting, temples were a major inspiration. It richly displayed episodes from the *puranas*, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, and other mythological stories. The subjects chosen to paint were restricted to Gods such as *Krishna*, *Ganesh*, *Lakshmi*, *Rama*, *Shiva* and *Parvati*. The permanence of the painted Gods and Goddesses, symbolised a lasting, eternal beauty, far beyond the temporality of human experience. Other than the personification of Gods, one of the most important depictions is the *Tree of Life*-the tree of God, which gives life to all creatures of the world. This art of painting undergoes a laborious, slow process of resist dyeing. Many stages have to be undergone before the final results are achieved. Basically, they are painted with natural dyes, extracting from bark, flower, and root.

NFSC researchers did a fieldwork in Srikalahasti, Andhra Pradesh, and met with Kalamkari artist, C.Subramanyam. He opined that Folk painting is imaginative as well as subjective. He said that, the arm of Krishna could extend up to embrace several women, which is unrealistic in the modern style.

With the help of his family, and students, he conducted the workshop. S.Ramakrishnan, Special Commissioner and Secretary, Tamil Development, Culture and Religious Endowment Department, inaugurated the workshop. M.D.Muthukumaraswamy, Director, NFSC, presided over the workshop, and R.Kannan, Commissioner of Museums addressed the participants. T.S. Rama worked as the facilitator. On the first day, the participants were introduced to the style and technique of Kalamkari painting. On the second day of the workshop Mohan, Curator, (Art section), Government Museum, Chennai gave a lecture on Kalamkari Paintings available in Chennai Museum. Sketching, Alum processing, boiling and washing of the painting followed. On the third day K.Lakshmi Narayan, Curator (Education), Government Museum, Chennai spoke on *17th and 18th Century Textiles in South India with special reference to Kalamkari*. Then the participants enthusiastically did the green and blue processing of the painting. The last day included the final touches of the painting and it ended successfully with the Valedictory Function. Shakuntala Ramani, Chairperson of Kalakshetra Foundation gave the Valedictory address, and the participants received the certificates from her. R.Kannan, Commissioner of Museums, also spoke on the occasion.

The participants were happy with the workshop and their desire to learn this art form was accomplished. They completed their painting and carried it home with more knowledge about its history and folklore. One of the participants expressed her feelings: *the workshop was good and up to the expectation. The artists were patient and explained the process well*. When asked by the Indian Express reporter about the workshop: *how is Chennai responding to the workshop?* the artist, C.Subramaniyam answered with a smile: *I'm extremely happy and amazed at the response I have got here. The people are skilled and show a lot of interest. What took two years to learn, they have perfected in this five-day workshop. I wish them all the best and hope they continue this.*



Stages in depiction of ornamentation

Event-2**Series on Visual Art Traditions of India:
Workshop on Madhubani**

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In collaboration with the Govt. Museum, National Folklore Support Centre organised a five - day workshop on Madhubani Painting from September 4-8, 2000. It was held at the Centenary Exhibition Hall, Govt. Museum, Chennai. Two days exhibition -cum-sale was also held by the artists at Lalit Kala Akademi after the workshop. There was an overwhelming response with a turn out of seventy one participants. The workshop began with an inaugural function where R. Kannan, Commissioner Government Museums, Chennai presided over the programme. Muthukumaraswamy, Director NFSC, addressed the workshop and A.K Handoo, Regional Director, Handicrafts Southern Region inaugurated the workshop. There were lecture-cum-demonstrations by eminent personalities on Madhubani Painting.

Jyotindra Jain, Senior Director, Crafts Museum, New Delhi, sent three eminent artists from Bihar, Shanti Devi, Kiran Devi and Phoolmaya Devi who conducted the workshop with full dedication. With an expertise in *Kayastha*, *Brahmin* and *Tattoo* styles of painting respectively, they trained each participant to complete all the three different styles. The participants were divided into three groups for the smooth running of the workshop. Each group had a facilitator (T.S.Rama, Ramasrinivasan and Rola) to breach the gap between the artists and the participants. There was an exhibition of the participants' works at the end of the workshop where each of them proudly displayed their paintings.

