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MEET MY PEOPLE

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Punjabi

FOLK-SONGS—

GIDDHA
DEEVA BALE SARI RAT

POEMS—

DHARTI DIAN VAJAN
MURKHA TE KANAK

SHORT STORIES—

KUNG POSH
SONA GACHI

Urdu

FOLK-SONGS—

MAIN HOON KHANABADOSH
GAYE JA HINDUSTAN

SHORT STORIES—

NAYE DEVATA
AUR BANSURI BAJATI RAHI

Hindi

FOLK-SONGS—

DHARTI GATI HAI
DHEERE BAHO GANGA
BELA PHOOLE ADHI RAT
JAYA LOKGEET

POEMS—

BANDANVAR

SHORT STORIES—

CHATTAN SE POOCHH LO
CHAYA KA RANG
NAYE DHAN SE PAHALE
SARAK NAHIN BANDOOK

ESSAYS—

EK YUG EK PRATEEK
REKHAYEN BOL UTHIN
KIYA GORI KIYA SANVARI

MEET MY PEOPLE

INDIAN FOLK POETRY

by

Devendra Satyarthi

With Introduction
by
Mulk Raj Anand

Hydrabad, India

CHETANA

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To
ARTHUR
WALEY

PEASANTS
Woodcut by Dinkar Kaushik

PREFACE

THIS book was planned to be published in two volumes in 1946, for due to some unavoidable difficulties a one volume edition was not possible. Unfortunately, the second volume was delayed in the press at Lahore, and later on, while India was divided, the press copy of the second volume was lost during the communal disturbances.

The first volume contained ten chapters including *Songs of Sword and Rifle*, a study of Pathan war poetry, and *The Mother of Peacocks*, an essay on the Irrawaddy including a number of Burmese folk-songs. These two chapters have been omitted now, since I decided to include them in separate studies of Pathan and Burmese folk-songs. Another chapter entitled *Lakshmana and Urmila*, a study of two Telugu ballads, has been omitted while re-planning the one volume edition. Nine Chapters in the list of contents are now published for the first time—1. Folk-Songs of Bengal, 2. Asamiya Songs, 3. Homage to Orissa, 4. The Role of Tamil Songs, 5. Sing Kerala, 6. The Three-Line Kannada Songs, 7. The Marathi Ovi, 8. Folk-songs of Gujarat, 9. A Short Anthology. The appendix, and index appearing for the first time. Again, it may be added here that the chapters taken from the first volume had to be revised to suit the requirement of the one volume edition.

An extract from the Preface to the first volume may be of some interest to the readers of the present publication. "The Folk-Song Movement has touched the remote corners of India during the last seventy-five years since 1871, when Charles E. Gover's *The Folk-Songs of Southern India* was published at Madras. We have Meghani in Kathiawar well-known for [redacted] thousands of old genuine folk-songs devotedly collected and edited in Gujarati; Raichura brings his own quota of Kathiawari *Doohas* and Garba songs. Mansuruddin and Jasimuddin have explored Bengali songs after Dinesh Chandra Sen and Chandra Kumar Dey. In the Punjab we have Ramsaran Das and Harjeet Singh, whose collections published in Punjabi show a great scientific accuracy of the texts. Ram Naresh Tripathi gave a lead in Hindi; Ram Iqbal Sinha Rakesh's work for Maithili songs, and Krishnadeva Upadhyaya's zeal for Bhojpuri songs is deep and dignified. In Rajasthan we have a trio in Suryakaran Pareek, Ram Sinha and Narottamdas Swami, though the hand of death has snatched away unluckily

the first of the three friends. In place of Temple and Grierson, we have amidst us two Englishmen—Verrier Elwin, well known for his studies in the Gond anthropology and folklore, and W. G. Archer, author of *The Blew Grove*—The Poetry of the Uraons, who has also published about half a dozen anthologies of songs in original texts collected with local collaborators among the aboriginal tribes in Santal Parganas and Chhota Nagpur. My own collections, made during the last twenty years, range over more than fifty languages of India, and the songs number over 300,000 all told, though I have been able to publish only a small number of them ".

I have not been able to express my love for my country in political activity, nor could any form of social service suit me. I simply took to the songs of my people. The colour, fire and sparkle of the present poetry made an interesting story for me.

The opinion of Andrew Fletcher, that a nation's ballads are more important than its laws, touched my dreams and I decided to wander all over India to make a vast collection of folk-songs in as many languages as possible.

Many individuals in various dialect zones helped me not only in the collection of songs but also in the still more difficult task of translation and notes. I am indebted to them, for little would have been possible without their help.

In a country like India, where the national movement did not recognize the importance of folk-songs, it was not always easy to get co-operation. Individual literary appreciation from Rabindranath Tagore, who called it 'a valuable work requiring delicate sensibility for the exploration of an obscure region', gave me some impetus. Again, words of literary evaluation from Mahatma Gandhi, who recognized folk-songs as 'literature of the people,' went a long way to win sympathy of a rare type of host in my difficult days.

To the Late Ramananda Chatterjee I owe a special gratitude, for he made the pages of *The Modern Review* available to me for many years. I also feel indebted to the editors of other journals who showed a special regard for my contributions.

My friend Mulk Raj Anand favoured me with his Introduction that is symbolic of more than merely a personal tie.

May, 1951.

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POUNDERS
Linocut by T. Kesavarao

COMMENT

FOLK music has been a living institution in India for untold generations. Every part of this vast country has its own musical tradition, every little dialect its own quota of songs to offer for the rich fund of India's heritage. The Aboriginal scene is richer in oral tradition and surpasses all such regions that may claim to have a more advanced culture and civilization.

In case of any tribal society, where singing and dancing are linked together by a vital tradition, poetry is a living force with images emerging from the depths of the unconscious mind of the community in the heightened state of feeling. It may be said even about societies, which have greatly excluded dancing from much of their singing, for singing itself can create a ground for abnormal images bringing out the barest facts of the social order. Again, the taboos give a sort of release to the folk mind to see more independently in the domain of song which may look at times pointless and even irrational to the unfamiliar ear, yet it may triumph in subtle and logical interpretation of the tribal culture.

It is not easy for me to think of folk-songs as mere poems. Surely, it looks odd to reproduce a folk-song without music and that too in translation, yet my emphasis has been on folk poetry rather than on folk music. I remember how every time I recorded a song it seemed to talk to me, "Now you will take me away devoid of my wings and you will tell everybody, here is a bird without wings."

It is true that a folk-song may retain its images even when it is reproduced as a poem, but the tribe or society to which it actually belongs will not take it as a living cell till the singers and dancers rise to the occasion to give it its original form ; then the bird flutters its wings and to it soars higher and higher.

It is no good, however, to apologize that I made no attempt to reproduce the tunes of the songs. Separate study from the point of music may be made by one who would do full justice by reproducing folk-songs as music. Ratanjankar's *Folk-Songs of Bharatpur* that gives the text of songs in Devanagari script along with the notations of music in India *Sawaralipi* style is an attempt on these lines, but Ratanjankar's study offers nothing so far as the study of folk poetry is concerned. Perhaps Ratanjankar did well to confine himself to only one aspect of the songs, for it may not be worth while to attempt at music and poetry

in the same volume. We may also consider the proposition from the point of a person's limitations. Maybe that one is incapable of doing full justice so far as folk poetry is concerned, whereas he may deal with folk music most successfully.

The full value of folk-songs lies both in music and poetry, for both aspects are complementary and essential. Separate volumes dealing with music and poetry may not be a bad idea, for in that case it may not be essential for a person to divide the emphasis in two directions and thereby put his success at stake.

Now it is clear that a separate study of folk-songs from the point of poetry is not any devaluation of the songs, though so far as I am personally concerned I have always felt the loss of music. The words of a song devoid of the tune looked like an outdated passport, whenever I recited it as a poem. Again, in translation the words of a song seemed to have lost further details.

I must admit that the process of translation has not been so easy. It has been a great headache in certain cases. It was essential, for I had an urge to put my stuff before students of world poetry. At times I felt a sort of incapacity to carry on the translation, for I myself failed to recognize the songs in translation. Loss of rhymes was inevitable, for I decided to be faithful to the originals. Instinctively it occurred to me that the scientific value of the songs could be put forward only if I made no attempt at applying any metrical form in translation, for I could not agree to take away a single detail from the original, nor could I like to add a new patch here and there to come up to any metrical requirement in the translation. I simply took to a line for line translation: all images and symbols coming in up their own attire. A lot of experimenting, however, was essential before I could realize the advantage of this process and acquire confidence.

Says A. G. Shireff, "... in the translations which follow my aim has been to give as accurate a rendering as possible in a form which may remind English readers of folk-poetry with which they are very familiar."[1] Of course, Shireff succeeds in finding many resemblances between the folk-songs of the United Provinces and English songs and ballads. But I must say that this idea of rendering songs in verse with the aim of reminding English people of their own

1 A. G. Shireff, *Hindi Folk-Songs,*

ballads is dangerous, for to meet the requirements of verse from Shireff had to stoop down on unscientific ground and translate the word *savi* as ' gown ' and a refrain like *ta yahi ranban men* as ' under the greenwood tree '.

The translator must have some principles before him. The images of the originals should suffer no loss. " Certain things," says Ezra Pound, "are translatable from one language to another, a tale or an image will translate ; music will practically never translate." The translator must face the position rightly, for he must know that the stuff he wants to reproduce has a great documentary value, and he must put forth *sari* as *sari* even if he had to explain such words in footnotes or he may give a separate glossary. Any attempt at translating *sari* as 'gown' so that it can rhyme with 'clown' in the second line will simply look clownish.

Arthur Waley's method may be adapted by any sensible translator, for it has greater scope of authenticity. He observes, "Above all, considering images to be the soul of poetry, I have avoided either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original."[1]

The panorama of the Chinese poetry, including *The book of songs*, which may be recognised as the oldest anthology of folk poetry in the world, will always be indebted to Arthur Waley, he succeeded in maintaining its documentary value in translation.

I have been reproducing the original folk-songs along with the translations in my books in Punjabi, Urdu and Hindi, for I strongly felt that until the originals are there the authenticity of the originals cannot be maintained, and moreover the danger is always there that the original text may be lost even by the people themselves who have been singing it generation after generation. In the fast-changing age of progress on scientific lines, especially the oral tradition was facing the greatest danger. This is what I felt at every step, and I developed a close association and friendship with the originals..

I would have very much liked to include the originals side by side with the translations in this book exactly on the lines of my books in Indian languages, but Archer's view looked more reasonable, "We believe that little is gained by printing originals side by side with their translations. Those who will test the translations will be few. They are the tiny minority who serve the vital functions of upholding truth. Those who can relish the

1 Arthur Waley, 170 *Chinese* Poems, p. 19.

poetry may be many, and for these, poetry should either be printed as *poetry* or it should not be printed at all. To make a linguistic puzzle a necessary pendant to a poem is to rob it of almost all its power and charm. The best method, therefore, is to print the originals as a separate publication and to supply the translations with a finding list. Such a course not only provides the critic with a stick but if care is taken it may also give the poems back to the people. We suggest that at a time when oral traditions are weakening all over India this is a gesture which no anthropologist should grudge."[1]

In broad outlines the folk poetry of the world seems to have a common appeal, for man is man everywhere. Certainly, it is the diversity of cultural detail, the variety of shades and overtones, that is more important, but the existence of a common mind that communicates the affairs of Village India on almost similar lines and in the same colours further helps to understand the cultural unity of the Indian people.

A song may define the importance of hospitality; the hostess may not offer milk and *ghee*, but she can offer rice, as evident from a song coming from Kulu Valley. This is seen everywhere. The seasonal joy in any sequence will look similar, though it has more importance among communities that still live in close contact with nature. The love for ornaments, the joy of weddings, the bride shedding tears while leaving her mother's home, the scene of a *hat bazar*, or weekly market, a child at the mother's breast, the little girls and boys singing a nursery rhyme, an earthen lamp with its flickering wick, the bullock-cart with the creaking sound of its wheels, the drums resounding the heart of the village, the Punjabi girls addressing the Giddha dance that it should not forget to enter their village, the Uraon girls from Chota Nagpur telling each other that the elephant-like *Sohari* festival is passing and they should try to catch hold of it—all such stuff is available in songs coming from different dialect zones in India. A single line may reflect the whole scene of tribal life focusing an image of vital interest. A simple object may serve as a symbol of ritual conduct. Such a material always helps the growth of a living poetry which is always pregnant with subtle meaning.

Images merging with the wide range of tribal life have a universal appeal, though reinforcement coming from close study

1 W. G. Archer, Comment, Folk-Song Number, *Man in India*, March 1943, pp. 1-2.

and understanding of cultural sequence is very essential. Images, as Stephen Spender has emphasized, " are not still-lives to be hung on walls. They are visions of history of the race and of life and death." When a *Savan* cloud projects the image of a lover, as seen in a song coming from the Punjab, or when the *singni* fish weeps in a Gond song to declare that the fisherman's wife has given birth to a son carrying a fishing net on his head, and thus projects the image of a class of exploiters, one at once feels the power of folk poetry. In another song coming from the United Provinces, the *neem* tree stands for the mother and the sparrows are the daughters : the father is asked never to cut the tree so that the sparrows are not troubled.

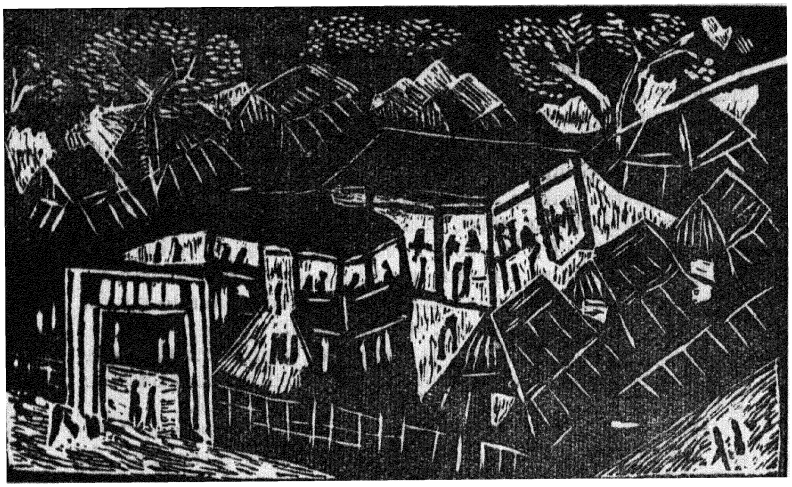
Images usually follow a sort of pairing, as in the *Birhas* coming from Bhojpuri dialect of Bihar, and it is not without purpose. It gives intensity and top priority to the mass appeal.

Discussing Biga folk-songs, Archer rightly observed, " We do not study man merely to dissert him. We examine in order that we may learn. Behind the twentieth century art in Europe lies Negro sculpture. The importance of Baiga poems is that they suggest a new starting point for contemporary poetry both in England and in India."[1] Now that folk poetry of India coming from various tribes and communities speaking different languages and dialects is reproduced with some sequence and setting, I am sure it will attract the modern poet everywhere.

My long journeys in my country for over twenty years have always reassured me of my people's love for me : I have met them and known them not merely as cyphers in a Census Report but as a real and living humanity. I listened to them singing—the words coming up as a woman will draw water from a well, or even as a girl will spin a new thread at her spinning wheel. The village homes and fields are projected in these songs with the live force of folk poetry, and surely these songs coming from over fifty languages and dialects have some importance which will not be missed by poets and critics, who may get a new fund of inspiration for the making of a new poetry in any part of the world.

May, 1951.

1 W. G. Archer, Baija Poetry, *Man in India*, March 1943.



HUIS
Woodcut by Kamala Mittal

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT the time when I was revising the essay which follows, after having written it during a deep, dark night on the Ganges at Kalakankar in Partapgarh District of U. P., I found myself in Santiniketan. The year was 1938, the month was December, the day was the foundation day of Santiniketan when a fair is held at the Ashram. As I walked up to the fair from the house where I was staying, dragging a little toy cart, which some of the students had presented me, I met my host Balraj Sahni with a dignified, tall young man who was afterwards introduced to me as Devendra Satyarthi, the Punjabi poet who had been collecting the folk-songs of India. My little clay cart caused the young poet some amusement. But I remember saying to him that I was carrying the first centuries behind me as he was carrying the prehistoric past in the sheaf of papers in his portfolio.

That phrase seems to me now to have become a symbol of our friendship. For, apart from the accident of chance, it seems to have become indicative of the fact that our minds were working along similar lines. While Devendra Satyarthi had been rediscovering the survivals of the most vital spoken rhythms of our past in the villages of India, I too had gone back to the sources of our folk tradition and rendered the stories, the myths and the tales in the countryside.

Since my arrival in India, after spending the war years in England, I have had the opportunity of reading Devendra Satyarthi's book, *Meet My People*, in proof. And when he suggested that I should write a foreword, I readily agreed, not to write a foreword which is a form of writing generally too patronizing, to be honest, but to contribute the essay which I had written just before I first met him. For, that essay, the sum of my meditations on a dark night on the Ganges, was a parallel development, justifying our faith in the poetry and courage of our peoples, and a narrative that would be the basis of a dignified collaboration between us. I believe that Devendra Satyarthi's translations reproduce in beautiful rhythmic prose the true genius of our bards, minstrels and popular poets and are a unique contribution to our heritage of many aspects of the life of our peoples. I offer my essay here, therefore, as a tribute

to his work and to the love that we bear in common for our peoples.

THE river flows sullenly through the night, filling the universe with a terrible sense of its dark potencies, spreading into the jungles and hills and inhabited plains a vast sense of doom. It is the main stream of Hindustan. It gathers unto itself many tributaries, even as it floods the land, when it is pregnant with the meltings of the snows on the Himalayas, and flows into many little rivulets, marshes and canals. It is Ganga, flowing, they say, out of the head of Siva, the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer of the universe. In it are the drops of nectar which pilgrims carry away in copper jars to drink for immortality, and in it are the specks of dust with which the incinerated ashes of the departed mingle before they are carried to the ocean. Source of life, then, and the grave of the dead, healer, reviver, as well as the carrier of the germs of ten plagues and the hundred different fevers, purifier, sustainer, killer, worshipped by millions as the Mother, the mysterious container of all the hopes, aspirations, dreams and dark unconscious of the people of Hindustan, it is a great symbol, if you like, or only a great river, which has flowed down through the ages and still flows.....

I have come out to its banks in the pitch black night from the nearby village and sit gazing at it from the terrace of my host's summer house, full of 'divine discontent', but also full of a strange sense of foreboding, a deep fear. For only a hundred yards away the two dead men of the village are burning on their funeral pyres, and I have never been able to get over my terror of the jinns and *bhuts* and *howbattas* and hobgoblins with which my mother's talk and the gossip of the women in our gulley impressed me right on from my early childhood.

And yet I ought not to be afraid. For am I not a modern ? Have I not been half way round the world and dabbled in a hundred different arguments ? Have I not seen the great factories, the Sukkur Barrage which has harnessed the Indus, giant electrical works which have caught nature by the tuft knot and swung it as a juggler swings his monkey ? Do I not know something about the great struggles which are raging round the world, and even in the village behind me there ? And how events are changing man's mind revealing before his disillusioned gaze another fate, and another destiny ? Why am I afraid then ?

And of what ? Or is it merely the healthy doubt which affects my mind so ?

Of course, for moments, for long moments, I am not afraid. For the sheer fascination of the elements overwhelms me. The arrogant sound of the water is redolent of the fury with which it has carved its way down the Himalayas through gorges and glaciers. The cool snow breeze which comes wafted over it is like the balm of new life to one tormented by the heat which oozes from the sun-baked earth. The vistas of the enormous land on both sides of the river, with the groves silhouetted across it in the conic cypress trees which rise and talk to the sky, the expanses of the black forests which spangle the countryside up to the ends of the horizon, are curiously soothing. And the teeming life of snoring or praying humanity, the whirring insects, the jackals which howl now and then, the dogs which bark back, and the donkeys which occasionally bray their ridiculous bray, are all reassuring..... And yet, I must confess, I am afraid. It is no use affecting a strength and a heroism when one is the slightest bit craven. It would be hypocrisy to think that everything is solid when I know that all around me the world is crumbling, when I know that there are vast vacuums of nothingness about me, crying out to be filled up. It would be a lie to pretend that there is not going on in me the most momentous conflict, not as big quantitatively as the struggles which engulf humanity, but a miniature tussle reflecting the same contradictions between the old and the new, the past and the future, between all the 'fates' which have accrued to me and the present destiny. It is not that I have no faith in myself and my friends, that I do not believe in our capacity to resolve the shapeless experience of our lives, but the thing is to rescue the soul from the rocks of dogma in which it is rooted, to resurrect it from the swamps, the lowlands and the marshes which the Monsoons of an aeon have created around it, to take it out of this heavy dark night and to renew it. When I see it in rare moments lit like the coloured electric lamps within me, then I am not afraid of the glow of those dead bodies and of the gigantic elements, but it would need the flame of a volcano inside me to consume the dreads of the past.

The river flows sullenly through the night, filling the universe with a terrible sense of its dark potencies, spreading into the jungles and hills and inhabited plains a vast sense of doom.....

Let me take it into confidence. Let me ask it a few questions. Who are the dead which it commemorates with its curious

intonation, its sound and fury, signifying nothing, and something ?.....Are they the cause of my anguish ?

Perhaps that is so, perhaps it is because I want to know, to feel the essence of my own life in contrast to the dead who weigh so heavily on me.....

The deadliest and the heaviest weight is that of the forest there, the jungle compact and thick like the mass of a mountain in one of Nicholas Roerich's pictures. Old, old, very old, as ancient as the Himalayas, with its hoary, bearded banyans and oaks and *kikars* and *neems*, dense, dark and sombre, spreading like a vast mysterious sea of vegetation, at the bottom of which are tangled under-growth of thorny bushes and weeds and crawling insects, life, the ferocious wild kingdom and the buried nights of history.

Those were long nights. And the jungle then was omnipresent, omniscient, dwarfing everything. And the small dark people, the neolithics, lived there, shaded from the sun which burnt the tree-tops, breathing the fungus odours, drinking the pungent waters of the drying pools, rather than the nectar of the nearby Ganges, exorcising their demons and propitiating the forest spirits—Yakahas, Nagas, fauns and nereids.....The forest was all round, it enveloped everything.....But who knows what dreams stirred the dark breath of those nights. For, with all my fears, I am a self-conscious man, heir to myriads of generations, son of two parents, grandson of four grand-parents, great-grandson of eight great-grandparents, great-great-grandson of sixteen great-great-grand-parents, and so on *ad infinitum*. And I have accepted each stone carved by those ancestors and all the writing on the wall, the paint on the pots and the shapes on the copper and bronze and silver and gold, not as an antique dealer accepts old merchandize believing it to be precious merely because it is old. But because I can perceive the qualities of the heritage, shall I project myself back into the intricate processes of that time and ascertain the depths plumbed by these men in the pools, the heights reached by them above the tall stems of the calamus and bamboo groves ?

Perhaps I can venture to guess ! The demons and the good spirits they evoked evidence to a special effort on their part. And they show that they struggled, as each generation struggles to build, to be free. Else, why those shrines in the caves, the little temples dug deep in the mounds of earth among the groves of mango and teak and *Kadamba* trees, the clearings under the magnolias, the tamarisks and the palms?....

Only, they were baulked by the spirits of the forest, by their own fears, as it were, by the gigantic expanses of greenery, the provinces of demons and witches, choked by the airless confines, overwhelmed by the oppression of endless brooding nights, hidden under the thick curtain of endless torrid days.....

But they left behind prodigal works, monoliths, images of their gods, of the earth-earthy stones from which it seems that they were here only yesterday, so sharp, so tense is the outline of their sculpture, though I know they were long ago.

Before their beauty I am not really afraid. I can understand it. I can listen to the distant voices of its creators.

And yet the river flows sullenly through the night, filling the universe with a terrible sense of its dark potencies, spreading into the jungles, the hills and the inhabited plains a vast sense of doom.....

But has it always been the same ? And will it remain so ? Life changes. Everything changes. A form is born to fade away. But what was the nature of the change that happened between dim dawn and the first invasion of India ? Was it only an outer change ? Or did the substance change too,—the inner life ? And did the *Rig Vedic* shepherd sing the final song, the song of all songs ? And have two thousand years passed in vain ?.....

If the mind of man is like a rich tapestry to which the donation of each previous generation makes a background, on which are superimposed the colours distilled by an individual's experience of the senses, refined by the play of the intellect and imbued, above all, by the strange tone of the will and open to sudden illuminations from the subconscious in its creative moments, then it is possible for man to grow, to extend himself from the provinces to the ' metropolis', to merge his ego in a super-individual effort, to be a new man, to glow with all the neon lights in himself, so that he can see his way in the dark and show others the way.....