The workshop came to a close with a Valedictory function where R.Kannan, Commissioner of Museum, presided over the programme and P. Subramaniam, Director CFDRT, delivered the Valedictory address. All participants received a certificate for their participation in the workshop. In his address, P. Subramaniam said, "...I started contemplating on the beauty and the richness of the culture that gave birth to such art forms..." He further added, "...These two organisations (NFSC and Government Museum) coming together on such a great cause augurs well indeed for the future of

our rich and great folk traditions. The efforts have already provoked considerable public interest. Further sustenance of these efforts is sure to promote aesthetic appreciation in the public mind thus paving the way for greater beauty, peace and harmony in public life."

Madhubani, which in literal translation means *Forest of Honey*, is a small village in the northern part of Bihar. Hindu Mythology is the main theme in Madhubani Painting and it is usually done on cow dung treated paper with natural paints. It has mainly three schools: *Kayastha*, *Brahmin*, *Tattoo*. But for the womenfolk, this folklore could not have been able to adhere to its traditional form. It is women who have kept alive the

old traditions of the rural life and this enthusiasm is passed down from mother to daughter from generations. The ancient wall paintings or *Bhitti - Chitra* in Bihar played a great role in the emergence of this new art form. What was once a part of the interior on the murals of nuptial chambers has been brought down and interpreted colourfully on paper and cloth.



Participants at the workshop

The unique feature of the *Kayastha* tradition is the use of mainly two colours, black and red. The wrappers for the vermilion powder were painted by the bridegroom's family and sent to the bride before the wedding. These paintings were line- drawings of sacred symbols. They represented the lotus plant, bamboo grove, fish, tortoises, parrots, birds and all that symbolised fertility.

Unlike the *Kayastha*, the *Brahmin* style of painting lavishly deals with rich variety of colours. Their easy access to Hindu sacred literature has helped them immensely in portraying the rich Hindu iconography and mythology. The Brahmin tradition mainly deals with themes of gods and goddesses and magical symbols connected with deities.

The *Tattoo* style is an old craft practised in ancient Bihar. The *Tattoo* - based paintings reflect the primitive art and create its impact by a serial replication of the same image. The painting is basically in the form of a line - drawing and is divided into several horizontal margins. Their themes elaborately illustrate Indian epics and mythology.

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Review Shelf



CALL FOR PAPERS

Diasporic communications: Transnational and Local Cross-currents London, September 5-7, 2001

The Centre for Communication and Information Studies of the University of Westminster (CCIS) and the University of North London, in association with the European Institute for Communication and Culture (Euricom) intends to hold a colloquium on diasporic communication and audiences at the Harrow campus of the University of Westminster in London.

Although diasporas and globalisation are distinct phenomena, the outcome of their combination is a potent one. As far as communications are concerned, the transnationalisation of the media has enhanced and intensified the relationship between diasporas and globalisation processes. Electronic media increasingly link producers and audiences across national boundaries and initiate processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of diasporic identities. In doing so they set in motion processes of reconfiguration of place, space and culture and have a considerable impact on the everyday. In this context, established notions of the nation-state, of tradition and heritage and of citizenship and modes of belonging are challenged and transformed. The Colloquium aims to bring together academics to discuss these processes and their broader implications. In keeping with the traditions established in Colloquia organised with Euricom, the organisers do not wish to prioritise any particular method or approach within the scope of the overall topic. We would, however identify the following general themes as being particularly interesting to us: Intersections of the transnational and the local in diasporic communications, diasporic communications and diasporic identities, diasporic audiences and diasporic cultural politics, diasporic cultural production and consumption: the interplay between integration, cultural separatism and hybridity, diasporic cultural practices.

Papers are invited on any of these topics, or upon other issues defined by prospective participants. The colloquium organisers intend to pursue publication of selected papers presented during the event. Prospective participants should send abstracts of about 200 words to Roza Tsagarousianou (tsagar@westminster.ac.uk) or Shehina Fazal (s.fazal@unl.ac.uk) as soon as possible, and in any event by Friday 23 March 2001. Invitations will be issued by the end of April 2001. For more information on the colloquium link: www.westminster.ac.uk/media/diasporas.