Certainly, the nomadic herdsmen who wandered down from Central Asia (or was it Norway ?) began to think about the structure of their being, questioned being itself and sang the hymn of creation, surely the greatest early poem of the world ! How subtle, how exalted is the conception of the universe as born of desire, in the mind of God, how satisfying the notion of the return through desire, the reciprocal urge ! Anticipation of the voluptuous ecstasy ! Of one and the Many ! Also a transcendentalism so vertical that it is still with us.....The earth-man of the forests has travelled far and deep. And, as the for-

mation of an idea, and its transformation in song involves the fusion of so many impulses and acts, of so much experience, and vital flame, one wonders what magic was in the senses of these men. And what daring! What courage!

But, all the same, why am I not content to sing their songs? Why do I find it a little unsatisfying even to rest with them? Am I greedy for more? Why do I crave greater ecstasies of fulfilment? Is it the primitive faculty in me, classifying the various sense impressions and according to them a place in the sequence without a thought of essences?

No. It is not that. But I have the feeling that it is difficult to adopt an honest attitude towards the billions of souls who make up the past. Some of our moderns are inclined to borrow things from the ancients and recommend us to adopt them. I prefer to see the development as it happened. It seems to me that the earth was still slumbering in the spell of deep dark nights and the angry glare of red-eyed days when the Aryans followed down to the delta of the Ganges. And fear was abroad, the fear of the elements, the Sun, the Moon, the mountains, the rivers, the rains, the drought, the stormy winds and the stars. The challenge of this outside world could not be denied, nor could the dread course of this natural phenomena be directly altered, stopped or modified. And as man gazed upon the fruitful fields he tilled on the clearings, he could not but feel a superstitious awe of these outside forces. And the only way that he could establish his sway on his own stricken soul was by placating the dread elements with hymns and songs and prayers, half importunate appeal, half currying favour with the gods to help him out. The beasts of the jungle kingdom, too, were a menace. Hence the veneration of animal gods. Birds of prey abounded, and swooped down on pet animals. They also became gods, good spirits or evil spirits according to the use they had for man, symbols of wealth or fertility, tokens, charms and *tavizes*.

At least that is how it seems to have happened from the spring rhythms of the country songs.

The network of the fungus still grows. And presumably the inherited fears and the wisdoms wrung out of defeat and despair, or speculations born of brave flights of fancy, have added themselves as accretions to later thought. Hence our own fears.

What then is the sum of these vast conglomerations of sentiments, sayings, aphorisms, monologues, dialogues and compositions which form the Upanishads, the forest books which record the thoughts of the hermits and the sages who contemplated

in and around the villages ? Merely the dramatisation of the primeval processes or a series of creative myths, showing man's search for the meaning of life, for the symbol, the sign, the sound ?

The sheer dark wall of Nature which is so eloquent in the night can alone answer these questions. Seemingly unchanging and unchangeable, this tropical world suggests a polar conception of thought in which the Omnipotent is supreme like a fixed umbrella casting the shadow of its protection over all, governing the processes of birth and rebirth in a space which is also time. And the whole pageant is enacted in the eyes of this great God, beyond history and beyond the development of techniques. And this remains so for nearly three thousand years, making for one of the longest cosmic traditions in the world.

Was there, then, no striving on the part of man in these many centuries ?

Undoubtedly the very foundation of this vertical Vedantic idea was the result of a conflict between the fair Aryans who began to invade India about 2000 B.C. and the Dravidians, the dark resisters. The result of this *struggle*, which lasted till 1000 B.C., was the domination of the indigenous 'coloured' peoples by the white intruders, and then the ultimate conquest of the conqueror by the deeper and more intricate culture of the conquered. Amid the vortex of the warring factions I can see the skulls that broke and the blood that flowed down this river, and I can hear the groans of the helplesss sufferers. But the contradiction between truth and falsehood is soon destroyed by the *force majeure* of Nature's dread energies. Also, the mixture of life with life, the fraternisation, inevitable after every war, is the compeller of synthesis.

It is true that the possessors of the tallest ambitions succeeded in India, for the old Brahmins imposed their will on all and sundry. But already in 600 B.C. the ground was slipping from under their feet, for the scions of the Aryan warrior caste, the Kshattriyas, were leading the revolt against the priestcraft. The humanism of the Buddha is the quintessence of all the resentments of a thousand years of needless pain, the protest of that young world against the concentration of spiritual and temporal power into the hands of a few, even as it is an attempt to inform the moral code with the sanction of an ultimate tenderness. 'What ought to be done is neglected', says a Buddhist scripture, 'what ought not to be done is done'; 'the desires of unruly thoughtless peoples are always increasing.'

Who knows what other determinations remained still-born in those authoritarian kingdoms, where only a Gautama, a king's son, could dare to protest ? And what were the thoughts of men at the publication of the oracular code of the Brahmin law-giver Manu ? Did anyone protest against the principles of Kautilya's political tract, the *Artha Shastra* ?

I see the bubbling of many hearts with secret hopes. I see much coming and going among the retreats of the sages in the mountains. I hear the lashing of tongues in argument.

But against the Omnipotent God, Brahma, the Supreme symbol, who is the chief incarnation of all other gods, Vishnu, Indra, Siva, all protest is futile. And against the omnipresent caste system, with the Brahmins, the officiators at all ceremonies and the holders of the conscience of God, there is no avail except submission. So that only a few years after his death the one God idea is fastened upon the doctrines of the Buddha, who never asserted such a metaphysical belief. And the earning of a higher life through good deeds, the road to *moksha*, release, which Gautama emphasized, is soon used to show that the lower castes deserve their fate in this world because of the evils they have committed in the past.

Sponge-like and enervating, Hinduism absorbed all the highest speculations of the human spirit, as well as its lowest superstitions. And, with a profound grasp of the psychology of the human mind, it conceded a place to the weakest of the weak, so that it has worn the air of an extraordinary tolerance for generations. And by the time that the Muhammadan invasions began in 1000 A.D. it had penetrated into the nooks and crevices of the Indian plateau so deeply that it is not yet shaken except on the fringes, and persists : ' Abhor those who join gods to God !' cried the sons of Prophet. And they struck with fire and sword against the *Kafirs*. But the cosmic conception which saw the essence of all things in the changeless principle which assumed the shapes desired by each worshipper has survived until today !

The river flows, the mainstream, gathering unto itself all the rivulets, all the currents, dominating the imaginations of men, stifling their hearts and then releasing them through a new sweep of its sustaining spirits, a concession to the human heart.....

Sometimes I cannot believe that the spell of the Omnipotent could have lasted so long. The segments of many months repeating the old hymns ! .....Was there no discontent ?

The secret of this continued acceptance lies probably in the

satisfaction of needs. In this gigantic village of India, composed of hundreds and thousands of villages and hamlets, no one owned anything and yet everyone owned everything, for everyone, both Raja and Ryot, had only a right to the enjoyment of the fruits of the land, but no one owned property. The Raja supplied protection for revenue in kind and saw to it that the tracks were kept passable, canals dug, and public works initiated. The Ryot tilled the field allotted to his family. The land was freshly redivided after each conquest by the five elders of the village. The place of every new-born infant in the community was assigned, fixed. The chief enemies were still the drought, the winds, the rains and thunderstorms. The fate of Man seemed to be governed by the gigantic forces of Nature, which had to be appeased. And the psychology of Hindu ritualistic worship ensured the blessings of Almighty by the use of the most sonorous chants, the most lovely hymns and lovelier idols. Self-hypnosis was the highest ideal, the mergence of man with the highest self, the conquest of fear, the tearing of the sheets of illusion created by earthly desire, with a view to the attainment of fusion with the ultimate reality.

The course of this aristocratic democracy knew no alternation, except that of the day and night until our time. Kings came and Emperors went, but the slow routine of this secret life went on, on the sides of the mainstream, among the stony ridges as well as in the festering back-waters, among the forests as well as the marshes, uninterrupted. And the accepted values of this culture built up by these peasant communities are the values of a well-disciplined people, the fruit of the accumulated labour of generations, the product of a long and conscious choice between the attempt at form and the desire for renewal resulting in a high degree of self-restraint. It is a great tradition, simple, sensuous, self-sufficient and sensitive in the deepest sense, and, what is more, it is a singing tradition.

It is not surprising that it absorbed all the invaders, except the last, the Westerners. In its own peculiar way it was a generous culture, like the land in which it sprang up, accepting every-thing and making room for divergences of view.

Certainly, the only great challenge for fifteen hundred years, the sword of Islam, ended here by becoming only the crescent moon, a mere symbol of truth, only another of the many symbols, for its belief in a personal God, the Brahmins argued, contained in the several monotheistic strains of Hinduism. As for the laws and customs of Islam, so humane, so enlightened in

the sanction they drew from the brotherhood of man, and in the recognition of the rights of women,—even these were tinged in the long run by the Hindu code, because of the taboos which the closely-knit,indigenous society imposed against the invading faith. So much so that before the passage of a few centuries the idea of caste had been carried like a bacillus into Islam by the millions of converts whom the fear of poll-tax or other disabilities had taken over to the alien religion under the Pathans and the Moghuls.....And though the priestcraft of both faiths drew the asterisks of doubt over this jumbling of Hinduism and Islam, the polychromatic images resolved the doubts, bridged the fears, and led to miracles of art which are the joint product of Hindu and Muhammadan sensibility, such as the folk-songs.

But if we want to see how not a mere idea but the actual force of an historical urge alone can create the real impact, let us look for a moment and see how the star which rose in Bethlehem remained merely the smallest speck among the constellations on the horizon of Hindustan, until the fear of the imperialist sword baptised a few heathen according to the rites of Christian civilization.

The gospel of goodwill to men and peace on earth was first proclaimed by the angels to the shepherds. And these simple men went about spreading the glad tidings of the incarnation of Lord Jesus Christ. And soon the influence of this gospel was felt throughout the greater part of the world then known to the Roman conquerors before the end of the first century. It is even asserted that the apostle Thomas was put to death by the Brahmins of Mylapur, while he was labouring for the new faith near Madras. About the fourth century a number of Syrian Christians are said to have settled along the coast of Malabar, south-west of India. They earned great favours from the Hindu Kings of Malabar and freely travelled about in the country. Soon they increased in numbers and wealth, so much so that they had their own princes to rule over them for centuries to come. But though it was the duty of every individual Christian who had embraced the ennobling religion of Jesus to endeavour to spread the knowledge of the Lord, Christianity never really gained a real foothold on this continent, even though so many bodies among the outcastes sorrowed for a eucharist. No, it was left to the buccaneering Dutch, Portuguese, Spanish, French and English seamen and merchant adventurers to bring the everlasting knowledge of God, as taught by the son of God, to the tropical firmament. And, apart from the influence exerted by the Jesuits

at the Court of the Great Moghuls, it was the establishment of the English factories on the coast of Coromandel, on the south coast and in Bengal that made the modern Padre-Sahib a familiar phenomenon, the only good man in the camp of the bad. To the extent to which the missionary could dispel the fear of the White man created in the minds of the natives by his sword-brandishing compatriots, he was able to put over the meaning of the Cross. But, as the more honest missionaries will admit, the result of two centuries of proselytising has not been worthy of the great ideal which they sought to preach because of the taint of imperialism which attached to the words of one of the tenderest of men. Meanwhile, they sound rather ridiculous because they cannot make the choice which C. F. Andrews or Verrier Elwin made, to stand aside from falsehood and the white Sahib's ballyhoo. And they chant despairingly :

'But the end is not—Look onward,
Much must yet be done ;
Millions, yet still unbelieving,
Must be sought and won.

Disappointment will be waiting,
Satan does his best
Yet all obstacles must vanish
At our God's behest.'

The great river flows.....

And so long as the European Christian missionaries speak of fighting against the heathen and think of their work as a civilising mission like the Crusaders, they will not cut much ice in the land. It is unfair, of course, to judge the Crusaders too harshly. They knew no better. But when will the contemporary Western Christian realise that Christianity incorporates beliefs and rules of conduct which were held thousands of years before Christ was born and that he is not the only son of God, nor the religion he preached the only religion ?

'As one can ascend to the top of a house by means of ladders or a bamboo or a staircase or a rope, so diverse are the ways and means of approaching God, and every religion in the world shows one of these ways. Different creeds are but different paths to reach the Almighty ! So said Rama Krishna, the modern Hindu sage. And it is obvious that the wider view of the neo-Hindus seems more gracious to most people than the fanatical

zeal of the hypocritical white-collar representative of the master race, often the living negation of the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, the servants of tyrannical states based on the superiority of the white man above all. What a mockery the words of gentle Jesus sound in their beefy mouths: 'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth'.....

But the Utopias which glow in the night will not come about, neither Christian nor Hindu, nor the theocracy of Islam. The engineers further up have been diverting the water of this river in a thousand canals. And several railway bridges span this great water-way, defying all the spirits which, it was said, would smite the evil scions of the Iron age! ..... And we are in such a perilous position that if we merely stand aside and look on from the back-waters at our glorious past even as we see ourselves dragged in dull consent along the new roads, we are doomed to suffer the fate reserved for the tired and the unwilling, the sulking and the eternally frightened despairers of history.

I am calm when I say this, though I do not deny that I feel a certain heat in my body, the combustion of a silent anger at the frustration that is inevitable to slaves.

But I have roamed round the highways of the world, thought deeply, and listened to the voices of others. And in making up my mind I find that I am aware of all the complexities of the crisis of our modern world, that I have a good view of the great river as well as of the swamps and back-waters. So let not my friends accuse me of rashness and dogmatism!

India was far ahead of Europe in many ways because it had a longer history, but equally it has been for a long time in putrescent decay. The powerful Imperial dynasties of Asia, with their immense frontiers and poor communications, with their vast populations perennially in need of irrigation works, and their treasures half empty through the splendrous living of their Kings, were fissiparous, while the comparatively smaller European states, though much more ephemeral, developed more closely-knit economies and more dynamic cultures.

Feudalism in India, therefore, created its own nemesis through the unlimited lusts for power of the great princes and noblemen and the continual frustrations of the peasantry. And as the tiny top layer squeezed the villages dry of ever larger stocks of grain either in the form of rent or plunder, there began that extraordinary separation in the culture of the Indian peoples, the division of the fine, exalted court art and literature, and the rich human, intense, primitive folk art of the village, essentially

an art of revolt, though not untinged by pessimism in view of the harsh experiences of the peasantry through famine, drought, disease, and war.

The two strains of the court art and popular art remain distinct, except when the top layer, in danger of losing its soul, seeks to re-establish contact with the perennial source of all culture in the songs, dances and other rhythmical expressions of the people. For folk art is always sincere and spontaneous, in so far as it is the collective art of a whole people, the quintessence of the philosophy of a race, the expression of its most intimate joys and sorrows, employing the imagery, the archaisms, the virile dialect words, the tonality and the rhythms born of the living contact of men and women with spinning wheels and swords, with ploughs and handlooms, with gods and evil spirits.

Over both these patterns of culture the orthodox idea of the One God reigns supreme, the all-enveloping, authoritarian principle in the name of which the priestly oligarchy is able to dominate the landscape. The abstract conception of the Supreme Being is, of course, watered down into concrete shapes, and concessions are made to those who can only see through images of wood and stone, and a very intricate and subtle ritual of conch-shells and gaudy clothes and brass bells is evolved. And, through an insistence on *moksha*, release, through working one's passage home through the various incarnations, the roots of a fundamental pessimism are planted among the oppressed. So much so that, on the face of it, here in India the very idea of change in the Western sense, that is to say enrichment through development, seems never to have occurred at all. For as soon as the hold of the priestcraft tends to slacken through the wearisomeness of their respective codes, they seem to strengthen their hold by returning to the starting point by an integral revivalism. But the superficial view, which judges India's heritage by merely looking at the dominating orthodox culture, ignores the restless under-currents, the fluid streams of impulses and ideas which flowed away from the mainstream, the great river. The very enrichment of the Hindu pantheon with the myriad symbols of the heterodox cults, the snake gods, the tree gods, the river deities, the tree spirits and the various forms of the mother cult, and the very concentration on philosophies, show that among the byways men were evolving new faiths to express new needs and new energies. Certainly, most of the great medieval movements, Vaishnavaism, Saivaism, Saktism, Sikhism, and the various mystic religions were the expressions of popular revolts,

new conceptions of new communities intent on improving and recasting the caste society even though under the banner of a new way to salvation.

But what revolutions have there been ? And what violent upheavals of down-driven peoples against the Brahmin overlords? And how did the Elders succeed in deceiving themselves and others, so that they handed down to succeeding generations an apparent stability of belief ? Did the white beards in their crafty wisdom always accept the worship of gods whom they had, at first, barely tolerated ? All these questions remain unanswered, except in the sudden ejaculatory rhythms of the folk-songs and fighting ballads. And the survival of many gods points to the presence of other egos than merely the Brahmin Ego. And the multifarious art movements below the surface show the continuous efflorescence of new vital sensibilities proclaiming a new way of life. And the legendary denigration of the Indian tradition as closed, static and moribund becomes a falsity. For how, without the processes of revolt and change and continuous struggle, has Indian civilisation survived at all when, in the words of the poet Iqbal, 'Greece and Rome and Babylon lie dead'?

The river flows sullenly through the night, filling the universe with a terrible sense of its dark potencies, spreading into jungles and hills and inhabited plains a vast sense of doom..... And it seems to triumph over everything else.

But, as the black night becomes less black, the triumph of the river does not seem very impressive. For I can begin to see the byways now and hear the swish of the tributary streams. And in my imagination the myths born in the forests, the impulses of men seeking to live in spite of absolutism, the remnants of life struggling against convention, the people with their affiliations with fear and allegiances to sorrow, their determination to fight in spite of continual defeats and always singing—they begin to loom large before my eyes, with their feet dug in the earth, like monoliths struggling to beat back onslaught from the top.

And it is this struggle of the vast expanses against the great river that becomes of consequence to me today, the conflict of the intricate, chaotic, restless life in the tributaries against the mainstream, an eternal struggle, if you like, but one which recurs in our time in an entirely new shape.

The next conquerors are not emperors, nor kings, nor even the foolish old wise men. They are the bulls and bears on the Stock Exchange,they are bankers,big-businessmen,they are a number of robbers turned princes, they are landlords, industrialists,

rulers, statesmen, of varying colours and shades of opinion. And they have spanned the river with a number of bridges in order to ensure complete mastery of the mainstream at its most critical bends. And what is more, they own the motive power necessary to secure their suzerainty over it, to collect the loot, to assimilate the produce of the forests, plains and hills, as well as the man-power of the villages around it.

And there has been no triumphant conquest like this in the whole long four thousand years' life of this country, no such mastery of all the multifarious strains of thought and feeling and belief by a completely new Omniscient, Omnipresent God, Money or the cash-nexus. This Absolute spirit which has undermined the whole basis of human existence today, which has corroded the whole basis of group-life, which survived floods, droughts, famines and local wars, because no one owned anything, now threatens to divest the citizen of all honour and dignity by isolating each individual, by buying off some to exalt the others, and by squeezing out the very corpuscles of red blood by selling death to the vast masses by advertising it as life, with the help of the most ingenious devices of propaganda and publicity. The high priests of this new religion, the Directors of Monopolies and Cartels, the controllers and contractors, the black marketeers, have inventories far more intricate than the Brahmins ever kept, accounts books in which each soul is made to show a long series of items on the debit side and preferably nothing on the credit side. The tyranny and the fear they inspire to the multitude has within a few generations destroyed the self-sufficiency of the village communities and reduced men to the status of dead souls.

And in the face of this triumph the debacle of man, puny man, always concerned with the here and now, is almost final, unless he takes charge, captures this six thousand year old civilisation and gives it a new shape and a new meaning.

If the terrors of the landscape continue to dominate men's minds in this land, if the Bania, the Raja and the Stock Exchange continue to rule the roost, then it is likely that the aeons will continue to mirror celestial laws in a cosmos full of empty houses but no men. There has never been a time when the cynics have had more justifications to pronounce the imminent doom of our civilisation. For the towers have been falling before our disillusioned eyes, the lights have been going out, and we are threatened with more blackouts through bigger and more scientific

holocausts. But may it all not have been just a curtain-raiser to the drama of a new renaissance ?.....

Certainly, the introduction of a new technique alters everything. And even the undertakers of civilisations have not been able to prevent the rise of great new population from the nomads and serfs of bygone days, from among the small groups of the earth scratchers who eked a bare living out of the soil to the tune of a song. And, though the triumphant Egos have spat poison and death often enough, it is strange how they have ended in the dust, and how always out of their death a new life has started.

I learnt this truth in the catacombs of Europe, where the 'Fate' of the early Greeks, Zenophanes and Anexagoras, not unlike the dread deities of the Aryan-Dravidian civilisation, gave place, through the abundant harvests of villages and the city states, to the Sophist belief in Man as the Measure of the Universe ; when, in spite of the emphasis placed now on the impersonal Absolute Cosmic view and then on the human, the godliness of reason and the beauty of the vital flame was asserted. But in the prison of the new 'Fate' in the darkness of these wars through which we are groping towards the as-yet-unknown vacuums of the future, hardly able to keep our heads above the blood, the mud and the water, it is difficult for men to grasp the revolutions by which men achieved more in six thousand years than in the previous six hundred thousand. And even they who have inherited the light of the Renaissance and the Reformation in their eyes are weary and blinded!.....

Perhaps the dialectic of change is very subtle. Things seem to vary ever so little on the surface, and the inner change is almost incomprehensible. Specially in our day, the complex gamut of reality has shown such dramatic changes in the outer world that we ask if our inner selves have changed at all. It was easy for Heraclius to see the water pass under the bridges and to proclaim that nothing was ever the same. Also, he could feel the glow of the fire as barbarism and savagery had vanished almost before his eyes, and a new civilisation had begun to burgeon. But with us there is the polarity of idea and idea, the contradictions which we have inherited from the different 'Fates' of mankind,—from bygone empires, dead churches, freebooters, traders, missionaries, old revolutionaries, superstitious tribes, powerful nations, intriguing politicians, armament kings, federations of industries, chairmen of committees, Kaisers, Maharajas, Lenin, Stalin, Gandhi, Roosevelt, Winston

Churchill and not to forget Hitler and Mussolini. And though we can see the facts, which transform the life of man more dramatically, the causality of ideas is unrevealed, except to Shaw's Methuselah.

In fact, however, the range of processes is only too obvious. The whole of history is like Tennyson's 'flower in the crannied wall, if I could know thee, I could know all'..... And so we have to speak in riddles which foam upwards. But, all the same, we know that large volumes of water have flowed down the Ganges, and that there is change, and that the inner change is more integral. And we can dismiss those who still say that human nature is unchangeable as idiots or morons whose business in life is to remain self-involved, to prevent words or to bluff the voters.

The essence of man's struggle today, therefore, lies in his self-consciousness, in his awareness of his dignity, and in his will to struggle.

The river flows.....

But I have still indelibly printed in my mind the first words of that song, uttered in the years of my childhood by that Punjabi firebrand, Ajit Singh:

'Steady, steady, O keep hold of the turban on your head,
O peasant!'

I have always considered those words the simple testament of the whole of our people's struggle. The turban, the three yards of homespun, which is the symbol of dignity, has been coming undone on the peasant's head for a long time. And it is about time he restored its folds so that it is set like a crown on his brow!..... It is time that the half-dead ryot, kicked about by the Rajah and spat upon by the Bania, began to hit back. For if the truth be told, he has really been half-dead these many years, in spite of his brave gestures. So feeble had he become through the corruption of power imposed on him that when he was stricken with famine he just lay down and let the vultures come and gnaw on his bones. True, the beasts of prey abound in our land. But I think, we have too often let the Lords' Lord rule over us without a protest, hoping for the revenge which nature has always taken on the great in ultimately making them fall. We must realise also that we have too often listened to evil counsels. And, since our rulers broke the basis of our common life, we have not found the cohesion necessary for the struggle.

For we cannot fight separately—that way lies disintegration and death: to give the big heave, to push the weight off our shoulder so that we can clear the ground, demands unity. We cannot remain sunk in the apathy of animals.

For, whatever our ancestors have proved or not proved, they showed that though they shared with animals the life of nature, man grew to be the great diviner, the magician, the poet, the husbandman who could control the wind and the rain, the fire and the water, with tools and machines, while the animals, who live on the bounty of nature, could not. And beyond the plough and the wooden wheel with which he secured food and water, man saw that he could control the heredity and environment of which he was a subject. Else, why all those collations of moods and sentiments, of ideas and emotions which make for change ? Why all those mirrors of gestures and the elaborate hymns and spells and poems of the sheerest ecstasy glorifying the struggle ?

The river flows sullenly through the night..... But out of the darkness of the night the light must be born.....

And though I feel humble in the face of the great effort that is needed to seize the unborn moment, I have a deep feeling that it will not be Shankara or Patanjali whom we must invoke today, for they are part of us, but address ourselves to the flux itself, here and now, if the fight is in us still and the flame burning. For, not only must we hold our consciences, our views of virtue and vice, but the great truth must dawn on us of which the Engineers, who have opened the canal further up the river, seem to have some inkling, that the elements, fire, water, steam and air, can be harnessed to produce wheat and rice, that tractors give life, that our smallest rivers are the reservoirs of some of the greatest power on earth, as our oceans of story are the source of our deepest and most human wisdom if we can control our hearts and minds.