NFSC Announcements: Jaisalmer Workshop

DOCUMENTING CREATIVE PROCESSES OF FOLKLORE: February 5 - 19, 2001

NFSC announces a fifteen days international workshop at Jaisalmer in collaboration with Rupayan Sansthan, Rajasthani Institute of folklore, Jodhpur on the theme *Documenting creative processes of folklore*. This workshop is envisioned as a serious academic opportunity for folklorists from all over India and also for folklorists from South and South East Asian countries to gather for an advanced learning situation to enhance their theoretical and practical skills required for documenting creative processes of folklore. This workshop is also an opportunity to engage in a critical conversation with international faculty and scholars from South and South East Asia to learn rich cultural diversities of the region. The workshop further proposes to explore verbal and non-verbal genres of folklore including folk music, folk paintings and material culture. The desert festival in Jaisalmer in the month of February offers appropriate context for the participants to meet with a number of folk artists and folk musicians. During the workshop mornings will be devoted to lectures and afternoons/ evenings to small group discussions, which will be led by faculty members. On the basis of these discussions relevant fieldwork sessions in and around Jaisalmer will be organised.

Logistics

Sponsored by the Ford Foundation, NFSC will bear all the expenses related to this workshop except meeting the travelling expenses of participants from South and South Asian countries. Out of the total twenty-five seats available for the participants fifteen seats will go to Indian participants and ten seats will go to participants from South and South East Asian countries selected by the centre. Rupayan Sansthan in collaboration with NFSC staff would provide local and logistical support.

Faculty

Henry Glassie (Indiana University) Komal Kothari (Rupayan Sansthan, Jodhpur), Lee Haring (Brooklyn College of the City University of New York), Pravina Shukla (Indiana University), Jyotindra Jain (Crafts Museum, New Delhi)

How to apply

Interested candidates from India and South and South East Asian countries are requested to send in their letter of interest along with their Curriculum Vitae to the following address by December 31, 2000. Applicants from South and South East Asian countries are requested to include their passport numbers nationality and permanent address in their curriculum vitae.

Accommodation and travel

NFSC will pay second-class a/c round trip train fare to all the selected Indian participants from their home base to Jaisalmer by the shortest route. NFSC is not in a position to meet travel expenses for selected participants from other South and South East Asian countries. However, boarding and lodging for the duration of the workshop for all the participants will be arranged by the centre. All the participants are requested to be in Jaisalmer by February 4, 2001. Attendance certificates for all the participants will be issued jointly by NFSC and Rupayan Sansthan. Selected participants will be intimated in the second week of January 2001.

Closing date: December 31, 2000

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

National Folklore Support Centre (NFSC) calls for full-length, completed manuscripts in the area, *Identity and Oral Narratives in India*. Related sub-themes would include: Formation of gender identities • Caste myths • Oral narratives of diaspora • Narratives of displacement and migration • Narratives of self and other.

Research based on fieldwork will be accorded priority. NFSC proposes to publish selected manuscripts either in-house or in collaboration with leading publishers. Applicants are requested to send in an abstract of their work (maximum length: six double space typed pages) along with a curriculum vitae and a letter of interest.

Closing date: December 31, 2000

TWO RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS

An exciting fellowship opportunity exists for a person having a doctoral degree in folklore or related social science subject or excellent published work; you have the ability to analyse and communicate subtle issues succinctly and effectively both orally and in writing. Proven ability to do independent fieldwork research is essential. An understanding or experience of Indian folk tradition would be an advantage. Selected scholars will be paid a monthly stipend of Rs.7500/- for a period of two years apart from the travel reimbursement which is according to the centre's rules. The awardees need to travel extensively for fieldwork research and solely responsible for developing the integrated research model which can be replicated fruitfully. They will have access to centre's collection. Please send your curriculum vitae along with a note, why you think you are the right candidate.

All Correspondence should be addressed to: Director, NFSC, No.65, Fifth Cross Street, Rajalakshmi Nagar, Velachery, Chennai- 600042, Telefax: 2450553/2448589, E-mail: muthu@indianfolklore.org or muthu@md2.vsnl.net.in

Closing date: December 31, 2000