Is this too great a break from the thinking habits of our past ? Am I being impatient ? Is there an egoism in me which is but the counterpart of the Egos I have set my heart to destroy ? Do I deny too much and accept a nebulous future ?

I am not baulked by all these questions, because I do not propound a programme for a million years. Nor have I many illusions in this universe of the dead and alive. The dreams of my troubled nights only suggest the struggles of tomorrow. Sprung from the soil, a little way away from the mainstream, I am inured to taking long breaths. And I know that in the village there, under

the shadow of the palace and beyond the Dak Bungalow, there is the organized might of the Kisan Sabha, defeated in many battles, but tempered in the struggle, and with its banners held aloft, demanding bread and justice, the chief aspirations of the human soul.

The river flows.....

I see more and more of my brethren come out of that village with prayers and songs on their lips, more and more men coming to the surface of life, singing eternally, singing songs of their struggle.....

Lahore,
April 1946. MULK RAJ ANAND

THE FACE OF A VILLAGE

I

In this broad, open, wind-swept countryside in the Punjab, fallow fields, interspersed with patches of sand, meet the sun-burnt horizon. Furrows develop into waves of sand, and embrace the distant Panj Kalyan sand-hills. The western wind is the naughty mother of many a sandstorm. A storm may be all bloody, or it grows darker and darker, fast-approaching. Every year brings the Panj Kalyan sand in a good quantity, some of which returns to the original home riding on the wings of another wind. *Nheri kitthon utthi?—Kalyanan de tibbian ton, i.e.*, 'whence did rise the sand-storm ?'—' From the sand-hills of Kalyan,' says a Punjabi proverb, now used to satirise the mischief-monger.

The entire region must have been a big forest at one time. The *kikar*, the *jand* and the *shisham* would spring up once again everywhere if the axe and the plough retire. They still grow here and there on the boundaries and by the paths. Even a few remnants of the ancient forest survive where the local *Sardars*, the Sikh landlords, go for hunting excursions.

Trees are cut every year. The animals and birds are hunted every season. Death comes to the people, perhaps with lesser intervals, and they are taken away by uncured diseases, snake-bites, or cold-blooded murders. Trees spring up again and again. The deer and the hare, the dove and the pigeon multiply. And women give birth to children to maintain the human population.

The earth forms a natural background against which trees and animals, birds and men appear in common struggle—an ancient scroll upon which figures are written and rewritten.

" How are you, my children ? Your joys are my joys : your sorrows my sorrows : and your songs drink my own milk," the earth seems to say. And generations of man have cherished their song-heritage through centuries.

The songs and dances and legends are all fertile like the earth. Surely, dance festivals bring a new blood to the people's veins. They dance as though to declare their freedom. The heart of the earth pulses to the beat of a folk-song, as it does in every peasant dance. The minstrel and the story-teller command every man and woman.

Time moves slowly like the ancient traditions. Songs and dances and legends gather new weight as the beehives grow richer in honey. The people instinctively take to appreciation of life, though the struggle for bread is difficult and seems to dry up the currents of joy. Cries against God and man explain their economic condition. Undoubtedly, the new age is touching the fringe of this countryside.

Surely Bhadaur, my village birthplace, reflects the memory of old Bhadra Pur. *Bhadra* has more than one meaning : 'the cultured or well-educated,' 'beneficent', 'stately', 'gentle', 'the god Siva', 'a mythological elephant', 'the Mount Sumeru,' 'gold' and lastly 'the shaving of hair and moustaches.' Two miles towards the west of the present site of the village, the King Bhadra Sen founded Bhadra Pur, the centre of a small Rajput state. It must be centuries ago, long before Prithvi Raj had come to the throne of Delhi. Grandfathers stilll talk of the old treasures of Bhadra Sen that lie buried under the fields, though none would set out to dig the earth for the ancient gold *mohurs*.

I dream of the King Bhadra Sen and the princess Suchitra who danced the best peacock-dance and sang the most poignant songs to Indra, the rain god, who in those days sent more rain. Suchitra was turned into a she-snake by the curse of a hermit whom she annoyed by hiding his loin-cloth while he was taking his bath in the river. The river disappeared by his curse. When Suchitra begged, he said, 'My curse I cannot take back. A great man will pass this way one day. He will give your deliverance.' The hermit's curse, the legend maintains, soon brought the downfall of the King Bhadra Sen.

Bhadra Pur shifted to a new site under the new name of Mallu Gill, a mile and a half from the present village. Later on, many a Mallu Gill peasant was killed in a blood-feud under the burning, summer sun. The frightening ghostly cries of 'Killed, killed, killed', 'Going, going, going', and 'Water, water, water', are still heard sometimes, as some peasant would tell you reminding the old tragedy.

Mallu Gill shifted to the present site, returning again to the old name that soon cooled down to a new variant —Bhadaur, which still echoes the ancient Bhadra Pur. It was probably a century before the dawn of the Moghul Empire in India. Much of the village that developed later was covered by a forest.

An old martyr of the Bamiana Shrine, situated about a couple of miles away where our fields meet the fields of Saido village, is still remembered in old legend. He was Bama, one

of the Mallu Gill heroes. Even after his head was cut off, he went on fighting. And Bamiana, known after him, is the place where he fell down fighting. After every marriage, the peasants of Saido village send the boy and his bride to seek the blessings of the old martyr, and every year, before the wheat is reaped, a fair is held at the holy place.

The forefather of the local *Sardars* was Rama, the son of Baba Phool. He was invited by the people themselves and they had all agreed to give him a share of the harvest every time. The outlaws used to rob the people. Rama promised to save them.

The village *Gurdwara* is still alive with old memories. In the olden days, it was only a mud-house of Baba Charan Das standing amidst the trees. Guru Govind Singh came to see the Baba one day and stayed in a tent near the pond, now known as *Sat Guryani* after the Guru's visit. A she-snake was seen rushing towards the Guru, who told his soldiers not to harm her. She came and put her head on the guru's feet and died. On the Guru's command, the dead body of the she-snake was buried at Baba Charan Das's place. She was Suchitra, daughter of King Bhadra Sen. The promised great man had come and he gave her deliverance. *Sappan di Samadh*, or the she-snake's tomb, inside the *Gurdwara*, is still regarded with religious respect.

II

My forefahers had many camels, and using this means of transport they continued a regular trade. Big caravans of camels joined Kabul with this countryside, and the old trade saw its downfall as the English Raj stretched its arms this way. My grandfather was a child then. He studied Persian and was appointed as a *Patwari*.[1]

The camel-driver's theme is still alive in the *Giddha*. The village girl, while remembering the fast-approaching time, when she will get married, disapproves the camel boy.

1 In a camel-driver's family, marry me not, mother,
Waking up at dawn he will go with the caravan,
O he will miss my *Muklava* day.[2]

1 A minor revenue official.
2 When the bride goes for the second time to her father-in-law's.

The blood of the camel-drivers flows in my veins and it has strengthened my travel-lust somehow. The far-away horizon lights my imagination, the old camel-bells ring in my ears. I am not a caravan man now, yet the memories of the old caravan age keep flooding through my soul. And I am always on the move like a real gypsy.

The old banyan stands near the bridge of the village canal that brings the water of the Satluj. I can read years written on its aging flesh. But the oldest banyan of my village stands far away from the canal, besides the pond that receives half the water of the village during the rains. Deep inside, I love every tree in this wind-swept countryside. When my lovely *Neem* fell down, I felt the same sorrow that I felt over the death of an aunt. The lemons, the mangoes, the pomegranates, the peaches, the *jamuns* in the canal garden still call me, outstretching their arms, as they did in my childhood days. And the *Pipal* near my house looks at me smilingly, as it stands all bathed in gold at morning.

Noora, the shepherd, my old playmate, still sings his favourite song of the pipal leaf.

2 O dry *pipal* leaf, why are you rustling ?
Fall now, old leaf,
Lo, the season of new leaves has come.

Like Homer, Noora, as he takes to his age-old song, seems to believe that the race of mankind is like the leaves of a *pipal*. One day he too will have to leave his tree like a dry leaf.

The whole countryside is still called *Jangal* in the neighbourhood. Noora is *Jangali*, or jungle-dweller, and like his great-grandfather, whose songs and legends have come to him across the generations, he is more or less a pantheist in his thoughts. The old spirit of the jungle stirs in the songs and legends of the sons of the soil ; they have always sung with a mystic ecstasy.

Even the trees sing, as Noora would tell you. His songs illustrate his view.

3 Listening to the songs of the trees,
My heart gets light.

4 The *pipal* sings, the banyan sings,
The green mulberry sings:
Stop, traveller, listen,
Your soul will be set right.

Every tree is a son of the earth. Every tree has a spirit. A patient listener, every tree knows the secrets of man. Says the French proverb, 'The forest that ever listens, has the secret of all mystery.' Beware, for the soul of some dead person may be living in an old *pipal* or a banyan tree. I have heard the old people saying, though I have not seen it myself, that the soul of a dead person living in a tree can, at times, turn into a fairy; on a moonlit night it enchants a lonely passer-by. Surely, the tree itself delights in its magic dance. Inspired by the flying carpet of legends, as Noora went on speaking, I at once remembered having read somewhere of a Swedish ballad that told of a nymph's play; as she played the leaves of the trees danced in harmony with her steps.

Noora remembers the legend of a maiden, whom her brothers' wives murdered in cold blood. She was transformed into a tree that told her sad tale to the passers-by. Life continues, somehow, even after death, so Noora has found in his legends. Yes, life knows no death. Life persists. The tree, that sprang from the blood of the maiden, mystically symbolizes the continuity of life.

Sikandar, as Alexander the Great is called in India, has touched the fringe of the legends. On the bank of the Beas, there was a *pipal* tree, two hundred years old. Under the influence of the full moon, it was able to predict, speaking in human voice. This tree knew many languages as the legend maintains. Sikandar came to it and said, "Tell me, O *Pipal*, my destiny." "Never again will you see your dearest home," spoke the tree. Sikandar felt nervous and said, "Let us go back, my soldiers. The voice of the *Pipal* should not be true. We must reach home. No more world-conquest." But Sikandar died on the way. The *Pipal* had told the truth.

The village poet imagines Sikandar's mother lamenting over her son's death. The grave says, "Which Sikandar do you mean, woman? I have known many Sikandars." Sikandar's death symbolizes to the people that blind power has a fall. And Sikandar is born again and again. Man must succeed one day, the people declare, in the world brotherhood rather than world-

conquest that is so hateful. The world brotherhood will mean a real peace for the whole humanity. Everybody will enjoy real freedom, everybody will get good bread, the fruit of honest and dignified labour.

But I cannot always relish Noora's mystic voice of the past. With the back of his right hand he rubs his chin, as he listens to me. I tell him about the gonds, who have their own forest-lore in the Central Provinces, and I explain to him the voice of a gond song.

Among the trees I am playing on my flute.
But who careth for this poor forest-dweller ?
No mother have I, nor brother, nor friend in all the world,
All day I am making music on my flute.

Among the trees I am playing on my flute.
A mother have I, and brother, and friends to eat with me,
But none of them can help this poor forest-dweller,
So all day long I play upon my flute.

In the shade of a creeper sits a man
The scorpion bites him and he weeps.
Who careth for the dwellers in the forest ?
Among the trees I am playing on my flute.[1]

Noora likes the scorpion theme. Of the human scorpion, he understands little. The ancient forest dreams haunt him day and night. Like a parrot he would wish to visit the entire forest and would talk to the aged tree on his way.

Tree, O tree ! the parrot says—
Your land is bad,
Your stem is old.

My land is not bad,
My stem is not old,
The Nabob's she-camels have eaten me,
The carpenters cut away the beams.

1 Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hivale, *Songs of the Forest*, p. 51.

May the mourners in batches visit the carpenters
May the Nabob's she-camels die at once,
May the Nabob himself meet his death.

I tell him that the old tree speaks the language of an over-exploited peasant, and he gazes like a startled animal. Perhaps realism looks unreal to him. He returns to mysticism again and again.

6 Stay ye who will stay here,
I stand ready for the journey.

Separation's cry came to me,
In the stirrup I put my foot,
And lo ! I have mounted.

You are proud, O tree,
On your head comes
The wood-handled axe !
It cut you all to pieces.

Some pieces are picked up and burnt,
Some become rafters in a palace,
Some meet my Lord Ranjha,
Some stand and yearn and sigh.

Stay ye, who will stay here,
I stand ready for the journey.

Sung in western Panjabi, a wandering minstrel gave this song to Noora, and he is sure of the mystic significance of the voice of Heer, who gave her virgin heart to Ranjha. The soul is likened to Heer ; God is recognized as the eternal Ranjha.

How I wish that realism should come to Noora. The reflections of the twentieth century, the eddies of the modern agitated life, try to capture his mind, but he will not change so easily. Obviously, he knows that the money-lender, who hoards wealth and has pride of superiority over him, has much changed, as have the *Sardars* and persons of the upper class; but he lives in the same old age. His head is filled with God and fate. The leaf

of the *pipal* will not move without God's will, he says, though obviously the leaf needs air to move it. He looks foolish and unwise. If a man starves, that's God's will. Another man earns more, God helps him. I really cannot agree with him. Why shouldn't he get the wheat bread enough to face the torment of hunger ? Why shouldn't his sheep and goats look more healthy? How long will he await God's help ? He is a slave of fate by all standards. When will he get a new shirt that will replace the old one with crude patches everywhere ?

He dreams of the princess Suchitra. I, too. There is harmony between us. I tell him that Suchitra sings to me in my dreams, " The flute's singing voice am I, or take me for the rhythm of the peacock-dance. Mother says, you are the colour of saffron. I say, no, no, mother, I am the shine of the polished gold and my heart is yet a folded flower. The deer thinks I am the doe. I say, no, no, O prince of the forest, I am my mother's daughter still. The peacock says, come, we will dance. I say, no, no, O dancer of the forest, father's word do I need still. And then comes the camel-driver and he says, come, ride behind me, and we will go."

" And who is that camel-driver ?" Noora inquires.

" I am that camel-driver surely," I reply.

" She must ride behind you then with Allah's grace," he says smilingly, " but tell me where will you take her ?"

" I will take her to Russia," I say with gusto, " and Russia is beyond the Kabul frontier—a new heaven on earth."

And I tell him about the Russian shepherds. Even the shepherds should be able to read and write, he wonders. The peasant getting his own newspaper, this news looks like a white lie to him. Old gods have been driven from Russia, I explain to him, and the new gods are the leaders of the people.

" Do they sing only new songs now ?" he asks.

" Many new songs and many old songs too," I tell him, " thousands of old songs have been collected there."

The Song of the Nightingale from ancient Russia, that I give him in his own language, has a familiar flavour for him.

Far away the nightingale now flieth,
Fare ye well, O friends so dear,
I needs must leave you,
For the time to wing my flight has come now.

Far away the nightingale now flieth,
Far away to distant lands of sunshine,
Thanks I give for all your love,
Thanks for all your tender kindness.

When the little nightingale you harbour'd,
Gave me freedom for my song after nightfall,
Never wrought any evil to my children,
Gladly would I tarry here longer.

But your winter night bitterly chills me,
How I fear your snows white and cruel!
How I fear your winds coldly blowing.

When at last the golden spring returneth,
I shall once more greet you with my singing,
With a new song I shall greet you.[1]

"Only a free nightingale can sing a new song," I tell him, "life without freedom is no life, and by freedom I mean good and sufficient bread."

He can understand the voice of the nightingale. He smiles. Quiet flows the water of the Satluj in the village canal. Happily the sheep and goats graze on the canal-bank. Noora loves everyone of them and has given most poetic name to the pick of the lot.

III

My mother and the elder aunt came from a distant village, both daughters of peasants. The younger aunt too came from a peasant home, and I was born a short time after her marriage; she treated me like a living doll and even felt a sisterly love for me, for she was my elder aunt's niece.

The elder aunt was a childless widow. Grandfather suggested that either she should remarry, or she could be sent to Kanya Maha-Vidyalya at Jullundur in the Punjab for education. She was back after five years of schooling, and as she put me in her lap to write *Om* on my tongue, mother told her, "Now he is your son, not mine."

1 Kurt Schindler, *Songs of the Russian People*, p. 68.

My mother knew many old songs. But ours was a puritanical house. Even the ancient marriage songs were frowned at. The charming *Giddha* dance was disallowed.

But old songs ran into my blood. Mother knew yards and yards of them, all real peasant songs. And didn't my forefathers sing old songs, as they had their long journey riding their camels?

Father, like my newly converted Arya Samajist grandfather, belonged by inclination to the petty bourgeoisie. I was not allowed to mix with the peasant boys. Even at school, my teachers were prejudiced against peasant lore and culture.

Stealthily, my mother sang at her spinning-wheel. Sometimes when father was out, a spinning-bee was held at our house and naturally the old spinning melodies echoed in the air. Every time I would pick up some snatches.

I would steal an occasion to find the *Giddha* dancers somewhere. Be it of boys or girls, in the ring I would stand marking the various dance forms given by the two or three solo dancers in the centre. The song ended with the chorus, or a couplet served as the song first and then as chorus. The persons in the ring clapped their hands, aptly feeding the rhythm and the song. Many songs suggested various dance forms ; the dancers were exuberant every time. When rains came, the *Giddha* got intoxicated. It never left the village. It went on somehow every day. The moonlit nights and the starlit skies ever knew it. Every marriage meant a new life for the *Giddha*, for the virgins had their typical song to invite it.

7 Enter this village, O *Giddha* dance,
Pass not by the outer path.

While I was a student of a neighbouring High School, I started a regular collection of Panjabi folk-songs. Many were the *Giddah* songs that poured in. Guru Nanak had compared real spiritual joy with the *Giddha* in one of his poems, and I thought he must have attended the dance festivals. Surely, the *Giddha* songs were songs of free, naked love at times, songs of man and woman, inspired by physical exuberance. Later on, while I was a college student at Lahore, I met some Kashmiri and Pathan students, who sang their own songs, and while we exchanged notes, I found a great similarity of expression.

I remember how I decided to go to Kashmir during the next summer vacations in search of Kashmiri songs. Father did not permit me. I had to run away. Without money I travelled like a mendicant. I saw Amarnath amidst the snowy Himalayan peaks, and visited the villages all over the Valley. Kashmiri music sounded like a dirge. Kashmir's history had not yet washed the stains of blood from its face. Kings came and went away. Every woman gave birth to children only to add to the number of slaves ; beauty grew on human trees, yet like all fruits, it was sold for bread ; eyes, dark without *kajal* ; cheeks, heated like copper ; lips, opening, yet not opening like shy petals; arms, aching to soar across the skies but tired and burdened, all. This explained the sorrowful notes of Kashmiri songs, and I soon realized that similar notes were heard even at my village birthplace.

On my way back from Kashmir I had high fever. This saved me from father's anger. Mother, somehow, remembered the words of a village astrologer, who had once told her, " Your son has a *Chakkar* in his feet and this *Chakkar* will take him away from this village." She said, " Now you will not leave home." My aunts said, "We shall give you any number of songs."

I was a changed man. I decided to say goodbye to my college for ever. Father argued that time is precious and it should not be wasted in wandering. But I had taken my decision, and soon I left home to live with my cousin at Baroda for some days.

Gujarati girls reminded me of pictures in Ajanta caves. They danced their *Garba* and sang the homely, little songs that made a living poetry. Baroda was my nest for some days ; it could not keep me for ever.

Soon I was on the move. A third-class railway passenger, travelling without ticket. The ticket-checkers would remove me from the train, and I would catch the next train. It was not so easy, but I had no other way. From one language zone to another zone, I travelled tirelessly. New horizons ever called me. And everywhere I got living song-lore of the people.

At Santiniketan I met the poet Rabindranath Tagore, who highly admired my collections of folk-songs. He emphatically told me that even he himself had spent days together in the study of Bengali children's songs while he was young. I remember how I succeeded in getting a good chit from the poet

and sent it to my father, who could never believe that Rabindranath Tagore had admiration for my work. As he wrote me back, he had lost all hopes about my career.

Travel was my real inspiration and the poetry of the people gave me fresh images of colour and rhythm. Every day, every hour, my collections got richer and richer in variety and value. But I did not seek recognition. I would starve sometimes, passing my night by the roadside.

I visited forests of Central Provinces, and saw the whole of Rajputana. Sometime I felt homesick, but new people captivated my mind everywhere.

After full two years of wandering, I came back. Mother said smilingly, " You felt homesick after all." My god-mother said, " How could you be away so long ?" And the younger aunt said, " Were the songs sweeter there ?"

Soon I was married. Father thought he could chain me down. But I thought I could even run away with the golden chain.

My wife came from a neighbouring town. But she had danced the *Giddha* and knew many old songs. We settled at Amritsar for some days and then shifted to Lahore. I was a free lance. But I soon got disgusted and returned to my village with my wife.

Father was not ready to permit my wife to accompany me in my long travel, and even if he would have given his consent, it would have been an uphill task, for I had little practice to make money.

This time I tried a new method. I would meet educated people. I got a good response. My hosts were kind. Lectures before small gatherings fetched me some money.

It took me almost two years again before I could turn my face towards my village birthplace. After spending an year in Assam and Manipur, I reached Darjeeling, where I met the poet Tagore. He said admiringly, " Folk-songs are dear to me. Surely, you are doing a great work."

Reaching home once again, I thought I could spend some months there, but the *Chakkar* of my feet soon found me on the move. This time my wife accompanied me and we reached Orissa.

At Puri for the first time in her life my wife saw the sea, ' the big, big river', as she called it. Her collaboration was my privilege and now women's songs were within an easy reach. We came down to Cuttack, and later on went to the States.

Orissa had poor harvests, but it was rich in songs and dances.

Berhampur Ganjam had more possibilities. The frontiers of Orissa and Andhra embraced here. The adjoining Agency areas, the homes of the Kondhs and Savaras—India's aboriginal tribes, were known for malaria, but thanks to quinine, we could easily extend our work in every direction.

We had to leave for Burma now, but my wife could not take a sea-journey. I left her at Berhampur Ganjam and reached Rangoon. Travel in Burma was not without joy. The Irrawady was alive in song and legend. The Burmese language was difficult, but it offered a rich mine of folk-poetry for me.

On August 25,1932, at Mandalay, I received a telegram from Berhampur and I left immediately bidding adieu to my Gujarati host and many Burmese friends. My wife was in the hospital. She had in her lap now a five-day old daughter. Her name should be Kavita Vasumati,[1] I suggested. She smiled and said, " Kavita arrived the day we sent you the telegram."

I took to writing very seriously now. Photography had been my hobby for some time ; now it helped me in my writing. Lectures and articles gave me just enough. Many journals, especially the *Modern Review* in India, and *Asia* in America, took a special interest in my work.

While I was in the North-West Frontier in 1935, I had correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi, who later on expressed his appreciation of my work in a foreword to K.M. Munshi's *Gujarat and its Literature*.

We have been travelling together with a tremendous programme all these years ; from one language to another. My wife has been my real strength, though she feels awfully sick of my travel-lust at times and refuses point-blank to move any more. But travel has been her education. And Kavita Vasumati, who has been brought up in the open air, rightly inherits the gypsy spirit ; whenever we move onward, she is happy.

Again and again I return to my village birthplace. Mother says, "Live here more and more." My god-mother says, "Don't you go at all." And my younger aunt says, " Live with us and I'll make songs for you day and night, if that may be your condition to stay here."

[1] *Kavita* means poetry and *Vasumati* is the earth. Rabindranath Tagore liked this name immensely. I well remember the Poet saying smilingly, "I am only a poet, but you are father of poetry."

Last time I photographed my mother with my aunts from many angles. Mother put on the *phulkari* veil that she got in her dowry. My younger aunt had her own bridal *phulkari*. But my god-mother preferred her usual white rather than acceding to my suggestion. They were ready with a hearty laugh as I pressed the shutter of my Rollieflex Automat. One of these pictures is a big success. Mother looks like a Russian peasant woman ; her rich, luscious laugh lighting the wrinkles cut by the plough of time.

IV

Every night at sleeping time, mother still addresses the earthen lamp, while blowing its tiny flame with the fanning of her hand.

8 Go to your house, O earthen lamp,
At her threshold stands your mother waiting for you.
Come home as the evening comes,
Go home while the new day dawns.

From time immemorial woman had imagined that the earthen lamp goes back to meet its mother. I too come back, though after longer intervals, to meet my mother.

The folklore here, as at Fontamara, Ignazio Silone's village in Italy, 'resembles the ancient art of weaving, the ancient art of putting one thread after another, one colour after another, neatly, tidily, perseveringly, plainly for all to see.'

Mother sits at her spinning-wheel, and my mind goes to the interesting bit of folklore of this countryside that inspires every woman to spin more and finer during her lambing time, so that her child gets thick and fine hair. In the mirror, or in a picture, whenever I look at my hair and beard, I always think of my mother devotedly spinning the ancient thread, long and fine.

Father is a changed man now. He does not mind if mother sings folk-songs to me. He is rather amused, as I join with her in the old, old melodies.

" Now you'll stay, won't you ?" mother asks.

" Yes, mother, " I say smilingly.

Kavita Vasumati presses for Kashmir. She was only two

years, when she was with us in Kashmir in 1934. She saw Ceylon three years back. No Kashmir this year.

The singing voice of my mother enchants me, and, this time especially, I find her old stuff almost captivating.

9 The dark *shisham*, mother, the dark *shisham*,
Of the dark *shisham* I got the spinning-wheel made.
On it my merchant father spent money,
Who got it ready, mother, O who got it ?

I took it from the shop and placed in the yard,
People thought the yard is filled with light.
I took it and placed inside,
People thought the lamp was burning.

I took it and placed on the roof,
People thought the crescent moon appeared ;
I took it and placed in the street,
Wazir Khan was dazzled as he passed by.

Don't fear, Wazir Khan, don't fear, brother,
This spinning-wheel has spun your turban.
The two supports of the wheel are of the *kau* wood,
Having bid adieu to sisters, brothers shed tears.

10 Mother, cook the *chulaee* leaves,
Cut them first in tiny pieces.
Mother, make it delicious with a *seer* of butter,
Whenever your daughter returns from the spinning-bee.

Daughter, bring your spinning-wheel,
Mother and daughter will spin together.
Mother, you are old and I am young,
We cannot pull on together.

Daughter, your kingly father will hear,
O where did you pick up this attitude?
Mother, all who spin have it,
I too picked it in their company.

Mother, go and bring my spinning-wheel,
Sisters of the spinning-wheel will not give my seat.
Mother, go and bring my seat,
Sisters of the spinning-wheel will not give my basket.

Mother, go and bring my basket,
Sisters of the spinning-wheel will not leave me.
Mother, cook the *chulaee* leaves,
Cut them first in tiny pieces.

11 From the east came the dark cloud,
From the west came the cruel rains.
Who will help my rolls of carded cotton ?
Who will help my spinning-wheel ?

My brother's wife will help my rolls of carded cotton,
My brother will help my spinning-wheel,
Her plaited tresses got wet,
His check wrapper got wet.

Where will her plaited tresses dry up ?
Where will his check wrapper dry up ?
Her plaited tresses will dry up in the palace,
His check wrapper will dry up in the garden.

My younger aunt can sing the *Song of the Bride* to the rhythm of her spinning-wheel.

12 The first time the family-messenger came to take me,
What the hell I care, with him I will not go ;
I cannot lift my veil,
I cannot trail my scarf,
I cannot tread my path,
O family-messenger, yes, family-messenger
The family messenger is a perfect fool,
He picks up a quarrel,
I cry for justice,
I will not go, I will not go, I will not go.

Second time, husband's younger brother came to take me,
What the hell I care, with him I will not go ;
I cannot lift my veil,
I cannot trail my scarf,
I cannot tread my path,
Husband's younger brother, O husband's younger brother !
He is my heart's darling,
A minor, yet a passionate fellow,
I will not go, I will not go, I will not go.

Third time, my husband's elder brother came to take me,
What the hell I care, with him I will not go,
I cannot lift my veil,
I cannot trail my scarf,
I cannot tread my path,
My husband's elder brother, O husband's elder brother !
Under the bed he goes,
Saviour of my veil,
I will not go, I will not go, I will not go.

Fourth time, my father-in-law came to take me,
What the hell I care, with him I will not go ;
I cannot lift my veil,
I cannot trail my scarf,
I cannot tread my path,
My father-in-law, O my father-in-law !
He is a peevish fellow,
An old man, yet all the more jealous,
I will not go, I will not go, I will not go.

Fifth time, my husband came to take me,
O dance with him, my mind, the peacock dance,
I can lift my veil,
I can trail my scarf,
I can tread my path,
My husband, O my husband !
My heart's master,
I go, I go, I go.

13 Aha, where Lachhi washes her face,
There grows a sandal,
Where Lachhi washes her face.

Aha, Lachhi asks the girls,
What coloured veil suits a fair complexion,
Lachhi asks the girls.

Aha, truly said the girls,
A veil that's black suits a fair complexion,
Truly said the girls.

As Freda Bedi once told me, "The veil is a woman's life history. It is her mischief as a young girl. The red veil of the bride contains all her tenderness, her shyness and her passion. The veil of the matron is at once one with her dignity and her self-respect. The white veil of the widow is her shroud and her barrier from the bitter world. Her nature, her character are written upon it more surely than upon the lines of her hand. Without it she would be no longer herself, but a bare tree shorn of the glory of leaves."

Through their songs my mother and aunts express their joy and sorrow, hope and despair, anger and fear. The old songs seem to pulsate with new blood; every word alive with new meaning.

V

Apparently, my village looks upon modern times with fear and suspicion. But it is difficult to live in seclusion avoiding all contact of the modern world. So I find my village must come forward to understand the changing world. With that understanding alone it can retain the wisdom that it has inherited generation after generation.

One of the fruits of modern civilization is the recorded music, and it has pierced even the boundaries of my village. But Noora, my shepherd friend, has not yet learned to appreciate the singing voice of the gramophone records, though like some of his companions, he does not call it the 'Devil's voice'. "Nothing like the voice of the singer as he sings before us," says Noora, "you feel like touching his feet, but it is not so when the *tavian wala Baja* sings." This is how he refers to the gramophone machine, *tava* being the newly-coined word for the record itself.

Somehow, Noora has begun appreciating the voice of the *tavian wala Baja* ; more so, when the language is Punjabi. "Now I cannot sing like this, " says Noora, as he listens to some capti-

vating song. I am afraid he may try to imitate this music one day. His own songs may be replaced by some of these cheap recorded songs. This may ultimately result in the destruction of the folk music.

Over and over again, he sings the song of the she-pigeon.

14 Fly away, O she-pigeon,
Men with guns are following you.

Fortune will smile at the poor bird if she safely escapes, as Noora pronounces emphatically. Perhaps, in the same way, the gramophone records are telling upon the folk-poetry. Noora cannot understand such a symbolic interpretation, but, I am sure, one day he will surely talk in this vein.

His songs really never go astray. " Half-spoken words are no good for songs," he would say, "you must say what you want to say, must hit at the right spot." With this attitude he sings about the Ferangi's Raj.

15 God is dead, gods have fled away,
It is the Ferangi's Raj.

He talks of the young men who have joined the army. As he thinks of the horror of war, the image of the soldier's wife comes to his mind.

16 Near the hearth, under the pretence of smoke,
Weeps the soldier's wife.

It is but natural that the horror of war disturbs us as we talk. The soldier ought to be back soon. No more war. Man really wants peace. No bloodshed. No more songs of separation for the soldier's wife.

As the trees shed their leaves and become green again, my country must attain freedom one day. Then it will be no

more the Ferangi's Raj, wherein God is dead and all other gods have fled away, as the Punjab folk-song has depicted.

I can see my country's face here. The village landscape consoles me and raises my aspirations. " Long live your songs, Noora," I say, as we move facing the wind.

But in view of the growing popularity of the gramophone records, I am rather perturbed about the fate of Noora's songs.

" It is true that we have learned to appreciate the ' primitive arts'," says Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "but only when we have 'collected' them." We 'preserve' folk-songs at the same time that our way of life destroys the singer. We are proud of our museums, where we display the damning evidence of a way of living that we have made impossible." Coomaraswamy further cites the query of a Ceylonese correspondent, "If God appeared on earth, and inquired about the Aztecs, Incas, Red Indians, Australian aborigines, and other slowly disappearing races, would the civilized nations take him to your great museum ?"

But, somehow, I do not feel so pessimistic about Noora's songs. He will not give up his songs so easily.

The village landscape smiles and reassures me. The coming generations of the people will always sing the simple songs; songs that once expressed the feelings and aspirations of their forefathers.

RAJPUT WAR POETRY

I

THE COUNTRY

AS Aldous Huxley wrote graphically in his *Jesting Pilate*, "The desert of Rajputana is a kind of Sahara, but smaller and without oases. Travelling across it, one looks out over plains of brown dust. Once in every ten or twenty yards, some grey-green plant, deep-rooted, and too thorny for even camels to eat, tenaciously and with a kind of desperate vegetable ferocity struggles for life. And at longer intervals, draining the moisture of a rood of land, there rise here and there, the little stunted trees of the desert. From close at hand the sparseness of their distantly scattered growth is manifest. But seen in depth of the long perspective of receding distance, they seem—like the, in fact, remotely scattered stars of the Milky Way—numerous and densely packed. Close at hand the desert is only rarely flecked by shade ; but the farther distances seem fledged with a dense dark growth of trees. The foreground is always desert, but on every horizon there is the semblance of shadowy forests. The train rolls on, and the forests remain for ever on the horizon ; around one is always and only the desert."

Looking back through the mist of centuries, we can discern that once the waters of the great Indian ocean flowed over much of the desert areas in Rajputana. Webb supports this view when he says, " Indeed, in many parts of Jaisalmer there still remains the illusion of a tide recently gone out but forgotten to return, leaving great stretches of thirsty, flat rock gasping in the sunlight. And, where once the ocean's waters ebbed and flowed, now the desert tide advances, slowly and remorselessly."[1]

The Sheikhawati district of Jaipur is notorious in Rajput folklore, ' Oh, curse this Sheikhawati land : my bread is half wheat meal and half sand.' Surely, the whole desert is cursed, ' Once the Aravalli hills crossed, hope of home is forever lost.' The Famine's reply to his mother is most significant, ' *Pag Poogal dhar kotare, bahoo bayarmer: phirto ghirto veekpur, thavo Jaisalmer,*'

1 A. W. T. Webb, *These Ten Years* : A Short Account of 1941 Census Operations in Rajputana and Ajmer-Merwara, p. 6.

i.e., ' My feet are in Pungal, my body in Kotara, my arms in Barmer. In forgetful moments I will visit Bikaner. But I am always in Jaisalmer.' No girl of the fertile parts of Rajputana would like to be married in the desert, where the wells are deep and the poisonous snakes are common.

Larger than United States of America, Norway or Italy, Rajputana is larger than the United Provinces or Bengal, and only a little less than Madras, Baluchistan or the Punjab. The Aravalli Hills run nothh-east and south-west and divide Rajputana into two unequal portions. No less than three-fifths is the *Marudesh*, or the desert, that includes Sirohi, Marwar, Bikaner, Jaisalmer and the Sheikhawati *nizamat* of Jaipur. And the green Rajputana embraces Mewar, Tonk, Kishangarh, Jaipur, Karauli, Alwar, Bharatpur, Dholpur, Ajmer-Marwara—the British district, Danta, Palanpur, Dungarpur, Banswara, Partabgarh, Bundi, Kota and Jhalawar.

Rajputana, or Rajasthan, as mentioned in earlier history, is a land of war-songs and stories of warrior blood. The fourteen million people of this part of India find no substitutes for the old heroic poetry. War-songs echo and re-echo. Stories of martyrs are told and retold. Every hill and every hill-pass, crowned by a fort, every town, beautifully walled, the countless domed memorials of warriors and kings, and the impressive *Sati* Stones all seem to say, what is past is not dead.

II

THE BARDS

The origin of the Bards, or the *Charans* as the Rajputs called them, is a complicated problem of history. It seems probable that the tenth century A.D. found them scattered in various parts of North India, and that round about Kanauj, their favourite centre, they had rich colonies.

The time of Hinglaj, the premier goddess of the bards, is approximately the ninth century A. D. They have many goddesses, and when they say, *Nou Lakh Lovadial*, *i.e.*, ' Nine lacs of goddesses, every one wearing a *Lovadi*, or a *woollen Sari* ', they really mean it. And all the goddesses are said to be half or full incarnations of Mother Hinglaj.

Rajputana became a *Tirtha Kshetra*, or place of pilgrimage, and many members of the *Charan* community living in far-off places came as pilgrims to the seat of Ubbat Devi, whose

temple stands on the hill of Tenda, fourteen miles from Jaisalmer, and many of the pilgrims settled down in Rajputana at different times.

Then came the fourteenth century, and in its heels came bloody warfare. Ranthambor Fort had already passed into the hands of Alauddin. Chittor Fort, too, fell into the hands of the enemy. Padmini, the lotus-eyed queen, burned herself alive, along with many other Rajput women. It was *Jauhar*, their last resort. They valued their honour and for it they sacrificed themselves; and thereby they inspired their men to wear yellow clothes and face the enemy heroically, rather desperately. The bard saw all this before his eyes. Mother Hinglaj spoke to him, "Why are you silent, my son? Why not sing of warrior blood?" Every night he saw Mother Hinglaj in his dreams and every night she repeated the same words.

The war poetry leaped to a high pitch. The *Doohas* were sung to the great *Maru Rag*. Songs of hard realities of life. Songs which the bard loved, which everybody loved.

Then came Rana Hammir Singh, who resumed possession of Chittor Fort. The Rajputs rejoiced. The bard stood and watched the scene with the eyes of an artist. Mother Hinglaj patted him on his back. He had sung successfully.

The war for honour and freedom went on for centuries. It was not always a victory for the Rajputs. Sometimes they were badly defeated. They suffered much. The Raj family of Mewar always yearned for a united front. But it was not possible. Some of the Rajput chiefs had given way. The Mewar Raj, however, did not lose ground for hundreds of years.

The Rajput *Charan* sang of generations of swordsmen, who gave everything for freedom. He sang with gusto and the warriors heard the call of honour in his *Doohas*.

The *Charans* as a race were not all bards. Many of them were cattle-breeders. They raised their huts in the forests, every little colony was known as a *nes*. The *Charan*, even as a herdsman, helped the cause of war. He raised cows and horses of fine breed. His one consolation was that he supplied milk and *ghee* to the heroes, and that he produced mettlesome horses and mares.

Sometimes the *Charan* took to the work of a *Banjara*, or travelling tradesman; and with his loaded bullock, he went from village to village. He kept daggers, swords and shields for sale and had many occasions to give free weapons to the poor, honorary soldiers.

Every now and then the cattle-breeder *Charan* produced a son who could make new songs. Poetry was in his blood. The whole neighbourhood rejoiced when a new poet appeared on the scene.

The bard's person was sacred. He was never awarded capital punishment, whatever his crime. The nation wanted him for war-songs. His genius impressed the kings, who always patronized him, and he was always at liberty to say anything he liked in the open durbar. The bard's first impulse was to acknowledge the gifts the king bestowed on him, but he never suffered from inferiority complex. The royal patronage came to him as the dew comes to the flower. As every Rajput mother's son was expected to be a swordsman, ever ready to fight for the freedom of his country heroically, so was the bard expected to spread the gospel of honour and freedom through the length and breadth of Rajputana.

When it was a war to the knife, the bard, too, took hold of sword and shield to do his bit. It is a pity that Rajput history today does not give a full list of bards who rose to distinction as martyrs.

War poetry was never the monopoly of the bard. The Rajput sirdars and kings equally contributed. Anyone who felt inspired sang extempore. The women sang more and with a greater force. The bard put many of his songs into woman's mouth. The woman, in her turn, composed her own songs.

The bard's wife had a separate role. She helped the womenfolk in their song contests. None actually claimed authorship. They shared each other's songs, as they shared each other's smiles and tears. Every Rajput woman, as she roused her husband to go to the battlefield, wove a new couplet.

The new recruits in the creation of heroic poetry looked to the bard for revision and improvement of their songs.

The songs were never recorded. There are no references to the bard keeping a written collection with him. His memory was great. He followed in the oral tradition.

The text of a song was not fixed. Nor did it attain at once its final form. New songs came into being with every new battle. Their authorship passed into oblivion ; the sex of the original author, too, was not known. The song, in which a woman spoke, did not always indicate its origin from the woman. It was a fashion with the bard to put songs into the mouth of a woman. In some cases, a couplet had one line from one sex and the second from the other.

The bard accompanied the soldiers to the battlefield with a flag of his own. While singing, he became a new man. Poetry flowed from his lips like a stream. All the bards might have been cast from the same mould : so similar were their traditions and heroic ideals. Everything they had, their bodies, their hearts, their souls, belonged to Rajputana ; they wanted it to remain free, always free.

III

THE SONGS

As Tod says in his *Annals of Rajasthan*, " There is not a petty state in Rajasthan that has not had its Thermopylae and scarcely a city that has not produced its Leonidas." Every battle for independence was fought with sword and shield, as also with songs of honour and freedom. The war song struck its roots deep into the soul of the Rajput. It was the voice of the ancient blood.

"A virgin mine of history and of language," this is how Grierson paid a tribute to the bardic poetry of Rajputana.[1] And Rabindranath Tagore went on to say, " The literature that Rajputana created out of her blood is unique and it is not without reason. The Rajput bards sang extempore to the war-drum, facing the hard reality of life. It was the dance of nature, like Siva's *Tandava* that they saw before them. Can anyone today create that type of poetry through imagination ? The heroic sentiment and emotion, enshrined in every couplet of Rajasthani, is the original asset of Rajputana and pride of India at large. It is spontaneous, sincere and nearer to nature..... the bards sang and roused the heroes and today I have listened to the age-old songs of the bards. They have a force even today."[2]

The Rajput war song mostly took to *Dooha*[3] or *Doha*—the

1 *Linguisitic Survey of India.*

2 Rabindranath Tagore, Extract from a speech before the Rajputana Research Society, Calcutta, delivered on Feb. 18, 1937.

3 The *Dooha* in Rajputana is found in four forms—the *Dooha*, the *Sortha* or *Sorthio Dooha*, the *Baro Dooha* and the *Tumveri Dooha*. The second form is praised in an old *Dooha*, '*Sorthio dooho bhalo. bhali Marvan ri vat ; joban chhaee dhan bhali, taran chhaee rat*,' i.e., ' The *Sorthio Dooha* is good, the tale of Marvan is good, the young woman is good and good, too, the starlit night.'

couplet form, used so far by the poets and the people to sing of love between man and woman or to express religious and philosophical thought. Longer metres like the *Savjhor, Sanor, Supankhro* and the *Kavitta,* were also tried.

Every line of a *Dooha* is divided into two lines to suit the rhythm in the translation. My attempt has been to keep as close to the text as possible. It was in 1928 that I came in touch with some of the bards of Rajputana. Later on, after a gap of nine years, in 1937, I visited Rajputana and collected more songs. I am specially indebted to friends, who helped me in this uphill task and explained the obscure words, and more so to Raghunath Prasad Singhania and Bhagwati Prasad Bisen, the founders of the Rajasthan Research Society at Calcutta, who put at my disposal their valuable collection.

The songs still stir the people's blood. The bard has a long memory, and he sings to a high pitch that seems to indicate the howling winds on the desert sand.

One widely diffused theme is that a true Rajput is never afraid of war and that a daughter of Rajputana can accept such a person alone as the lord of her heart.

17 The shell awaits the fall of the *swati* dew,
The *chakavi* [1] awaits the rising sun;
The Rajput awaits the renewal of the battle,
The damsel awaits the brave man.

It is believed that the drops of dew from heaven, deposited in shells during *Swati Nakshatra,* form themselves into pearls. The heart of a brave man is a shell wherein valour is formed like a pearl. Again, it is supposed that just as the *chakavi* is attracted to the rising sun, so is the Rajput maiden drawn to a hero.

Every woman is expected to give birth to a brave son, or at least to one who is liberal.

18 Give birth to a hero, O mother,
Or one who is generous ;
If not, better have no son,
Why lose your grace in vain ?

[1] A kind of bird.

The mother should sing a heroic cradle-song, as the time-old theme has maintained.

19 Leave not your land in foreign hands,
Fight like a hero on the battle-field;
So sings the mother, as she rocks her son,
Asking him to live and die with honour.

A single hero will do, many sons are not wanted ; this is what the bard tells of the women of warrior blood.

20 Gandhari gave birth to one hundred sons,
But Kunti had only five ;
Kunti's sons defeated Gandhari's sons
What good to have many sons ?

Scores of *Doohas* bring the woman's voice. She urges her husband to smash the enemy.

21 When you reach the battle-field, my love,
What will you hold superior ?
Your companions are three—
A stout heart, a sharp sword, and a strong hand.

The war-drum speaks the language of action, as the Rajput bard declares.

22 May I be true to my husband,
Go on, go on, O drum,
May I save my honour in the village-assembly,
May my words be true amidst my female friends.

The suggestion is that if the drum sounds continuously her husband will fight bravely, and she will be honoured everywhere.

The wounded warrior lies on the sick-bed. Suddenly, a minstrel comes and starts singing. The warrior's wife keeps the whole situation in her control.

23 His body is wounded with swords,
His wounds closely stitched;
With his green wounds he will rush,
Stop for a while, O minstrel.

Must the warrior feed his horse on *ghee* ? The Rajput warrior seems to have argued with his thrifty wife on many occasions.

24 Don't you quarrel with me, my love,
When I feed my horse on *ghee* ;
Whenever comes the time to attack,
He will be my power.

25 They feed upon the air and the plants,
Faster than your horse they run ;
Let me ask you, my lord,
Whose *ghee* do the deer take ?

The lion symbolizes the Rajput hero, though, unlike the lion, the Rajput is doubly sure of his motherland.

26 Home and abroad are the same to the lions,
What motherland for the lions ?
Any forest the lion enters,
That's his motherland.

Echoes of resistance came from every house. No demoralization. No life without freedom. The woman prompts the hero. The mother and the wife speak almost with one voice in the old *Doohas*.

27 The war-drum sounds in the army,
The heroes are roaring ;
Honour says, now die, O man,
Cowardice says, let us return.

28 My husband's mellow drum,
Sounds full of courage ;
The enemies get startled,
The friends jump with joy.

29 Go to the battle-field, my lord,
Do not be a coward ;
Shame will come for you, reproach for me,
None will call it a thing of honour.

30 Go to the battle-field, O hero,
Wield your iron weapon without fear;
Widowhood will not cling to me,
You won't share disgrace.

31 Don't you come back running, my lord,
If you run, disgrace to me ;
My female friends will clap their hands,
They will turn their faces from me.

32 The opium jumps up from the cups,
The saffron jumps up from the *howdahs* ;
As you go to the battle-field, my lord,
Do not take your head with you.

33 Better if he dies in the battle,
Still better if he returns safely;
Both ways, O female friends,
The elephants will pass before my door.

34 If the enemy's warriors have fled away,
It must be due to my husband, O female friend ;
If our warriors are coming back,
He must have been a martyr.

35 Of my husband, O female friend,
I got this assurance :
Defeated, he will not return,
He must win, if he must come.

36 Of my husband, O female friend,
I got this assurance :
He must leave for heaven,
He must win, if he returns.

37 My husband's sword, O female friend,
Strikes the bosom ;
So long as the enemy's army stands, he won't fall,
First victory over the enemy, then he may fall.

38 Get up, O Rahab, the archer,
Twirle your moustaches, do not weep ;
Heroes die only once,
None should weep for a hero.

39 On one hand is life,
On the other stands honour ;
Life says, let's go to Joginpur,
Honour says, attack, O kingly hero.

40 O man without self-reliance,
O coward, why do you run back ?
You may die within the iron-walls,
You may be safe in the open field.

41 Your horse neighs at the door,
The heroes wait upon you at the door ;
Wear the bracelet and go to fight,
The war-drum is calling you.

42 If such is the kingly hero's advice,
I must accompany you;
The enemy will mark
The hand to hand fight of mine.

43 Wifehood tastes brackish,
In case the husband is a coward ;
Widowhood looks graceful,
If the husband is a hero.

44 You said my breasts were very stiff,
They struck against your bosom ;
How is it that blows of the swords,
You take for touch of flowers ?

45 O armour-maker, remember to make
A loose-fit armour for my husband ;
Else it will fasten tightly,
As he blossoms into a lotus while fighting.

46 In days of peace and joy,
He clasps me with delicate arms ;
His body stiffens at the call of war song,
He rushes to the battle not remembering to wear his armour.

47 I praise, O blacksmith's wife,
Your husband's efforts ;
While my hero attacks the enemy,
His sword saves him from every blow.

48 Give me water soon, he says,
How to serve him first ?
My mother-in-law carries water,
Larger the warriors' wounds, sooner she serves.

49 Run, my love, the enemy has come,
She said and wielded the sword ;
She put on her husband's clothes,
Opened the door and fought and won.

50 O my husband's elder brother's wife,
What for did you practise riding the horse ?
The enemy's drum sounds at a distance,
Hold the reins and ride and smash the enemy.

51 The war-drum calls on the frontier,
Get up, my love, the gate of the fort is open ;
The lazy lion heard the call,
He turned his side and fell asleep.

52 Every pain I will endure, O female friend,
But two things burn me :
Son who shames my milk,
Husband who shames my bangles.

53 The menfolk out to attend a feast,
The enemy suddenly attacks the women ;
Daughters of a lioness, each one a lioness herself,
Bravely they wield their swords.

54 Your husband, O female friend,
Stands surrounded by many persons,
Near his head, the money-lender, near his face, the beggars,
All round, the enemy's warriors.

55 Money to the money-lenders, charity to the beggars,
Flames of the sword to the enemy's warriors ;
He will pay the due to all,
Only if he stands all right.

56 Why did you play a trick, O wine-seller's wife ?
You thought my husband, mad with the wine of flowers,
Will only think of love,
But it only adds to his courage.

57 I brought you up amidst troubles, my son,
Feeding you on my milk ;
Never I knew, my darling,
You will return from the battle, shaming my milk.

58 It is good you ran back, my love,
Get ready to wear my clothes ;
My bangles feel ashamed,
I may see you only in my next birth.

59 Tell the drummers to stop and go away,
The cocoanut may be kept ready ;
My coward warrior comes home,
Kneeling to his blessed feet, you should salute him.

60 My ornaments and shining clothes,
Hasten to wear, O warrior of battles, my love,
The black blanket on my shoulders, my days I'll pass in penance,
You will save the money you ever spent on my bangles.

61 The goldsmith's wife feels sad and says,
Your family glory you lost, O Thakur,
O destroyer of my husband's wages for new ornaments,
May death remove you from our land.

62 The dyer's wife feels sad and says,
Why did you prove so false, O Rajput?
I hoped to dye new clothes for your wife's *Sati* rite,
You have ruined my dream.

63 The perfumer's wife cries, what a pity!
Your cowardly home-coming spoiled my hopes;
Your wife ordered for fresh perfume to scent her clothes for the *Sati* rite,
Who will buy costly perfume?

64 My husband is the innocent woman's pitcher,
Like a *Sati's* cocoanut, he shares the battle,
Single-handed he goes to face the enemy,
How shall I hope for his safe return?

65 He stands on the earth, one foot in the stirrup,
The enemy's warriors around him;
Even now my lord won't leave
The twirling of his moustaches.

66 Mad warriors have all come out to give a fight,
Don't you put your arms round my neck;
The lancers cover the sky with lances,
The armoured warriors are seen everywhere.

67 You should think of both the families,[1]
Love is a moving shadow;
If you come back cowardly, you shall get the pillow,
Your wife's arms, you will get no more.

In the range of the *Doolas* of old Rajputs we mark that the woman inspires the warrior to fight heroically and the bard to sing louder, making his language,

1 This means he should save the honour of his father and father-in-law.

taken raw from the people's mouths, more and more terse and effective.

The Rajput war song makes a living poetry. It is dynamic. The bard, drawing his images with the bold strokes, stands out in the background. He tries to use his staff from a new angle every time. Repetition could not be helped, however, for everybody was at liberty to make an amateur attempt in the country's harvest of war poetry.

Even during the marriage, the Rajput girl is able to think of her warrior husband's lot. Many songs have survived that show us the girl's heart. Her power is the power of blood, for she is the daughter of a warrior father, whose tradition she has inherited across the generations and is rightly proud of her future.

68 While he heard the marriage-drum,
The end of his moustaches went upward ;
Inside the marriage-grove
The princess saw her husband as a would-be martyr.

69 His head bent down, while looking,
Capable of success over the enemy ;
At marriage time, the bride could say,
He will live a short life.

70 At marriage time I could say,
Looking at him through the strings of flowers at the door;
If his wife will have to wear *Lambi*, [1]
Others' wives, too, will have to wear the same. [2]

71 At marriage time I could say,
Looking at the ends of his moustaches, touching his wedding crown ;
He won't go alone to the heaven,
He will go with a full army behind him.

1 The mourning dress.
2 The suggestion is that he will kill many warriors before he is killed.

72 At marriage time I could say,
Looking at a frown on his forehead;
He won't fall alone in the battle,
He may fall after he has smashed many a warrior.

73 At marriage time I could say,
My lord is sincere ;
With the strength of his sword,
He will eat the corn of the kings.

74 At marriage time I could say,
Looking at the armour under the wedding clothes,
He has come into the world,
Destined to live a short life.

75 At marriage time I could say,
Looking at the war-bracelet on his arm;
Bangles from my arms will soon be removed,
But only when many a woman's bangles are gone.

The war song swept east and west, north and south. Even a fort of mud walls got appreciation.

76 The fort with all walls of mud,
The true heroes inside;
How will it fall in the fight,
Even when the kings are angry on it, O Rajia ?

The rite of *Sati* was essential. Whenever a warrior died fighting, his wife believed that she will soon marry him again in heaven. So she would at once decide to be a *Sati*, i. e., she will burn herself alive, as the Rajput traditions maintained.

77 He came with the drum-play, O female friend,
To marry me at my father's place ;
The drum now goes on, goes on,
I will pay in the same way.

78 My husband lies asleep in the battle-field,
I have given birth to a son ;
Pray feed him, O my husband's elder brother's wife,
On your milk along with your own son.

79 Take my message, O traveller,
To my father;
Tell him, he didn't beat the metal plate at my birth,
Now they play for me the drum at full beat.

80 My son fell down in the battle, cut into pieces,
His wife now goes to be a *Sati* ;
A hill of national honour stands before me,
My joy knows no limits.

The dry-shelled cocoanut, the present for the bride from the bridegroom, symbolized the warrior himself whenever his wife had to be a *Sati*. In case the dead body of the hero was missing, she sat with the cocoanut, ready to be burnt alive. She played with it. *Agni*, the god of fire, took her to heaven.

But the heroes never die, for they live in song and legend.

81 We may forget our parents,
We may forget our relations ;
But the story of the great heroes,
The bards ever repeat.

The Rajput war song, obviously, is proud of Badal, who was a contemporary of Padmini. His uncle, Gora, was a principal Sirdar of Chittor. Padmini sought for his advice.

Gora and Badal both gave the plan that was followed by the Queen. Alauddin had taken away the king. She sent a word to Alauddin that she would come to him with five hundred women. Badal was only a minor boy. But he accompanid the Queen and the party. Five hundred warriors, dressed as women, sat in the palanquins. The palanquin-bearers, too, were warriors themselves. In the leading palanquin was seated a blacksmith, who was entrusted with the duty of cutting the chains of the King. The Rajputs succeeded. It was Badal, who most heroically took the King upon his horse behind him and fled away. Gora died on the spot. Badal, the hero of the day, has been cherished through generations.

82 Badal got ready to go to fight,
His mother came and said:
What is this, my child ?
You are still a child.

83 Why do you call me child, mother,
I never wept for a morsel of food;
I shall strike my sword on the Shah's head,
Then you may say, O bravo, my son !

84 A tiger, a hawk and a warrior,
They are never children ;
They always hunt a big game,
They catch it in a moment.

Jagmal, the king of Marwar, defeated the Khan of Mandu. A *Dooha*, put in the mouth of the Khan's queen, has survived.

85 At every step lies a spear,
At every step, a shield;
Bibi asks the Khan:
How many Jagmals are there in the world ?

Rana Pratap, who raised the standard of Mewar in the Rajput history, stood for full freedom of the Rajputs. Losing the Chittor fort, for Akbar sent his bravest army to fight, he withdrew to the Arawali Hills, where he lived with the Bhils and passed very hard days towards the end of his life. It is said, Akbar, garbed as a Rajput, came there to meet the Rana, and, when he returned to Delhi, he was a changed man. But Akbar's counsellors, it is believed, again changed his mind.

Pratap's blood was pure. His dream was great. Chittor must come back, he thought. His name symbolized the free Rajputana. Haldighat saw him attacking Akbar's commander-in-chief, Raja Man Singh, who sat on the *howdah* of the royal elephant. Pratap came on Chetak, his beloved horse, who put his forelegs on the trunk of Man Singh's elephant. Pratap at once attacked Man Singh with his spear, but he saved himself by promptly bending down his head. The elephant was holding a small sword in the twist of his trunk, and he gave a deep cut on one of the back legs of Chetak. Pratap rushed back. He could not mark that he had failed in his attempt. The wounded Chetak, to his great sorrow, died by the side of a brook.

Pratap was for the whole Rajasthan ; he defined his country in bold outlines. As the Rajput history stressed, perhaps there has been no greater hero as compared to the Rana, who had taken upon himself the entire prestige of his motherland.

There was a rumour that Pratap will soon beg Akbar for a treaty. Prithviraj Rathor, who lived helplessly with Akbar, is said to have sent a letter, addressed to Pratap, in the form of ten *Doohas.*

86 Give birth to such a son, mother,
As Rana Pratap ;
Akbar wakes up startled,
Thinking of the snake by his bed.

87 His shelter not so easy, his days are even,
The hero won't give up honour ;
Blockaded by many kings,
Rana Pratap lives in the hills.

88 O Rana Pratap, O matchless hero,
O annihilator of the hostile armies,
Who will pound it under the hooves of horses,
So long as you stand upon the land of Mewar ?

89 Pratap's turban is genuine,
He comes from Sanga's lineage ;
You always kept it erect, O Rana,
Since you faced Akbar.

90 O Lord of Chittor, ' the one-fourth of a moment
As the bell rings,' [1]
Lies on your head, O King of Mewar,
O Rana Pratap Singh.

91 O King Akbar,
Your grandeur is great, O Turk,
They all saluted you as they passed before you,
All the kings except the Rana.

92 A herd of one hundred cows,
Akbar has shut up in one enclosure ;
He did not get his nose stringed,
Pratap Singh is a bull that roars.

93 The Rajput *Rajas* are like the bullocks,
To Akbar's fold they have come;
The Rana cannot bear the string,
Pratap Singh is a mighty bull.

94 If Pratap utters perchance
Shah with Abkar's name,
The sun will rise from the west—
That son of Kashyap.

1 The pun is upon *Paghari*, or one-fourth of a moment, that also means turban (*Pagri*)—the symbol of the Rajput's honour. Such puns have been common in Rajput poetry for centuries.

95 Should I twirl my moustaches,
Or with my sword should I kill myself ?
Write to me, my *Divan*,
Either of the two things.

Some authorities believe that Prithvi Raj sent only the last two *Doohas* to Rana Pratap. The following three *Doohas*, it is said, were sent by Rana Pratap to Prithvi Raj in reply.

96 The god Eklinga will make me utter
Turk alone in this birth ;
The sun will always rise
As usual from the east.

97 Be happy, O Peethal,[1]
Twirl your moustaches ;
So long as Pratap is alive
To strike his sword on the heads of the enemies.

98 I will rather bear a blow of the sword,
The rival's glory tastes like poison ;
I wish you success, O Peethal,
In your discussions with the *Turk*.

Adha Dursa, a contemporary of Rana Pratap, composed a number of stirring *Doohas* in praise of the Rana. He is remembered for his masterly vocabulary and keen sense of imagination. He takes straight to his theme with all the simplicity of a nationalist poet.

99 Akbar is utter darkness,
The Hindu *Rajas* are napping ;
The world's benefactor keeps awake,
Rana Pratap Singh stands guard on us.

1 The pet name of Prithvi Raj.

100 Akbar is unfathomable occean,
The Hindus and the Turks all drowned in it ;
The King of Mewar therein
Looks like a lotus flower—Pratap Singh.

101 Akbar all at once marked
All the horses, burning their skin with hot iron ;
The rider of the unmarked horse
Rana Pratap Singh alone.

102 Akbar will die,
Another man will rule over Delhi ;
O glorious Pratap,
Your fame will never fade, O hero !

103 Do not feel proud, O Akbar,
That the Hindu *Rajas* are your servants now ;
Has anyone seen my *Divan*
Showing feats before Akbar's railing ?

104 Akbar's mind is strong,
Disunion among the Hindu *Rajas*;
The degenerate son of the Kafirs—
O let me catch hold of Rana Pratap Singh, thinks Akbar.

105 Akbar thought of them,
The Hindu *Rajas* came in ;
Saviour of Mewar's honour, Pratap Singh,
He never touched Akbar's feet.

106 The head of the people's king
Is never down before the Turks ;
Such honour is kept
By Rana Pratap Singh.

107 The path of the forefathers is great,
It must be followed ;
The hero of the sword and the generous ways,
My Rana Pratap Singh.

108 He never brings the head down ,
He never comes near Akbar ;
The honour of the sun lineage
Rana Pratap Singh has kept.

109 Akbar's policy
Is overlooked by many *Rajas* ;
The honour of the lineage of King Raghu,
Rana Pratap Singh has kept.

110 The Hindu *Rajas* give up their honour,
They give their daughters to the Turks ;
The pride of the Aryan lineage today
Rana Pratap Singh alone.

111 Akbar has gathered many stones,
All these *Rajas* ;
He could not get so far
Rana Pratap Singh, the philosopher's stone.

112 For the sake of justice
Sanga fought with Babar ;
On Akbar's feet
Rana Pratap will never fall.

113 To get comforts, these jackals [1]
Are now under Akbar's sway ;
But the enraged tiger
Never cought in the trap—Rana Pratap Singh.

1 The Hindu *Rajas*, looked down upon by Adha Dursa, are referred to as jackals. Apparently, jackal symbolises a coward, and the Rajput would take it as an abuse if someone calls him jackals.

114 Akbar is false and unwise,
His heart is broken, yet he will not come round ;
On his feet he will not fall,
True to his oath—Rana Pratap Singh.

115 Akbar's heart is restless,
Day and night ;
Saviour of the *Rajas*' honour,
Rana Pratap is the chief Queen's son.

116 Even the warrior kings
Press Akbar's feet ;
The protector of the cows,
Rana Pratap Singh, lives in Akbar's heart.

117 Many *Rajas* came to Akbar,
With their heads so lowered, they passed before him ;
One man kept his head high,
Rana Pratap Singh alone.

118 The mighty *Rajas* of Hindustan,
For sheer greed they gave way ;
The earth is his mother,
Rana Pratap Singh worships her.

119 To smash Akbar's armies
He goes alone and fights ;
In every mountain-pass he hits their pride—
Our Rana Pratap Singh.

120 He would like to die in the battle-field,
Free from Akbar's slavery ;
As a slave he will suffer,
He will not live in memory—Pratap Singh.

121 To win the wealth of the Gohil lineage
Akbar is greedy ;
He will not give single cowrie,
He must keep his oath—Rana Pratap Singh.

122 Akbar is a big fish,
He tosses up his tail ;
The son of the Gohil lineage
Is the deep ocean—Pratap Singh.

123 To make the water muddy
Akbar moves like a crocodile ;
The Rana of the Gohil lineage is like the ocean,
It never looks muddy—Pratap Singh.

124 Countless weapons struck together,
Lacs of enemies attacked on him,
The hero of many battles
Entered Udaya Pur with a slogan.

125 Akbar obstructs the way
With lacs of Hindu dogs ;
The roaring boar
Beats them—Pratap Singh.

126 At heart he feels spiritless,
Akbar always shakes his head ;
Every day he feels redoubled in spirit,
Pratap Singh is full of spirit.

127 Why worry, O Akbar,
Carrying a string and a *poongi*, O snake charmer ?
Inside your basket
The cobra will not come—Rana Pratap Singh.

128 With his Queen he runs about,
The *gomra* fruit tastes like nectar for him ;
But having comfort in alliance with Akbar
Looks like opium to Pratap Singh.

129 He goes without food,
He sleeps like a hungry lion ;
Leaving his forefathers' path
Pratap Singh never goes a step.

130 Akbar is an elephant,
All drunken, he moves in his herd;
Like the flesh-eater lion,
Pratap Singh throws him down.

131 All of them belong to Akbar,
Strong horses and elephants ;
Ever running after you,
They are skeletons, O Pratap Singh.

132 The hero passed through many sufferings,
He got fame ;
O hero of justice and patience,
Your valour is a blessing, O Pratap Singh.

133 His fame spread everywhere,
His life is blessed in the world ;
No infamy for him,
True to his oath—Pratap Singh.

134 The never-ending wealth,
One's good fame in the world ;
Both joys and sorrows
Are like a dream, O Pratap Singh.

The heightened language of Adha Dursa's *Doohas* is obscure here and there, yet the bard, as he sings them today in the same gusto, seems to make the people understand the meaning of the archaic expressions. In certain cases the *Charan* may even try to replace some difficult words with easier ones.

Sooravach Tapraiya is another bard, who sang in praise of Pratap. Like Adha Dursa, he also looks difficult, yet his *Doohas* are popular.

135 Thirty-six lineages are enslaved,
The *Gahlot* lineage is superior ;
Do not get angry, ye *Rajas* and *Ranas*,
As I make my statement.

136 The valour of Pratap Singh, King of Chittor,
Is a *Champa* plant ;
Akbar is a *bhramara*, [1]
He is never attracted by the scent of the *Champa*.

137 A sword on the elephant's forehead
You struck, O Pratap Singh,
You cut it into two parts,
As a wire cuts a piece of soap.

138 Asword of gold
You struck, O Pratap Singh,
As the rays of the sun pierce the clouds,
It passed through the elephants.

139 Free from all attachment,
Rana Pratap, the hero ;
He has smashed
The enemy's elephant forces.

1 The *bhramara*, or the bumble-bee, never visits the *Champa* flowers.

140 The *Rajas* eat from the earthen pots,[1]
You still eat from the leaf-plate,
This is your way, O Rana,
O son of Udai Singh.

141 The old valour is no more
The Hindu *Rajas* bow before the Turks;
It is Pratap Singh
Who built temples over the mosques.

142 So long as Rana Pratap
Does not bow,
The Hindus and the Moslems
Are not one but two. [2]

Pratap is also praised in some of the anonymous *Doohas*. The singing voice of the bard rises louder and louder in excitement, as he sings, and we are readily influenced by the heightened effect given at certain places.

143 Rana Pratap Singh struck
His spear into the enemy's armour,
As if the *jhinga* fish
Brought out its head from the net.

144 Rana Pratap Singh struck
His snapping spear,
As if a she-snake came out,
Her mouth filled with her offsprings.

145 Akbar's horse-guards,
All smashed by Pratap;
As if the book of the *Veda* and *Purana*
Fell to the monkeys.

1 They are converts.
2 The bard believes that if the Rana were a convert to Islam, there would have been left no Hindu any more.

146 Pratap struck his sword,
The people of both the paths[1] admired him ;
Piercing the victim's head-dress, it pierced the head,
Piercing his body and the saddle, it cut the body of the horse.

147 Son of Udai Singh rode his Chetak,
He came with his sharp sword ;
He gave a heavy blow on the Mirza's head,
As if the lightning fell on the coppersmith's anvil.

Kushala Singh, who once saved the Bikaner Fort with his five thousand horse-guards, is dear to the bard.

148 Kushala Singh asked the fort,
Why do you weep, O Bikaner ?
So long as I am here if you fall,
The sun will rise no more.

The hero from Jalaur has his own *Dooha* ; simple, yet all the more reassuring. It is in the form of an oath.

149 If the sky is torn, the earth trembles,
My armour is broken to pieces;
My head comes down and my body is in agony,
Then alone the Jalaur Fort may be lost.

The bard from Jaipur remembers his own champions, and sings in their praise.

150 Struck in the mud,
The chariot of Rajput valour ;
O Savant Singh, Sultan Singh's son,
You are capable of taking it out.

1 The Hindus and the Muslims.

151 Gaur calls you at Ghatava,
Be ready and come, O Shekha,
Your *lashkar* is fit to beat the enemy,
We have a wish to see.

The bard from Marwar adds his own note in the long series of the *Doohas*.

152 Give birth to a son, mother,
Such as Durga Das;
With a loose turban on his head,
He supported the sky without pillars.

The bard from Mewar has his own comment to make.

153 Make me pigeon, O God,
Of Jagat Singh's durbar—
Water I will drink from the Pichhola tank,
Corn I will eat from the State granary.

For five hundred years, from the beginning of the fourth century to the beginning of the tenth century, the Rajput war song had its time. No more any warfare in Rajputana. No more any new growth of the heroic *Doohas*. Lalji, a Dadhvario bard of Rajputana, addresses his servant, Nopla, as he marks the decay of the Rajput spirit.

154 Same horses, same villages,
Same harvests, same *Rajas* ;
The spirit of the Rajputs
All gone, O Nopla.

Another bard, making a similar comment, tries to touch a great note of satire.

155 Rajputs have gone, frauds are left behind,
Traitors of the country ;
The Rajput women are dead,
Who could again give birth to Rajputs.

156 O Rajputs of today,
The dung-hills are better than you ;
Accursed be your turbans,
Blessed are women's bangles.

Looking enquiringly at the sons of warrior blood, Kirpa Ram, the Rajput *Charan*, addressed his servant, Rajia, as he composed heroic poetry. He switches his mind back to the past and feels sad.

157 Wounded by a pointed slip of wood,
They requite wheat and *ghee* to eat as patients;
Such *Sirdars* are more costly
Than the bread itself, O Rajia.

The bard is sad at the fall of Rajput spirit and he becomes ironical.

158 Take to agriculture, O poet,
Love the plough ;
Bury your songs under the earth,
Put sand over them.

The sand, the ever-thirsty sand, absorbed pools of warrior blood for over five hundred years. The Arravalli hills could not check the sand-storms. The ever-drifting sand of the desert has been finding its way to the green Rajputana as well. The old battlefields were not altogether free from sand that absorbed every drop of warrior blood. Whether it was a battle on the national front, or some family feud, the Rajput ever knew the words of the old song.

159 You felt proud, O God,
After the creation of the horse ;
You made one mistake,
You made no saddle on his back.

The horse was always kept ready, and the sand always took its toll of blood. Blood of heroes and martyrs.

SONGS OF THE SPINNING-WHEEL

PUNJABI women have always spun. The spinning-wheels inlaid with ivory have been celebrated in their ancient folklore. The carpenters still know the art of making beautifully carved spinning-wheels. The bride in the land of five rivers still expects to get a *shisham* wood spinning-wheel inlaid with brass wires; the sandal wood spinning-wheel, worthy of a princess, is, obviously, beyond the scope of the dowry she receives from her father. A poor man's daughter can only get a *kikar* wood spinning-wheel.

"Ever women's company he keeps, yet a thorough saint is he: swift as wind is he, yet the hero never steps forward: to the entire world he supplies clothes, yet himself ever unclothed: behold his five heads, brother, and his single, good hand" —thus the *charkha*, or the spinning-wheel, is described in an old Punjabi riddle.

Uninterruptedly for over thousands of years, the spinning wheel has been linked up with human life. "Centuries ago," says Sarojini Naidu, "poets used the simile of the spinning-wheel and the weaver's loom for the destiny of life, the Fates spinning and weaving out man's destiny."

The first spinning-wheel was made by God, says an old Punjabi proverb. Man is compared to the spinning-wheel. *Shaitan da charkha*, or the Devil's spinning-wheel, is a common nickname for a cunning fellow.

As ancient as the cotton-cultivation, the spinning-wheel has a history behind it, and ever since I can remember, the singing voice of the sisters of the spinning-wheel has been running in my veins like a pulse beating. Again and again, I look back to the spinning-bees held at our house when I was young.

Spinning with my mother has been a thing of art and beauty, as it is even today. Jatto, our family midwife, who has airs of holiness with her forehead horizontally wrinkled, joined only occasionally. Dayawanti, who often looked lovely, wore a dove-coloured veil; slender-waisted and sleepy-eyed; alive with the rhythm, her whole body seemed to quiver like a string when she sang. Savitri, a cousin of mine, would not sing; she was markedly quiet and Madonna-like. Punjabo looked charming when she smiled; she was an artist out and out, and her songs were much in demand; songs came curling up through her

memory. Nihalo, with her round face and a gold tooth, was never seen laughing. Bhagwanti, who had gold beads round her neck, was gifted with a genius for melody ; she sang softly. Warm with life and tradition, the spinning songs, mostly sung in chorus, seemed to absorb everything.

Again and again, I was attracted by the picturesque scene. There was a great bond between the spinning-bee and myself. I listened to the songs for the sheer joy of music. The wheels had been there ; and songs, echoing from house to house with all their soulfulness, were impregnated with the rhythm of spinning.

Dayawanti once told me, "In my dreams the spinning-wheel talks to me: 'I was made by Visva Karma. I approach every heart with creeping footsteps. Wherever I go, I give work. I breathe the air of songs. Life is God's gift, I tell the women, and they should spin as gods span life. Men do not want me, I am the beloved of women.'[1] Perhaps, you will call me mad."

"No, no," I said, "I won't call you mad."

"I draw songs from my heart as I draw yarn," mother would say, " sitting at the wheel I become a new woman. Sometime the spindle goes wrong, but I can soon mend it, accompanied by some tune that seems to hang on my lips. Long live the spinning-wheel, I say, as it moves."

Dayawanti would sing of the sun, the moon, and stars.

153 Listen, O sun,
Listen, O moon,
Tears roll down my eyes
The world enjoys,
I spin my sorrows.

154 With every turn of the spinning-wheel,
I wink at stars.

1 Compare Mahatma Gandhi's note, *Swaraj Through Women*: 'Since the beginning of time there has been a division of labour between men and women. Adam wove and Eve span. The distinction persists to the present day. Men spinners are an exception. . . . experience shows that spinning will remain women's speciality. I believe there is a good reason behind the experience. Spinning is essentially a slow and comparatively silent process. Woman is the embodiment of sacrifice. . . . Equality of sexes does not mean equality of occupation.'—*Harijan*, December 2, 1939.

155 I offer my dreams of the moon,
Take them if you like.

156 Carry my spinning-wheel there
Where your ploughs are tilling.

The simple couplet often reveals the long-cherished desires of the spinners. Beauty runs like a crimson thread through the wide range of images.

The *Trinjan*, as the spinning-bee is called in the Punjab, always makes a happy picture. The young, unmarried girls, the brides, women of every age, all sit together at their wheels. Room is made for every spinner. They all imbibe the spirit of competition. They all lift their voices together and sing. It seems spinning has never been independent of the song. With a subtle excitement, the task of spinning goes on with the spontaneous, unrestrained music of songs. Young girls always make a feast of colours; jet-black, sombre red, yellow, blue, rose-pink and green. It is so picturesque with the dark-eyed dreamy types. Young brides, with their *hennaed* fingers, bend their veiled heads over their wheels; they wear silk and brocade, often beautifully embroidered. Mothers forget their worries in this happy company.

Any time may be fixed for the spinning-bee, any house selected for it. Of course, each spinner likes to give a party at her place, for she thinks that the spinning-bee, ever under the protection of gods, adds to the spirit of friendship and peace of mind.

Winter is good for spinning, they say. An all-day spinning-bee, called *Chiri Charoonga*,[1] is easier on a short winter day. After the daybreak, they assemble inside a room and spin till sunset; at noon they get their meal from their homes and they wish that it should not be too late. An oil-lamp is kept burning all the day if the room is dark. Every spinner returns from the spinning-bee with over half a pound of cotton turned into fine yarn. Mothers and brides hurry away as soon as spinning is over, but most of the young, unmarried girls

1 *Chiri* means sparrow. *Charoonga* is an obscure word for baby-sparrow. The spinning-bee is so called for the spinners are expected to be so busy in their task as to have no time even to see sparrows.

insist upon going out only after sunset. If spinning is over before the appointed hour, they always indulge in some native indoor game.

Another winter spinning-bee is the all-night *Jagrata.*[1] This begins at about ten p.m. after the other household work is well over, and it continues till next morning. The night is longer than the day. So they can have more output of yarn than what they turn out in the all-day *Chiri Charunga.* Some call it *Rat Kattani.*[2] Cold is bitter. But spinners have learnt to be enduring. Often fire is kept in an iron pot in the centre. They have woollen blankets. 'What fear has winter for a spinning-bee?'[3] says a Panjabi proverb. They have some home-made sweet or fried corn, maize, gram or wheat, in small reed-baskets; from time to time they eat, not so much for hunger as for keeping up their spirits high in the company. 'Even the spinning-wheel laughs at the napping spinner in the spinning-bee,'[4] says another Punjabi proverb. The dawn wears away. The rays of the morning sun fall on the spinners' faces. All hurry up to finish off the remaining cotton.

Summer is less liked by the sisters of the spinning-wheel. Hot winds make the cotton coarse. Water is sprinkled in the basket in which are placed the *poonian,* or rolls of the carded cotton, which become moist and make fine spinning easier.

The sittings of the spinning-bee in summer are held in some airy room, or under the shade of a tree in the compound. At night they prefer a roof, for they like the stars, especially the constellations and the pole star, to watch over them, and the moon, particularly when full, to serve as their lamp.

Once I heard the spinners singing the time-old song, addressed to the moon. It was not difficult for me to understand that the moon in love-songs is often an emblem of the beloved, and the countless stars stand for hours of separation.

157 Rise, O moon, bring light,
I passed night counting stars,
See the moon appears, ye sisters,
See the moon appears.

1 *Jagrata* means vigil, Hindi *Ratjaga.*
2 Spinning throughout night.
3 *Tinjan noon ki dar pale da ?*
4 *Charkha vi hasse uste, jo tinjan de vich oonghe.*

Rainy days are pleasant. Cotton gets automatically moist for fine spinning. In every thunder, in every shower of rains, in every downpour, the spinners hear a song.

'If I am a spinner, I can spin even on a broken spinning-wheel,'[1] says a Punjabi proverb. 'As a cook I spoil the corn; as a spinner, I turn cotton into wick-like yarn,'[2] another Punjabi proverb put into the mouth of a good-for-nothing woman, was sure to make the whole spinning-bee burst with laughter.

The placing of the spinners' rolls of carded cotton in a common basket is essential. It is generally done before the commencement of the spinning-bee. One of the women is selected. She first places a set of four or five cotton rolls taken out of her own reed-basket on the palm of her left hand, and as she receives similar sets from everybody, she places them crosswise over her own. This group of cotton roll sets is then placed in the common basket. She gathers a second, a third set and so on in the same order and places them in the basket. She will distribute them as work goes on, so that every girl receives her own set every time. The sets from the common basket are distributed only when the distributor herself has spun her set. No songs are sung while the cotton rolls are gathered in the basket.

Shy at first, the newly married bride would soon thaw in the spinning-bee. I remember having seen a bride who tied a piece of yarn to a virgin spinner's wheel and said, '*Je veer piyara khol de, je khasam piyara tor de*,' *i e*, if your brother is dear to you, untie it; if your husband is dear to you, break it. It was a proverbial saying. The girl knew the joke well. To untie the easily breakable yarn piece was a hard game, yet she had to try to show that her brother was dearer to her. But she only succeeded in breaking the thread, and the whole spinning-bee burst with laughter, saying, 'No harm, she loves her husband.'

"Spinning songs are clever enough, my son," once an old peasant mother told me, "they remain hidden from me while my hand is away from the handle of the spinning-wheel." It reminded me of the words of a Kashmmiri boatman who said,

[1] *Je main homan kati, tan lakkaran ton vi kati.*—*Kati* (from *kattana*, to spin), is an obscure word for the spinner, a more frequent word being *Kattanhari* or *Kattanwali*. *Lakkaran* (lit. pieces of wood) in this proverb refers to a broken spinning-wheel.

[2] *Annon karan kabannon, kapahon battian.* Literally it means, 'With corn I make bad food, and cotton I turn into wicks.'

"The tunes of my boat-songs will certainly fall flat if I sing without actually plying my heart-shaped paddle."

Work songs all over the world show an obvious, psychological connection between tunes and the tasks of manual labour; they are hardly to be severed from the efforts and movements they were invented to fit. I noticed in various parts of India how difficult it was to collect the songs of toil from villagers while they were away from their work. Some of them would sing voluntarily, but they would often fail to produce the effect of their songs of toil. Back at their task, their songs would rush out correctly.

In districts scores of miles apart, variants of the same songs may be heard. Old songs live in the memory. But the spinners continue to make attempts at new songs.

Words of new songs sometime appear to fit the tune badly. The singers soon smooth out the crudity. Women, who would make new songs, always have the richest treasury of old songs at their finger-tips.

All the songs are not about the wheel, though the spinners occasionally return to the music of the wheel itself.

In some of the songs, the spinners do not fail to seek the advice of the spinning-wheel, for as their experience assures them, it seems to share their feelings.

158 *Ghoon, ghoon*, O spinning-wheel,
Should I spin the red *pooni* or not ?
Spin, girl, spin.

Far-off is my father-in-law's home,
Should I live there or not ?
Live, girl, live.

Long, is my woe,
Should I tell or not ?
Tell, girl, tell.

My husband is a minor,
Should I stay with him or not ?
Stay, girl, stay.

Ghoon, ghoon, O spinning-wheel,
Should I spin the red *pooni* or not?
Spin, girl, spin.

The sad girl talks to her spinning-wheel, when none else is ready to share the deep sorrow with her. Surely, she is a rebel. She must wait till her minor husband attains youth. The spinning-wheel symbolizes the guardian angel. She puts her own voice in the mouth of the spinning-wheel. She bears with everything, as she learns to spin even the rough cotton into fine thread.

Some songs are addressed to the bridal veil, though, unlike the spinning-wheel, it keeps silent. It is red, it will always be red, the *saloo*, as it is called by brides and all men and women. The mother and the mother-in-law are things apart, and the contrast between the two is a popular motif in scores of spring songs. The daughter at her father-in-law's place cannot but think of the mother who continues to influence her dream.

159 I spin a fine thread, O bridal veil,
My mother-in-law has sent a bridal basket, O bridal veil,
I opened, on a dark night, O bridal veil,
There came out a black snake, O bridal veil,
I threw it across the river, O bridal veil.

I spin a long thread, O bridal veil,
My mother has sent a basket, O bridal veil,
I opened it on a mooonlit night, O bridal veil,
There came out the *naulakha* necklace, O bridal veil,
I wore it most endearingly, O bridal veil.

Words are inseparable from music. They seem to fly on the wings of melody along with the warbling sound of the spinning-wheel. I remember to have contacted an old woman who said, "It is the spinning-wheel itself that keeps my memory fresh. It gets each word of the song again and again etched on my mind. It makes every word alive."

The wheel may be of gold and silver, as the ancient folk-songs witness.

160 *Ghoon, ghoon*, the spinning-wheel warbles, mother,
Mine is a spinning-wheel made of gold,
I got for it a silver axle.

Ghoon, ghoon, the spinning-wheel warbles, mother,
Its *maal* [1] is silken,
I got it dyed nicely.
Ghoon, ghoon, the spinning-wheel warbles, mother.

In some songs the spinners sing of the sandal wood spinning-wheels. One of my pretty sisters-in-law once gave me a song; it was, obviously, the song of a new bride.

161 My spinning-wheel is made of *kikar* wood, darling,
Get me a wheel of sandal, darling.

I will not spin cotton,
I will not spin wool
Get me silk to spin darling.

My spinning-wheel is made of *kikar* wood, darling,
Get me a wheel of sandal, darling.

The spinners seem to think little and dream much. "When goddesses lived on the earth, they always preferred spinning-wheels made of sweet-smelling sandal wood; Saraswati always span silk, while others took to cotton, and daily they held their spinning-bees," as an old Brahmin woman once told me reassuringly.

The spinning songs depict every-day-life, as viewed by the spinners, and evoke the poetry of life, ever projecting beautiful pictures.

Some of the couplets, each of them complete in itself, are highly symbolic. Some are purely impressionistic. The windy freshness of their rhythmic tunes belongs to the realm of the *Giddha* dance. Frequent references to spinning in some of them seem to show their origin in the spinning-bees. In the *Giddha*, the couplets are prologued, as evident from the song addressed to the sun and the moon. The prologue has actually no limit, it may run into many lines. But the spinners often rarely take to the prologued pieces. They like to sing the simple couplets; as regards music, it is not actually the same as is found in the *Giddha* dance. Freedom is taken in order to adapt them to the rhythm of spinning.

[1] The thread that rotates the wheel.

The prologued pieces, sung by brides and girls, have a special charm for all.

162 Mother gave me a spinning-wheel,
Inlaid with gold nails.
I think of you, mother,
As I see my spinning-wheel.

163 My spinning-wheel made of *kikar*,
Get me one of *shisham* wood.
Heavy moves the wheel,
Thirty-six times its *maal* has broken,
All the girls have come after spinning,
I cannot spin any more.
My wheel is very bad,
It won't let me go to sleep.

164 You are never happy at home, daughter,
You ever go to spin outside.
On the left hip you carry the wheel,
You spin unusual thread.
You look so cross,
As your husband comes to take you.

The whole range of spinning couplets emerges from a living poetry; every spinner shares the common emotional pitch under the direct influence of the spining-wheel.

165 My love is a lump of candy,
He talks so sweetly.

166 My love is a sandal tree,
I am satisfied with the scent.

167 My love is a cypress plant,
I got him from God.

168 I have to leave the spinning-bee,
Here comes the strong man's bullock-cart.[1]

169 My friendships of the spinning-bee
I recalled on the bullock-cart.

170 Let me go to give farewell to my friend,
Spinning goes on everyday.

171 Leave the spinning-wheel, remove your seat,
Your parents will give you dowry.

172 I feel lonely while spinning,
Ask my husband to come home.

173 Your drunkard son, O widow,
Broke the axle of my spinning-wheel.

174 You searched me at night,
I hid myself in the spinning-bee.

175 Hearing the sound of the spinning-wheel,
The ascetic came down from the mountain.

The young spinner imagines that the ascetic could think of her beauty simply by listening to the beautiful warbling sound of her spinning-wheel.

The couplets do not necessarily rhyme, nor both the lines of a couplet are of the same length. The prologue of a *Giddha* is rhymed. The first line of each couplet in the prologue is free, the second line of each of the group keeps up the rhyme, balancing the one in the second line of the chief couplet. It has all been taught to spinners by the tradition itself.

1 The strong man is the husband, who comes on the bullock-cart to fetch his bride.

A couplet of this type, prologued or simple, is called *Boli.*[1] From the depths of the heart comes the music that keeps up the words of a *Boli* fresh and thrilling ; its lilt glorifies the isolated themes.

The *Boli* is noted for extempore variations. The gifted spinner, obviously, adds a new piece every now and then to the floating reserve. Every new composer would try to put the best emotion into the lyrical impulse. The spinning-bee shares the joy of a new couplet and soon it echoes through the whole neighbourhood. The free arrangement of the lines allows ample scope to alter a few words and to put in a new idea. Passing from mouth to mouth, the new couplets acquire the traditional character of old folk-songs.

Some are worthless as poetry. But many are remarkable both for content and mode of expression. Turning from subject to subject, the spinners often catch hold of a charming image. It is only when they explore deep emotions that the poetic genius gleams like the flashing of a shield.

Before a score of couplets have been sung, a spinner has many more in her head. The budding *Boli*-champion comes forward with deliberate modesty.

176 I may build a bridge with the *Bolis;*
I cannot win the world.

Outwardly, she strikes a note of humility. But she is a mine of songs. Her aspiration is to know many more, so as to outnumber the bricks used in building a bridge.

Kattani is a small reed-basket for rolls of the carded cotton and balls of yarn. The spinner makes it herself with simple reeds. As fancy inspires her, she imagines that little *Kattani* is acquainted with poems and the spinning-wheel has learnt the singing of couplets. Surely, the atmosphere in the spinning-bee is greatly helpful for the growth of new poetry.

177 My *kattani* recites poems,
My spinning-wheel sings the couplets.

1 *Boli* means dialect or speech literally, the plural is *Bolian*.

178 Listen, ye stars
My spinning-wheel sings the couplets.

179 My *kattani* recites poems,
The moon saw it stealthily.

A girl begs the youth to kill a peacock as she wants quills to make a beautiful *kattani*.

180 Go and kill a peacock for me, my love,
I have to make a new *kattani*.

181 I won't sinfully kill the peacock,
Make a *kattani* of reeds.

The youth may still express his love; he does so in his own way, while she sits in the spinning-bee. It makes her inquire with a blush.

182 Who is the youth that threw the pebble ?
It fell inside my *kattani*.

The spinners sing freely. Like the girls and brides everywhere, love is a common note with them.

183 I embraced him, in my dream,
I opened my eyes and saw him not.

184 The sand of your fresh footprints,
I pick up and put to my bossom.

185 The moon rises daily,
It is all dark without my love.

186 A dust-cloud fills my sight,
I see no more my love's figure.

187 Twenty letters came from you,
The one about your coming you never sent.

188 Pollen is formed on the berry trees,
Not yet came the lord of my heart.

Love-couplets are simple and outrageously frank. They often run into a series making a significant scroll. Love-match is rare. A girl always marries a boy after her parents' will, and she is expected to make a good wife. Wedded love provides no inspiration for love-poetry. The twilight of romance is a necessity. The 'drinker of fresh milk', is the sweetheart of the goatherds ; she is never missed.

189 Layers of cream appear on your bosom.
O drinker of fresh milk.

190 You will bear a son like a lump of curd,
O drinker of fresh milk.

The bride at honeymoon is a regular theme ; it gives delight to every spinner.

191 She fanned out the earthen lamp with her veil,
Talked to me with her eye.

Banto figures as a type of beauty in a number of spinning couplets. Her head is likened to a jungle, her face symbolizes the moon, and her waist reminds us of a leopardess.

The love-sick girl cannot spin. She invokes gods for blessings, for she is so sure of their nearness. But they do not seem to help her.

The couplets have a large family. Like the spinners themselves, they exchange side-glances. Some are antiphonal. They even lead to criticism of life, bearing a note of satire on contemporary society.

The longer songs give full pictures. They are more popular with the elderly women, who take pride in their long-winded music. Redolent of the ancient spirit of the spinning-bee, they are essential.

That the spinning-bee has lost its old hold on the country women is a sad commentary on an age of turmoil we are passing through. Must the machine take away the spinning-wheel ? The young bride remembers her mother, but surely she does not remember by heart the whole stock of her mother's songs that her mother inherited from her own great-grandmother.

Years ago,in a letter addressed to Ananda K.Coomaraswamy, a lover of folk-songs discussed the loss of craft-songs in England, " What is to me most tragic, however, is the thought, nay, the conviction that for every old song found, there must be two or three lost utterly and irrevocably. We notice this particularly in the songs of the crafts. There are many records of songs of crafts having been in existence, but the songs themselves are no more to be found. It is machinery and industrialism that has destroyed them and we notice that wherever machinery and industraialism has come more recently, there do more of the old songs still survive. That is why in agriculture we have the largest collection of existing songs. In smithing, where there is still very little machinery—the blacksmith, farrier, village smith, a good many still linger, but the songs of the weavers and the spinners are gone with the handloom, as the songs of the potters have gone with the hand-wheel, and all those others where a man could sing peacefully in the job of his work. What would you have? You simply cannot sing when you have belts of machinery whirling aloud over your head and five thousand other people working with you...I am convinced that it is only in old societies that have been untouched by industrialism that the real connecting link is still to be found between music and handicraft, just as it is between handicraft and other things of a communal purpose."[1]

The spinning-bee is now breaking up in the Panjab villages. Old spinning songs are fast disappearing, and it sounds like a tragic note.

1 *The Ceylon National Review*, July 1906, pp. 192-3.

It will be a rich compensation to preserve on phonographic records the songs of the spinning-wheel.

The spinning metaphor has a long history in India. The poet in the age of the Vedas asked his gods to spin out the ancient thread. "As fathers they have set their heritage on earth, as a thread continuously spun out."[1] Rich in detail, the picture of the young husband wearing on the first day of the marriage the garment made by the bride, as seen in the Atharava Veda, looks very significant. The ancient tradition is still alive in India everywhere in one form or other. During the first year of her stay at her father-in-law's, the bride in Orissa, especially in Sambhalpur district, would do no other work than spinning. Assam is equally proud of the spinning-wheel and the hand-loom. In the Panjab, it was only natural that Hussain, the Sufi poet (1539-1593 A.D.) should compare his soul to a girl, who remained unmarried because she failed to prepare for her trousseau the yarn which, after the ancient tradition, she had to spin herself. As the husband adored the young wife, who brought dowry, hand-spun and hand-woven, so God liked the Sufi, who died with a good account of Karma.

"You want spinning songs," said a blushing young maiden, as I approached a spinning-bee in a remote village, "why not join us in our bee? You will have plenty by the evening."

I actually sat at a spinning-wheel, and the maiden, who had invited me, sang burying her head in her knees.

192 If you will marry, old man,
Do away with your beard,
Listen, I tell the truth,
Bring a gold palanquin.

I saw through the joke. They all blushed. I did not regret the happy occasion, however, and rose from my seat much uplifted. Then an old peasant grandmother appeared on the scene. She asked me sharply, "But why don't you enquire about the growth of cotton?"

I stood there silently. "We got very little cotton this year," she went on saying, "and this year spinning-bees will be thin.

1 Rig Veda, X, 56-6.

Even the cotton plants fall sick like men and women and children, my son, and we can't give them medicine."

The sisters of the spinning-wheel joined the grandmother to laugh at me. "First tell us some way to save the old spinning-wheels from white ants," the maiden, who blushed no more, was saying, "and then enquire about our songs."

HALBI POETRY

HALBI[1] is the language of peasant communities in Bastar State. Even among some of the tribal people like the Marias, the Parjas, the Bhatras and the Murias, it is acquiring the character of a *lingua franca* and has become of great practical use for the local interpreters.

" You will like to have some Halbi folk-songs, when they are so near," remarked my friend Pooran Singh at Jagdalpur, as he gave me his book, *Introduction to the Halbi Language.* " Halbi is a language of no less than 1,74,681 people of whom 1,71,293 souls live in Bastar State alone," he went on to say, " it is my mother-tongue and I am proud of it."

But a great linguistic scholar like Sir George Grierson spoke of Halbi not so highly when he wrote in the *Linguistic Survey of India*, "It is a mechanical mixture of bad Marathi, bad Oriya, and bad Chhattisgarhi." Pooran Singh was not willing to accept this criticism and he readily remarked, "Sandwitched between the Marathi, Oriya and Chhattisgarhi speaking areas, it is only natural that Halbi should be under their mixed influence, but it is rather sad that Grierson calls it a mixture of merely the bad elements of these languages."

He further quoted E. S. Hyde, Administrator of Baster, who called Halbi 'a valuable means of inter-communications', for, as he emphasized, especially among the Gondi-speaking Marias, Halbi is the only second language that may help the local interpreter.

I found a regular painstaking collaborator in Pooran Singh. At every typical word he would stop and give its whole background and purpose along with the literal meaning. He was not capable of reproducing the tunes of Halbi folk-songs. But he helped me to understand the poetic images.

REELO SONGS

Rich in poetry of open air and musical idiom, *Reelo*[2] is a remarkable type of Halbi folk-songs. It draws its strength from the everyday life of the people. Occasionally,

1 Literally, it means the language of the Halbas. Halba, Hindi *halbaha*, means ploughman.

2 In some parts it is known as *Leero*.

a boy and a girl may come round to like each other through the common medium of *Reelo* songs.

193 How can I bear to live with my husband ?
He gives me thrashings daily and we fight.
I must leave him one day
For you, my beloved.
Blossoming in the forest,
You are my *rasona* flower,
You are my singer of *Reelo* songs.

194 You say you will come to me.
Who will give me money ?
How shall I pay the price
In cash to your husband ?
I will prefer to be without a girl.
I know very well,
What an average woman is like ;
For her husband she serves gruel,
For herself she keeps the cooked rice.

195 Well, I too know
The men of *Kal Yug*.
Today they get rich,
Tomorrow they will drive away their wives.

196 Your comment I understand
My *rasona* flower,
But it is like the noise
Coming while you pound the *chivara*.

197 I fail to compete with you,
My dearest love,
Go on singing *Reelo*,
I shall be a calm listener.

198 For six months or one full year
I shall keep my eye on you,
I wish you were a good girl,
Not stupid like a buffalo.

199 Around a jar of *londa*,[1]
The boys of Tekragura village have gathered,
Water is served from the spring of Singanpur village,
Londa comes from Lamker.

We can imagine the girl offering a cup of *londa* to her beloved who sits amidst his friends, her winning smile lending a unique meaning to the long range of *Reelo* songs. The *Reelo* singers, nurtured in a tradition of long standing, compare each other with the yellow *rasona*[2] flowers. *Ma-i rasona*, or the *rasona* flower of the plains, is the name for a kind of friendship between boys and girls ; they commence it by exchanging the *rasona* flowers.

200 On the wayside mango tree
The peacock goes to roost,
His moustaches are growing.

201 Yes, my *rasona* flower,
The peacock's moustaches are growing,
But who will hear you so long ?
Make haste and be brief.

202 *Dadak, dadak*, falls the water,
My *rasona* flower,
Peep into your mind and see
If you will accept my love.

1 Rice beer.
2 It is also known as *rachona*.

203 Well, you ask me
To peep into my mind,
Have this *keora* flower
From my hands, my love.

204 I should have your *keora* flower, you say,
I take it with love,
You are taking leave now,
Forget me not.

205 The painted basket is brought
From Chinpal village ;
The boy who made it
Comes from Neganar.
No plough have I, nor bullocks,
Unavailing goes the wetness of the fields.

206 Unavailing goes the wetness of the fields, you say,
Why not ask your village friends
To come and help you[1],
If you have no plough nor bullocks,
My *rasona* flower ?

207 You propose help, my love,
From village friends.
I was only teasing you.
The plough and bullocks are there,
But there is no strength
In my body, my love,
The sun is setting.

208 Yes, my *rasona* flower,
The sun is setting, you say.

1 The *Reelo* singers point out the old system of co-operation, known as *bethia*. The villagers join in groups to help their neighbours in the field work, whenever it is difficult for them to do it single-handed. The people who come to help are called *Bethias*.

But like the naked roots of *jamala* tree
Standing on the river bank
Your moustaches are growing strong and unruly.
If not *bodi*[1] and *mehar*,[2]
Grow the *goindi*[3] rice,
You will have a rich harvest.
In a circle of forty sheaves,
You will place the harvest, my *rasona* flower.

209 Continue your blessed speech,
I hear patiently, my love,
How long will you go on?
My soul belongs to *Yama*,[4] the god of death,
My body will go to dust.
My days are numbered,
I will bend to the hill-breeze,
Today I talk to you,
Tomorrow I shall not.

210 To talk to me tomorrow
You will not be here, you say.
Give me names of your gods,
My *rasona* flower,
I shall pray for your safety.

Sometimes even the best part of a *Reelo* remains but a solo song. Of course, after every few lines in this case, the *Reelo* singer repeats the last item of the preceding line. Given to the use of satire, the monologue throws light on everyday village life.

211 My heart is glad, my *rasona* flower,
Harvesting and threshing all over ;
I am at leisure now.
At leisure, my wife,
Spread the mat, for my eyes are heavy with sleep.
Eyes are heavy with sleep, my wife,

1-3 Coarse varieties of rice cultivated on the hill slopes, where very little water is required ; ' d ' in *bodi* is pronounced as in body.
4 The god of death.

The child weeps and worries me.
The child weeps, my wife.
I, your husband, feel tired of making him quiet.
Whither have you been, I ask,
It makes you lose your temper.
Makes you lose your temper, my wife,
In the forest reserve of Titaragaon a leopardess roars.
The leopardess roars, my wife,
How it affects your heart ?
Affects your heart, my wife ?
Bhaen, Bhaen, Bhaen,[1] it fills my heart with fear.

212 The *mahua* oil you use on your hair,
Sitting on an old *machi,*[2]
You comb your shining hair.
You comb your shining hair, my love,
Quarrelling with your husband,
You ran to your mother, my love.
What makes you come, daughter, asks your mother,
My black-faced husband has beaten me, you cry.
My husband has beaten me, you cry, my love,
Get out, you black-faced one, you shout,
As your husband comes to reconcile.

CHAIT PARAB SONGS

Originally sung in the month of *Chait,*[3] *Chait Parab* songs may be expected to be spring songs, but they are songs of daily life with an emphasis on love.

They are not essentially in Halbi. Commonly sung by the Bhatras, who speak a mixed dialect of Oriya, they are almost Oriya-like in sound and colour.

The *Chait Parab* singer likes to commence his song with a prayer to *Mahamai Kalinka* and more often to *Danteshwari,* the tutelary goddess of Bastar Raj family.

The *Chait Parab* singer is sure of the blessings of the goddess, as he commences his song.

1 *Bhaen* pronounced nasally is a sound symbolical of the lonely forest spaces.
2 A seat of wood and string.
3 March-April.

213 Victory to you, goddess *Mahamai*,
Victory to you, Mother *Kalinka*,
I begin my song in your name,
Be kind and make my throat your seat.

As the village boys and girls compete in songs even the goddesses are supposed to take sides.

214 The goddess Ranokasini is worthy of my salute,
I begin my song in her name, success must be mine,
The drum sounds in the temple,
My salute to the god of the battle.

215 You saluted your god and goddess. Whom should go my salute ?
I sing in the name of Mother *Moali* and I salute her.
The parched rice is spread on the temple door,
Mother, give me voice of a *koel*.

On the first day of the *Chait Parab* festival, parties of young men go from door to door collecting small coins. This money is spent on liquor that they share together. Songs are sung in the temple of the goddess till the night is over; every now and then the music is followed by dancing. Next morning they all leave for the neighbouring villages, where they sing, and dance at every door to collect money which they spend on a good pubilc dinner on the last evening of the festival. It is primarily the festial of full-blooded boys and girls who are not yet married. The newly married boys and girls cannot resist the temptation of joining this celebration. The party of boys and girls that goes about singing, keeps a few elderly persons, too, who save it from going astray. Throughout the month of *Chait* the song feasts continue. The girl members of the party challenge the boys of the village and the boys sit to compete with the girls of that village separately.

The songs are both old and new and most of them are sung extempore. The party that wins gets presents of flowers, such as the rose, *champa*, jessamine and *hazariphul*, or parched

rice and molasses, from the defeated boys and girls, who, as tradition has maintained, never again in their life sit in contest with any winning member individually. Just after the announcement of the result of a contest, a defeated girl falls in love with the boy who wins ; with mutual consent, they run away to some forest or hill, wherefrom their parents bring them back after having given their final consent to their marriage. Such a marriage is known as *Paisa Mundi.* In olden days, the boys and girls used to begin the song contest with a definite promise that the defeated girl will marry the boy who surpasses her. One thing is clear even today. The girl, defeated in a *Chait Parab* song contest, carries on a life-long admiration for the winning boy and whenever he comes to see her at her father-in-law's place after her marriage, she offers him cordial hospitality and her husband cannot object to it.

Even after the festival in the month of *Chait,* one may find *Chait Parab* songs sung on other occasions as well, especially during the wedding feasts, when they get a new name *Mundi Mangto,* or the asking for the ring. The defeated boy is forced by the winning girl to present a ring to her.

The *Mundi Mangto* has become a popular tradition in Bastar. Whenever the village girls come to know of the arrival of a guest in the village, they assemble before him at night with a challenge to fight a contest. Even a State official on his visit to a village, may become an object of attraction to the *Mundi Mangto* girls of the village, who may ask him to compete in song if he could or simply acknowledge defeat and give them presents,

The *Chait Parab* songs make a colourful poetry. They may be easily arranged into a duet that seems to end nowhere.

216 The earth has various shades,
The black crow flew away ;
No more salutes to the goddess,
Come out with songs.

217 Come, my dearest girl,
My heart goes up with delight ;
Every night, O fair-faced singer,
I saw you in my dreams.

218 You have sung your song,
It has gone astray;
You cannot make a nice song,
You pick up the remains of others' meals.

219 Your *sari* is a dark cloud,
Thrown over your shoulders,
By the grace of God, my love,
We meet today.

220 A full day's walk on foot is the village of Maidalpur,
Buy me molasses, my love,
Offer me a home-spun kerchief
Unlike a *champa* flower it will look fresh all the year.

221 Dry *sal* leaf is breakable:
Not so really the *bodal* leaf;
Both your cheeks are tattooed, my love,
Sing your tiny songs.

222 The *hat*[1] is late by one week,
Our meeting is late by one month;
The running doe is caught
In the snare of the paddy-straw rope.

223 I love you, darling,
Be my life-companion;
In the *madhu ban*,[2] O girl,
I made a long search for you.

224 It rained this year heavily
We saw a flood;
Come with me, you say,
I cannot come, my home is far away.

1 The weekly market.
2 Forest of love.

225 Unploughed for eighty years lies the distant field,
Shade is pleasant in the plantain grove;
As a hard worker I shall work and feed you,
You won't yield, my love.

226 I dug a tank and planted a garden,
Water of my tank is sweet;
Far from me, my darling,
Must you quench your thirst?

227 The cobra crept by the *salpi* tree,
With a jar of liquor on my head
I went to your father,
He refused to make you my bride.

228 Heavy blows the wind, the sky is cloudy,
Here creeps the cobra, my love,
From the grip of a she-cobra,
How will you free yourself?

229 We have come as labourers,
We stand in a row;
Come, O singer,
Say yes and begin.

230 Nothing to be cooked in the widow's house,
She works to fill her little belly;
Whatever she gets, half-cooked or rotten,
She jumps to eat but starves.

231 The Bhatras live on the fruits of *sal* and *siume*,
The Mahras are happy,
The *Kawri*[1] on your shoulders, my love,
You cannot die of hunger.

1 *Kawri* is the bamboo pole; two baskets hang on its both sides. It is carried on the shoulder while taking leads from one place to another.

LEJA SONGS

In Kohkapal, Bilchur and Dharampur, the surrounding villages of Jagdalpur, I found out many specimens of Leja songs. It had more than two varieties and enjoyed equally the goodwill of the Mirgans, the Mahras and the Ghasis.

"It is not easy to trace the significance of *Leja*," Pooran Singh went on to say, "but *Leja* is the same as the Hindi Le ja (lit. take it). Perhaps this song was originally sung by the village folks giving a send-off to some dear one. Everyone who joined in the chorus said to the departing person, 'Take these good wishes and love of ours along with you.' And as time passed, there remained only *Le ja* (take it) as a relic of the original wish."

The Mahras repeat *Leja* thrice at the beginning of every song, while the Mirgans prefer to close with *Leja, Leja, Leja, re Leja*. In the village of Kohkapal, a young Mahra boy sang to me a Leja of unusual length. It was a long fragment of Halbi poetry.

232 Hurriedly come to me, O Koili,
Let me have a sweet embrace.
The *mandia*[1] I have is good,
Smoothly runs the grind-stone.
My name is Haria, O Koili,
I wish I could live with you.
You look like a sugar-cane,
I must have you.
Leja, Leja, Leja,
Not merely a *Leja* song,
It brings actual news from Benta Bheja[2].

233 *Leja, Leja, Leja,*
The road has many sharp turns
Do not walk over clods, O girl
You will fall.

1 A kind of corn.
2 The name of a village.

234 *Leja, Leja, Leja,*
Look at the *amar bel*[1].
What makes you hide and work inside ?
Come and play with me.

235 *Leja, Leja, Leja,*
The new moon appears.
Even if you were big as a mountain,
I cannot be satisfied by looking at you for a while.

Pooran Singh strongly argued that in the *Leja* songs there is very seldom any affinity between the first lines and the later portion, for the significance of the opening lines is confined to the last word that rhymes with the last word of the song. I could not agree with him on this point, for the opening of the *Leja* song appeared to me like the meditative brow of a person, suggestive and serene. If the *Leja* song is a snapshot, I argued, the opening of the song may be taken as a close background. It was after a long discussion that Pooran Singh and some other Halbi scholars agreed with me ; I told them that such a phase may be found in some of the folk-songs of other languages as well.

236 *Leja, Leja, Leja,*
The *anvari* and *jam* trees are standing closely.
Put on your shady hat of bamboo and leaves, my dear prince,
The sun burns your face.

237 *Leja, Leja, Leja,*
It rained in showers,
My song followed the pouring of the water,
It rained for the whole night.

238 *Leja, Leja, Leja,*
The leaves of the *anvari* and the plantain.
Look at the *goidi lakro* paddy plants
Bent with grain in the sloping field.

1 A kind of creeper that spreads over trees and does not let them grow.

239 The house with nine pillars and eight beams
Belongs to your father, O girl.
I have served your father for many years,
Yet no sign so far to win your hand.
Leja, Leja, Leja, re Leja.

240 On the berry tree speaks the bird, speaks the *gundlu*[1].
With a thorny stick he beats me, sister.
My leg below the knee is badly swollen.
Leja, Leja, Leja, re Leja.

241 *Turbud, turbud,* sounds the *turbudi* drum,
Rapidly sounds the *nishan* drum.
Look at the marriage-feast,
Everyone served on leaves
With curry made of the *pipal* sprouts,
That, too, so little.
Big leaf-cups of rice-gruel are served
That does not cost much.
Leja, Leja, Leja, re Leja.

242 A *koel* here and the other coming from across the river.
Leave me now for God's sake,
You have caused my ruin,
O husband-eater widow.
Leja, Leja, Leja, re Leja.

243 I brought bamboos and made a bundle.
O mother of five children,
You are in your second youth.
Leja, Leja, Leja, re Leja.

244 Your face is like the *sal* leaf.
Combing and braiding your hair,
You coiled your pigtail at the back,
Your ears are still unadorned.
Leja, Leja, Leja, re Leja.

1 A bird.

245 *Leja, Leja, Leja,*
I raise the crops with hard labour.
Terrible to pay the *dheda*[1] corn to the *saukar*[2].

246 *Leja, Leja, Leja,*
I will prepare the pickle.
In case it goes wrong,
I shall report to the police.

Every day, every week, the new *Leja* is composed extempore and the Halbi poetry is proud of it. W. V. Grigson offers a long range of *Leja* songs sung by the Muria boys and girls.

Leja, leja, O dear vine, take my one-stringed fiddle
To the flooded river, plunge in and play with it.
Leja, leja, O sliced gourd, in the long days that have passed
Since I last saw you, you have grown plump and lovely.
Rain has fallen and fallen, the pond is brimming. But, dear one,
Do not touch me, for my heart jumps to see you.
We have been separated long, too long, my darling,
And now, leja, O leja, we must live together.
Beloved, I'm carried away by the pock-mark on your dark, shining face,
By the glossy hair on your dear head.
Throw a fiddle at the plum tree, and the fruit will fall.
But who will soften the Englishman to the tale of our love ?
My tender fern, he is not our own Bastar-born king
Who would listen to our tale, and you would walk before him
In your loveliness, and melt him to sympathy ?
Leja, leja, O wild berry, would you leave me ?
Leja, leja, though, wealth of my heart, I know
That you are not mine, nor for me to touch, yet
Leja, O leja, desire will flare in your heart ;
Will you come then for a while to my house?

1 The corn borrowed at seed time that has to be re-paid one and a half times at the harvest.
2 The village money-lender.

Leja, leja, O wealth of my heart, the summer rains
Have soaked the fields, the rains of June.
My heart blazes with passion, my flower,
(Let go my loin-cloth a moment; the white girl is coming).
Leja, leja, sweet bug of my bed, what have you done to me ?
I see you, and all our past love leaps to remembrance.
Why though you snuggle, do you struggle, why cry and try
To keep yourself back, though I've tumbled you down ?
Leja, leja, give in, give in, shining brow,
Or, by the Mother ! my love will become hate.
Leja, leja, O wealth of my heart, the summer rains
Have soaked the fields, the rains of June.
My heart blazes with passion, my flower,
(Let go my loin-cloth a moment; the white girl is coming).
Leja, leja, sweet saunterer, leja, O love,
Lend me your jewels, for me to go to Jagdalpur fair.
Leja, leja, O love, you will remember your promise,
For as the deer leaves tracks, I have left an itch in your body,
And I shall learn how to tell the English ruler about you.
The wild beans and berries have dried up under the hill,
But your memory came fresh there to me at night,
And I could not sleep, leja, O Leja !
Ye, de, O little goldfish, O shining brow,
Do not cry over what happened last night ;
Leja, leja, come, dear vine, let us enjoy ourselves first
And then, if you will, tell the foreigner.
The rain is falling, sweet bug of my bed,
Why should I listen to your silly pleading?
Why are you striving and crying, pulling and pushing ?
You'll be all right, yes, you'll be all right.
There, there, sweet bug of my bed, dear wild berry,
Lend me your plough and bullocks,
And I will sow a crop of maize.
Leja, leja, who will play my one-stringed fiddle ?
All night I thought about you. Come and plunge and play in my pool,
I will play with you, as a shuttle flashes through the warps of a loom.
Listen, O listen to the pouring rain of June.
The wild beans and berries have gone dry under the hill,
And you tell me to sing to you about God.

God is everywhere in the world ; but your singer,
Your singer, my flower is with you in Bastar.
Leja, re leja, re leja re, sweet saunterer, my berry, my plantain-vine.
You know, one who walks on the edge of Gangamoonda lake
Is bogged in the mud ; but that mud is the place
For sowing rice seeds, leja, leja, O leja !
Ye, de, burn, my berry, burn, my only jewel,
And think and long for the night.
The tall plantain-vine bears a fine cluster of fruit.
Be ready for me, dear bug of my bed, comb
And decorate your hair, my only jewel, for tomorrow
Desire will fire me and I shall come back to you[1].

A Halbi proverb puts the *Leja* on the top, *Leja asan geet nihai*, *i.e.*, there is no song like the Leja. It has no end. Its words never die. It has power over the young and the old alike.

The forest is mysterious, but more mysterious is the Muria village. The *Leja*-singers, youths and maidens, have their own free republic. It is their *ghotul*, or the village-dormitory. Every evening they gather to sing and dance and sleep together in the *ghotul*. The eldest boy is the *silledar*, or the supreme leader ; the eldest girl supervises the girls, the *jhalivaru* as she is called. The parents remember their own *ghotul* days ; they never interfere. Every girl is a *motiari* and she has her own darling, the *chelik*. If a boy or a girl is absent for more than two nights, their parents have to pay the fine to the *ghotul*. The *chelik* and the *motiari* are partners while dancing, two by two in a large circle as the dance goes on. They share the same mat at night. But the discipline is strict. For the marriage they must await the word of the *silledar*. Then they have to leave the *ghotul*. If a girl becomes pregnant, she must hold the hand of her boy before the whole house ; they must marry.

SONG OF MURIA REBELLION

On the frontiers of Halbi poetry lies the poetry of the Gondi-speaking Maria Gonds. The Abujh Mar, or the land of

1 W. V.Grigson, *Leja, or Love Song, of the Muria of the Amabal Pargana of Bastar State*, New Verse, February-March 1937, pp. 17—19.

obscurity, is a mass of rugged hills where the Maria Gonds have lived for centuries.

The Halbas are found in small colonies everywhere except the extreme south. They were the Raja's garrison in the past and their language replaced even the aboriginal dialects in certain cases. Halbi may extend one day even to the Abujhmar Hills, the Godavari and the Lower Saveri and the Lower Indravati valleys.

The tribal unrest was the cause of the Muria Rebellion in 1886 in the time of Raja Bhairam Deo. After the death of the Raja, the State was managed by British Government. In 1910, when Rudra Pratap Deo, Bhairam Deo's son, ruled over the State, once again the Murias rebelled; then even the Marias and Parjas joined them. The Muria-Maria-Parja rebellion was suppressed subsequently. The voice of the tribal unrest, however, has found its echo in Halbi poetry. The *Weaver's Song* seems to have caught the entire effect of the situation.

247 *Kholo kholo,* flows the water.
How long will you command the woman with the loose hair-knot ?
The *dhoti* with big borders must be woven closely,
Not by feet, the people should be known by faces.
Seen from the back he looks gorgeous,
Hands clapped with handcuffs, feet bound with fetters.
He is Kanhai Majhi.

The village-headman is called *Majhi* among the Murias. Kanhai must have been a hard-bitten headman. His image is fixed on the mind of every Muria mother. The youths and maidens in the *Ghotul* talk of the past history. The *Weaver's Song* adds strength to the tribal unity.

THE BHOJPURI BIRHA

THE Bhojpuri folk-songs have a long oral tradition behind them It may be assumed that the oldest songs, coming through the evolutionary process of unconscious and conscious selection and modification in their passage through the people's minds generation after generation, are more ancient than the earliest classical poetry of this country. Community singing kept the creative genius alive for centuries. New songs came into being extempore ; many of them died, others survived and got into the oral tradition. They all make us familiar with the people's road through culture and history. They are, in broad outline, the people's musical autobiography. The *Birha*, particularly, helps us to understand its development and *milieu*; it reveals the emotional levels. Solitude and vastness surround the *Birha*-singer ; the horizon widens.

Birha means separation from the lover or the beloved, yet the *Birha* in Bhojpuri is not necessarily a song of separation.

" My *Birha* I won't leave here," an old cowherd told me, " it must travel with me. No matter if I go into Heaven or Hell after this life. My *Birha* is my story in song. My *Birha* is my passport for every journey."

" Don't you sing the *Birha* ? " I once inquired of a peasant.

" I sing," he replied smilingly, " though I cannot sing the *Birha* like the Ahir."

It is significant that the Ahir in Bihar and the United Provinces is the uncrowned king of *Birha* songs. " His family having been connected for many generations with the sacred animal, the cow," as Eha says, "he enjoys a certain consciousness of moral respectivity, like a man whose uncles are deans or canons." With almost equal delight he sings of his gentle and simple cow and his wild sweetheart. He would even sing of his thirsty goddess in the pastures, and would like to give her the milk of his cow. His accent is the pride of Bhojpuri.

Spoken by ten million people, Bhojpuri is an important language. As George A. Grierson remarked in *The Linguistic Survey of India*, " Bhojpuri is the practical language of an energetic race." The old city of Bhojpur, after which it was named, is no more to be found, yet the two villages of the same name situated in Shahabad district in Bihar still carry on the time-old memory.

The Ahir speaks loudly and sings with the strength of his lungs. He walks freely in his pastures. His superstitions are deep-rooted and powerful. It is very seldom that he defies the authority of his gods. He laughs a double laughter. Even his gods seem to laugh with him, sharing his thought and wit.

In his favourite songs, the Ahir addresses his god and the fellow cowhered in one breath.

Every Ahir knows the old *Birha* that depicts the birth of a real folk-song.

248 The *Birha* we raise not like a crop, brother,
Nor it ripens on a branch ;
The *Birha* lives in the heart, O Rama,
Sing it while the heart is full.

The *Birha* is the song of the full heart. Its method is pictorial. The image may be life-like or it may be a figure seen in a dream. The Ahir youth, as he sings, seems to touch up the fading colours.

Years ago, Grierson explored the wealth of the Bhojpuri folk-songs and aptly observed :

"Many of these are of considerable length..... These longer songs, however, are the property of the professional singers.....If these longer songs can be compared to opera, the shorter ones can be equally well likened to the drawing-room piece.....Every stout young fellow has a repertoire of them, out of which he sings whenever he has nothing better to do, whether alone, or in company. He has probably only one tune, to which he fits all his words, and as the tune wanders about through all keys, and generally has a *cadenza* of twenty or thirty notes every second or third syllable, it is difficult for the European, untrained to native tastes, to catch what he sings. This paucity of melodies has often struck me. In the country districts I never heard of a new tune being invented. There seems to be a certain stock of tunes ready-made, to which the words of every new song must be fitted. Thus every mill-song must be sung to the melody called *Jatsar* and such songs are called *Jatsars*. So certain songs sung in the month of *Chait* are classed as *Ghatos*, and the class of songs sung in the rainy season is called *Kajri*, which is the name of the air to

which they are sung. Some castes have melodies peculiar to them. For instance only cowherds (*Ahirs* or *Goars*) sing the songs classed *Chachars* and *Birhas*, which are sung to the tunes called *Chachar* or *Birha* respectively.....

"The *Birha* is essentially a wild flower.....Contrary to what might have been expected, it deals much oftener with the warrior god Rama than with the cowherd god Krishna..... This is the cosequence of the singers' surroundings. Shabahad, the district in which they dwell, might almost be called a second Rajputana in its heroric legends and songs..... It is a country of fighting men, and as such, Rama of Ayodhia and not Krishna of Mathura, is the god of the land. The *Birha* also deals with other deities, *e.g.*, with the special incarnation of Durga, which is the titulary deity of the singers' village.....

"Many are the *Birhas*, which describe the charms which adorn and the temptations which beset the pretty young village maidens, whose forms are developing from childhood into maidenhood.....the girls are all wives, though their husbands have not taken them home. Hence we find the girls complaining of the non-arrival of their husbands, a number of not very delicate jokes which the village elders (men and women) launch at a girl when she first becomes *apta viro*. Sometimes, too, we find the girl, half-pleased, half-angry, relating the attentions paid to her by some village-swain who met her as she walked through the forest. Again, we have songs referring to a woman's married life. She is now living in her husband's house, and she hyperbolically describes the slimness of her form, as reminding him of the string by which he lowers his drinking vessel into the well. Or, perhaps, as often happens, the husband is away on service and sends his earnings home, which are not always put to legitimate uses.

"Even when away from home on service the cowherd longs for his congenial occupations, and looks back to the happy days when he wandered free over the rich pastures on the Kaimur hills (the principal pasture land of Shahabad, they are to the south of the district and are a branch of the Vindhya range). Or he looks contemptuously at the elaborate preparations of wrestlers and gymnasts, and tells how the young Ahir would only need to touch up his waist cloth, and could do just as much.....each one is a miniature picture of some phase of village life....."[1]

[1] George A. Grierson, *Some Bhojpuri Folk-Songs*, J. R. A. S., Volume XVIII new series, p. 207.

The *Birha* is sung with a deep sincerity and feeling. The music almost the same every time, yet every voice has its own colour. The stability of tune, however, may not be taken as a good quality. The theme may be any, it must follow the same music. In a more developed stage, of course, the music follows the words, and illustrates the spirit of each song separately.

The *Birha*, in spite of the conflict between the tune and the theme, seems to maintain its appeal.

One may assume that the tune of the *Birha* is older than even the Bhojpuri language itself, or that it goes back to the prehistoric times.

While singing the *Birha*, the singer feels life coursing through his veins from head to feet, and if he has a charming voice, he can inspire his listeners. It is the unsophisticated Ahir alone who can preserve the original colour of the *Birha*. The flute, for instance, has existed for centuries.

249 The bamboo grove where I played with friends,
Never fades from my mind ;
I shall make a bamboo flute from the same forest,
I shall sing the *Birha* from door to door.

The *Birha* is not strictly regular. The second and the fourth lines may rhyme or not ; and as regards the length of the lines, their elasticity makes up for the deficiency.

The *semar*, or the silk-cotton tree, feels sad. It does not know what to do. The *Birha*-singer knows its heart-felt pain as he raises his voice in the forest.

250 The *semar* tree meditates,
Why are my flowers red ?
Why are not my flowers offered to gods ?
Why the gardener does not make garlands?

The *semar*, with its scarlet flowers, is so very beautiful to look at. Yet the flowers of the *semar* have no scent. Any worthless thing may be compared to the *semar* flowers, though the Gond riddle about the *semar* does not seem to underrate its

flowers, 'A rough pole covered with red jewels'.[1] It is obvious that the Ahir, in a desperate mood, meditates like the sad *semar* tree. And who knows if even some Ahir like the Gond, becomes the ghost of this tree, 'It is well not to build a house too near a *semar* tree, for here a *raksha* may be hiding, that discomforting ghost of a man who has died without tasting the delights of love. A fire consumes him, and at night he steals out of his person to the house of some village maid, and crops her virgin flower.'[2]

The lotus, on the contrary, is quite fortunate.

251 The lotus calls upon Rama;
I feel lonely in the pond,
Leaves are picked and sent to the dining-room,
The lotus is offered to Siva.

The lotus is treated as sacred. It is also a thing of beauty; the lotus-eyed damsel has been proverbial in India. The time-honoured lotus must go to the temple. Siva likes it. The lotus leaves make good plates; a gift of nature. One of the great ideals is to follow the example of the lotus.

Siva alone will not do. The *Dihvar*, or the tutelary village god, is important.

252 Village, O village, calls the village god,
The village is fast asleep:
Riding on your womb I came, O village,
You don't respond to my first call.

Every village has its own tutelary god. He is said often to be heard calling out over the fields at night, especially when the worshippers are lax in their attention to him. With a new village, a new village god was automatically created. This *Birha*, cooled artistically in the mould into which the popular diffusion of many generations poured it, expresses the driving force of mythology. The village god, even more authoritative than the landlord, would disturb the fatigued countrymen while

1 Verrier Elwin, *Songs of the Forest*, p. 148.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

they are asleep at dead of night. The authority of the village god, however, cannot be questioned, as the old traditions have maintained.

In the pasture lands, the goddess tries to exploit the Ahir by making him feel that she should be given some milk and the Ahir takes his courage in both hands to evade her oft-repeated demand as if she were only a clever country woman who lives by her wits.

253 Our goddess feels hungry, brother,
She asks for milk to drink,
Shall I milk the banyan or the *barohi*[1],
My *baina*[2] has gone a long way off.

Yet in another *Birha* the Ahir, perhaps overtaken by the fear of the wrath of the goddess, makes a promise to offer her the milk of his cow.

254 Goddess, O goddess, I call, O goddess Sarda,
The goddess hovers above,
A river of milk shall I give you, O goddess,
Come down from the sky.

Rama, Laksmana and Sita, the chief characters of the Ramayana, have their faint images in the *Birha*.

255 I recall Rama as I sing, I recall brother Lakshmana,
I recall the whole world, as I sing ;
I recall mother and father , as I sing,
They brought me up since childhood.

256 Rama and Lakshmana left for the forest,
Sita followed them,
Rama and Lakshmana felt thirsty,
Sita gave them nectar mixed with water.

1 A kind of a tree.
2 The name of a cow.

The Ahir may go on with the tale. His own suffering, if any, would come to his mind ; all the pathos, woven into the woof of Ramayana, looks like his own. Everywhere in India, the song of Rama's exile echoes and re-echoes.

The *Birha* is a miniature picture. It is not always a short-lived song, yet when it ceases to live, from its ashes, phoenix-like, it rises again with renewed vitality to live through another cycle. The image gets astonishingly sharp and absolutely clear —more sharp and clear than before in every way. Every image is at once a clue to the Ahir's interests. It seems to define love, its significance, its emotional overtone.

The Ahir girl, who has left her childhood much behind, walks like a forest-princess.

257 In one forest wanders an ant,
In one forest wanders a cow ;
In one forest wanders the daughter of the Ahir mother
With bells fastened on her breasts.

The tinkling sound of the young girl's bells makes answering music in the heart of the Ahir, and he makes a living forest poetry.

Who knows if the Ahir virgin, who is supposed to be the mother of the chief god of the Gonds, walked in the forest with bells fastened on both her breasts ? Burra Deo, the Gond god, "springs, they say, from a child born of an illicit union between a Gond and an Ahir girl. The father murdered the child by strangling it, and its spirit then began to haunt first the man and his family and then all the people of the neighbourhood. It could only be quietened by a promise that the Gonds would make it the great god of their tribe and worship it for ever."[1]

The *Birha* catches the voice of the Ahir girl. It is love that has ever poured drops of honey into the hard life of man.

258 The east wind blows as I yawn,
My body is filled with lassitude while standing ;
Who is the dandy who looked at me ?
The home nor the forest pleases me.

1 Verrier Elwin, *Songs of the Forest*, p. 16.

The *Birha* at its best is a symbolic document. The lyrical hreads are woven into a sort of primitive symbolism. Such ɔngs are less numerous than one might expect.

259 I was slim, I became more slim,
I became a string to draw water from the well ;
I gave my lord sweet water to drink
Without vessel, without string.

Some of these songs refer to tattooing. The tattoo marks, unlike the ornaments, it is believed, accompany a woman beyond ıe cremation ground. The tattooer should be an artist; herself woman, she should understand the taste of the young girl.

260 On her fair arms, the fair one gets herself tattooed,
The needle pierces her tender heart and she says,
Tattoo such a pattern, O tattooer,
As the dyer dyes my *sari*.

Atmosphere and character are handled with speed and ɛrseness. Each word is fully charged.

261 The fair one left alone from Bagsar,
She adorned the parting of her hair with pearls ;
Who is the young man who looked at me ?
My pearls dropped suddenly !

The *Birha* may have a double meaning in certain cases.

262 I sent the bumble bee for juice, O friend,
It brought me a little juice ;
How many girls shall I share,
The whole village is dear to me ?

Here *ras*, in the original, means both love and juice. *Bhanvarva*, in Sanskrit *bhramara*, symbolizes a flirt going from one flower to another. The girl, somehow, means that the love she has procured, is enough only for herself and she cannot afford to share it even with the dearest maiden.

Mangri symbolizes the untamed Ahir girl.

263 Your legs and mine are the same length, O Mangri,
Why not come to the gram field with me ?
I shall give you plenty of green gram to fill your belly,
I shall sing the unheard *Birha*.

263 I eat the green gram and fill my stomach,
I eat the gram cooked as *dal*,
The gram, used in sweetmeat prepared with *ghee*, I eat,
My plump and fair cheeks owe a good deal to the gram.

There must be songs in praise of the wheat. Says a Bhojpuri proverb , *avar anna khailen, na gehun ganthiavale, i.e.* other corn is for food, but the wheat is to be treasured in a bundle. The very idea that you have wheat gives you strength.

265 I grazed the cows in younger days,
I took the milk of the *bakenva* cow;
Since father gave me the handle of the plough,
I can drink the *bakenva's* milk no more.

The *bakenva*, in Hindi *baken* or *bakena*, is a cow that calved some nine or ten months ago; her milk is thicker and more sweet.

Away from home and his congenial life, the Ahir yearns to go back. When sung with the proper force *Birha* has its direct appeal.

266 No more looking after the cows,
No more bathing in the Ganges,
No more friends' company under the *neem* tree,
The three things God took away from me.

267 I sing the *Birha* roaring like a tiger,
As though the clouds thunder ;
The fair one rushes out as she listens to it,
The words of the *Birha* bend down suddenly.

268 In his cowshed sings the Ahir's son,
The fair bride inside, her house discovers the voice ;
Where does a cow have mother's home, O friend,
And where do the tenant farmers have a motherland ?

The image of the woman, who compares herself to a cage-bird, makes a frequent reference ; it is followed by the image of the woman who considers herself happy. The flirt feels jealous of her husband's sister—her newly matured *nanad*.

269 All the sparrows will fly away
Each in its time ;
I a sinner, confined in a cage,
I die in deep sorrow.

270 The fair one sits cleaning her sauce pan,
Playing rhythmically on a small brass vessel she thinks,
Money my husband gets as pay,
I spend as much on chewing betels.

271 My accursed sister-in-law will not listen to me,
She stands leaning over the yard ;
The mosquitoes could bite her flower-like breasts,
She will not lend them to me, even if I ask.

272 Death won't come to such a sister-in-law,
She never goes to her father-in-law's;
She puts her bed on the road,
My sweetheart comes and goes back.

The point is that the newly-matured sister-in-law has become an unwanted rival.

In some of these songs we find a comparison between the images in the first and the second half of the *Birha*.

273 A bunch of mangoes looks lovely on the branch,
The *palas* trees are blossoming in the forest ;
The child looks lovely in the lap of the fair bride,
As though the moon appeared on the sky.

274 The lotus flowers look lovely in the tank,
The wheat-ears look lovely in the field ;
The Raja's turban looks lovely in the royal court,
The *kamdhenu*[1] bride in the yard.

275 The *koel* sings, on the branch of the mango,
The peacock dances in the forest ;
I sing my *Birha* on the river bank,
It pierces the heart.

The parallels are not always reasoned, well-balanced allegories. Yet a note of sincerity runs through the images drawn from nature and human life. This double parallelism sometime harbours the economic problems of village life.

276 All will turn grazers of buffaloes and cows,
If there were enough pastures ;
All will like to have wives and children,
If they had enough money to spend.

The *Birha*-singer who has inherited the experience of his forefathers, is more and more conscious of the increasing population :

1 The name of the divine cow.

277 The she-tortoise gives birth to a son O Rama,
The Ganges gives birth to a bank of sand;
Small, small girls have produced daughters and sons,
Why a thunderbolt does not fall on their wombs?

The earliest *Birhas* are self-expressions of wishfulfilment; they breathe the air of the forest. The *Birha,* to use the words o one of the earliest *Birhas*, never ripened like a fruit on the tree, was never cultivated like a crop in the field ; it simply lived in the heart of the Ahir. It drank the cow's milk, sucked the forest honey, one after the other. The Ahir bride walked through the forest bedecking the parting of her hair with pearls. The village god did not drop the reins of the village even at dead of night. The goddess ever wanted milk from the Ahir.

Now the Ahir finds himself in a changed world. Exploitation becomes rapid. Harvest decreases. The landlord demands his share. The *Birha* today must grow in the field, must ripen like a fruit on the tree. It must suck now even the bitter sap of life. New society, new *Birha.* It must tell the story of the Ahir's struggle for bread, the story of the real world of necessity.

The railway line has reached the forest. The *Birha* cannot miss a satirical note on this change in the economic life of the people.

278 Since the railway train shot out,
Forests and hills are cut down,
Money I had, I gave to my legs,
The bones of my back I gave to my stomach.

The money was spent on the railway ticket to save the legs from exertion. Penniless, the Ahir ate nothing, and his stomach, shrinking and shrinking, touched his backbone.

The Ahir leaves his village now for employment in the town. His wife does not agree.

279 I fall at your feet darling,
Do not go to the town ;
Eat the wheat-bread with the cooked mustard leaves,
Pass your days in the village.

But the wheat-bread is a dream for many Ahir families.

280 Looking at big, big bins, don't be mistaken, Nirahua,
Even the she-rat fasts here;
Our children lick up the *lapsi*,
We sell the *mahua* to make a living.

The *lapsi* is more or less the staple food of the poor. The coarser part of the wheat flour is first soaked in water ; after some time it is filtered and the water is heated. As it reaches the bubbling point, some *gur* is mixed. When cold, it turns solid. The *mahua* flowers are dried and taken as food ; they are also used to distil country liquor. The *mahua* fruit makes a good food, and its seeds yield an oil used for cooking.

The Ahir gets no inspiration for a new song.

281 I have lost my *Birha* song due to killing hunger,
I have lost my *Kajri* songs, my *Kabir* songs ;
As I look at the fair one's rising breast,
No more desire rises in my heart.

The foundation of old rural economy all shaken, the Ahir leads a hungrily idle life. No bread, no *Birha*.

Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of India's struggle for independence, is replacing the tutelary village god. Unlike the old gods, he is a fighter for the people's cause. The challenging voice of the Ahir poet has all the unique hungry atmosphere behind it.

282 You will not win, O Englishman, in Gandhi's fight,
You may do your best;
Good, good luxuries you had in this land,
The bungalows will be sold now.

The future of the Bhojpuri Birha is not dark. The economically strong Ahir will sing more and more about the outer reality, though the inner realities of life, as ancient as his forests and plough-land, will endure with all their eternal pulse and simplicity.

A WANDERING MINSTREL

His forehead is firm, his eyes calm with the experience of old age. He has felt all the pulses of life. Over the people's sorrows he weeps: over his own joys he may not smile. "Man's life is brief," he says, "brief its music, its thread and colour."

"Ever since I got a *sarangi*, I thought it was my bride," he tells me. As he plays on it, it laughs and cries with him. it becomes almost human, as if it were his own heart, as the Russian folk singer said of his *domra*, "When I touched the instrument, it seemed to me that it was not *domra* but my young heart that beat against my fingers," or as someone said of a Gypsy fiddler of Hungary, "He plays the fiddle as one breathes: the instrument seems to become part of his organism: the strings are a natural prolongation of his nervous system."

Half a century old, his memory is flooded with colours like the autumn grass. His mind retains its glow. Twisting into a bow under his moustaches, his lips ever catch a running smile. Wrinkles on his forehead have followed their own patterns: they all mean experience.

A villager, first, last and always, he is like the blowing wind, fresh and invigorating. With his eyes bowed down over the strings of his *sarangi*, he sings as he goes from village to village. Children gather round him. Young girls, shy brides and mothers listen to him with admiration. For his songs he gets a handful of corn or a small coin.

"What does it matter if I have no fields and money," he says, "my songs are my harvest."

A deep sense of friendship, that he must have sucked with his mother's milk, has brightened his outlook. Yet he cannot sign his name.

He walks slowly, his hand stroking his beard. His big, hairy hands, holding his *sarangi*. His eyes will at once guess your opinion of him.

"What wind has brought you back?" he asks me.

"Your songs ever pull me back, Baba Sundar," I tell him, and he bursts with laughter.

"Your songs will make me mad."

"Then I must sing."

As the rumour goes, he was born in a Jat house, and if a

notorious minstrel had not kidnapped him in his childhood days, he would have turned into a full-blooded peasant. He has no memory of his mother. " My father was a wandering minstrel," he says with conviction, "he died when I was fifteen. He gave me his art." He cannot name his birthplace. A full gypsy. Roads are dear to him. Winds are his companions.

The old story of the princess, who went about begging for a husband and won over a wandering minstrel at last, provokes an interesting thought. Was that minstrel of the folk-tale a better artist than this wandering minstrel ?

His songs are long memories and essential passions. The joyous, full-flowing love-songs centring round the story of the immortal lovers, Heer and Ranjha. He sings with great warmth. Every girl among his listeners perhaps yearns to become another Heer, and every bride is inspired to recognize her husband as her Ranjha. He sings the ballad of Raja Gopi Chand who left his throne in search of truth. Every mother yearns for her son, going out for employment, as if he had gone away like another Gopi Chand. He sings of Pooran Bhagat, another prince, who walked on God's path. He cries actually as he continues the song-story of Pooran Bhagat.

He is a folk singer ; I, a collector of folk-songs. Sitting by his side and listening to him, I at once visualize Walter Starkie listening to his Gypsy blood-brother's ancient song and thus making up his mind to travel among the Gypsies in their own garb to know their life and lore, the song haunting him in his lecture room and at home.

> What care I for goose-feather bed,
> With the sheet turned down so bravely, O !
> For tonight I shall sleep in a cold open field
> Along with the raggle-taggle Gypsies, O !

The contrast is obvious. This old, wandering minstrel goes about alone : he never married. I wander with my wife and daughter. Walter Starkie, though married, goes about with a fiddle across Spain, as he writes in his *Spanish Raggle-Taggle*, mentioning his wife, " As day by day she weaves and unweaves Penelope's web awaiting my return, she will pray that long nights and days of toiling over the plateau lands of Castile living on raw ham and garlic will change my squat, uncourtly figure into a bronzed

image of the Apollo Belvedere. Sweet illusion of the female mind! What should we do if our wives ever give up the hope of their dreams? So, work away, seamstress! Let out the girth three inches: I'll not feel ashamed. Nay, I'll console myself with the thought that the best minstrels and story-tellers were gifted with a pleasant rotundity of mind and body: they were able to take the rough with the smooth and relish the swift changes of fortune."

He believes the legend, and is sure that after his death Guru Nanak came back on earth to fetch the seeds of the mustard and maize, for he could not live in Heaven without the *sarson sag* and the maize bread! Now even the gods are fond of this food, he tells me, as if it were the latest news from Heaven.

"Dreams ever give me a new force," he says, "my life is the milky way." And does not the milky way look like life's well-trodden track?

I mark him retouching the old words and tunes here and there. He is an artist in his own right. He has specialized. It has always been my memorable experience to hear him singing.

"Hallo Baba Sundar!"

He smiles at once, as I raise my folded hands in reverence. He seems to say in the words of Walt Whitman, "My tongue, every atom of my blood, formed from this soil; born here of parents the same and their parents the same." And his *sarangi* speaks in almost human voice as he sings.

283 What flower is the best, brother,
What flower the best?
Yes, you know the cotton flower,
It covers the naked limb, brother.

What footmark is the best, brother,
What footmark the best?
Yes, you know the mark of the water,
It makes the earth fertile, brother.

What colour is the best, brother,
What colour the best?
Yes, you know the colour of the earth,
It gives us bread, brother.

What voice is the best, brother,
What voice the best ?
Yes, you know the voice of the grind-stone,
It turns the wheat into flour, brother.

What beak is the best, brother,
What beak the best ?
Yes, you know the beak of the ploughshare,
It prepares the earth for seed, brother.

What instrument is the best, brother,
What instrument the best ?
Yes, you know the *sarangi*,
The friend of the minstrel, brother.

284 The eyes are pleaders, the eyes are traders,
The eyes open shops.
The eyes stand witnesses for the eyes.
The eyes pay fine for the eyes.
The eyes wound the eyes.
The eyes dress the wounded eyes.
The eyes look nice on the faces of the persons,
Who have tasted love.

285 Whom should I say, welcome, O moon ?
My love is leaving me with tears.
They are wandeing about in the streets,
Whom a pair of eyes has overpowered.
Tears fall on the shirt,
As the clouds of pain pour down.
Come, darling, let us embrace,
Lest we die in anger.

286 You promised to come after a few days,
It is time now.
You live in happiness,
My nights pass in sorrow.
Delights no more I remember,
Pain pricks me like a thorn.
You left for a distant land,
You threw me in a long gloom.

287 At midnight do not take the buffaloes out,
I Hir myself stop you ;
Snakes crawl near every plant,
They might bite you ;
Chuchak my father will lose nothing,
I shall pass my life as a widow,
Who shall be my friend ?
Whom shall I relate my story ?

288 Hir fears her mother,
Stealthily she looks in the streets ;
If they tell her, Ranjha has not come home,
She sheds tears and says to herself:
Nights dark on the way,
Wind will strike at his waist.
Come, girl friends, I could not attend you,
I myself saw my love leaving me behind.

289 Those who sympathise have a flying laughter,
Those who are cruel throw arrows ;
My love was more sweet than sugar,
Now he tastes worse than *khar* ;
He was weighed with flowers,
Now he is heavier than a rock ;
Do not clap to make me fly away.
Willingly shall I fly away.

290 *Sawan*[1] is pleasing,
These are the days to fall in love ;
Tanks are full ;
These are the days to bathe together ;
Red garments and *hamel*[2] for the neck,
These are the days to adorn ;
My darling left for a distant land,
These are the days for him to return.

1 Indian month corresponding to June-July.
2 An ornament.

291 Mother advises Sassi,
Daughter, give up your love for the Baloch.
First half of the night they stay,
Second half their journey they resume.
Sassi, climb the top of the Katur mount,
Punnun goes with the caravan.
Sassi, you will wander in the desert,
All your life you will shed tears.

He has a song for every mood. Halting a little to find some responsive chord, he tries to lend a new colour to the old song. Herein lies his art. The stars move orderly on their path, not so his songs. Every time a different note.

If there is but one attentive soul he would sing better. Every time he is a new man, alive, alert, enthusiastic. There is a pause. The scene changes. The bow chases the past glory of the Punjab. Now gay and intoxicating, now half sobs catching his voice.

The effect of his songs depends largely on his method of delivery. Listening to him I feel the national spirit never dies, for in his songs lies the bright promise of tomorrow. He rules the scene. His feet are deep in the soil like a tree, yet he moves. I shall always welcome him, as generations of peoples have listened to the wandering minstrel.

FOLK-SONGS OF BENGAL

I

THE BACKGROUND

BENGAL can claim the Ganges as her mother, for it must have taken her centuries, or thousands of years, to build the fertile alluvial soil with the silt on her long journey through the plains. Surely, there are two pictures of Bengal: one shows the dry country, the other an extremely wet climate. This contrast explains the two main currents of the mind of Bengal.

West Bengal, a few hundred feet above the sea, is a land of rugged tracks and vast plains winding to the horizon. Seasons change here, but life is static. The summer heat is almost killing, and "after the day's sharp and clear revelation," as Humayun Kabir puts it, "the quick sudden evening wipes out with a touch of mystery all sense of definiteness.....The earth which swoons under the intense heat of summer days impresses upon the mind the sense of futility of all effort. The sense of the transcendent and the super-human always hovers on the borderland of the mind.....The heart seeks to describe the indescribable and finds deliverance in a deep sense of peace which transcends all the endeavour and struggle of daily life."[1]

In East Bengal, the land of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra and backwaters, man, in contrast with the vast sky and the endless water, looks a dwarf; he is a ceaseless fighter, as the circumstances have made him. Boys and girls alike know swimming; crocodiles and river-sharks hold no fear for them. The hearth and home of the people are at the mercy of the river, for it may refuse to accommodate man any moment, especially in the rains when it overflows the banks. In the constant fight, man has no leisure to sing of the other-worldliness.

The racial history further explains the main currents of the mind of Bengal. Much is due to inter-mixture of blood on a large scale. The original people of Bengal must have been Negroid, though any definite evidence is missing. It may be

1 Humayun Kabir, *Bengali Poetry*, India, February 1945, p. 319.

presumed, however, that various tribes found their way to Bengal since long. The major content in the Bengali blood came from the Dravidian and Mongolian immigrants, as some authorities maintain. In view of this argument, the pacifism of Bengal comes from the Mongolian blood. Again, restlessness and excitability, the two typical traits of the Bengali mind, remind us of the promitive tribes, and, as Humayun Kabir would put it, "Perhaps this trait in the character of Bengal is derived from the original precursors of both Dravidians and Mongolians."[1] The Aryans came much later; love of nature and self-confidence, stressed in Bengali attitude and tradition, show the Aryan influence. Even the growth of individuality in art and poetry seems to emphasize the element of the Aryan blood, which might have been less in quantity and stronger in effect at the same time.

History first records Bengal as a Buddhist land. Fa Hien, the Chinese pilgrim, visited Bengal in the fifth century. Tamralipta, from where he embarked for China, is no more a seaport in south-western Bengal. It is known as Tamluk. The sea has been forced by the new land to recede. The process of silting up of the delta has made navigation impossible along the seacoast of Bengal, with the single exception of Chattagong, where the port is still open and reminds of the past. The people of Bengal took to the sea instinctively and established trade relations with islands in the Indian Ocean. History is proud of Vijaya Sinha, the prince of Bengal, who landed in Ceylon and gave it a new name, Sinhala.

Buddhism gave a new power to the people of Bengal, for even the language of the people, Bengali, originated from Prakrit and local dialects, revolted against Sanskrit. There was a regular fight between intellect and tradition; the individual emphatically challenged the society. In East Bengal, where the individual had always struggled against the forces of nature and had a good deal of Mongolian blood in his veins, the Buddhist mode of thought and worship transformed the mental make up of the people. The *Dohas*, the first recorded early Bengali peotry, speak for the common man, stressing the human qualities; they are full of commonplace moralizing tone, centering round Buddhist mythology, but their treatment of man has a deep sympathy and understanding.

In West Bengal, however, the stability of land and constant

1 Humayun Kabir, *Bengali Poetry*, India, February 1945, p. 319.

pressure of political power operated against the Buddhist revolution. The Brahminical renaissance, led by West Bengal, soon struggled after the lost values. Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* was an attempt to restore the position of Sanskrit, but it was an uphill task. With the Muslim conquest of Bengal, there arose new problems. It was not easy to reconvert the people of East Bengal to the new Brahmanism. They reacted, and thought it better to adopt the religion of the conquerors. The laxity of traditional bonds—the direct influence of Buddhism, however, will always linger in the mind of the Muslims. West Bengal, the home of the Viashnava poetry, resisted the appeal of Islam. The Muslim conception of democratic individuality, contrasted against the feeling of transcendence of the individual in the vastness of space, inspired the Vaishnava poets to find out new currents of thought.

The Muslim Raj could not remain altogeter alien. The Ramayana and the Mahabharat, translated into Bengali on the initiative of Muslim kings, is an argument for their broadmindedness and love of the native culture. Even Muslim poets brought their quota of the Vaishnava, the Sakta and even the Buddhist songs. The stream of life went on, and Bengali poetry always claimed freedom of thought.

Then came the British Raj. The decaying feudalism was counting its last days. The peasant in his village got the news, and felt startled, though he little knew the economic changes that had to follow the new regime.

II

THE MUSICAL TRADITION

Romain Rolland's homage to *Eastern Bengal Ballads*[1] is an argument for the essential unity in diversity of human nature, "The subject it deals with touches all mankind; the differences with European stories are much more social than racial. The good aesthetic taste that is felt in most of these ballads is also one of the characterstics of popular imagination in many of our Western countries: *Womeder Wehmuth*, a beautiful song of Goethe's, put into music by Beethoven, expresses it as

1 A Publication of the Calcutta University, edited by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen. *Mymensingh Gitika*, another Publication of the Calcutta University, provides the Bengali text of these *Ballads*.

'the pleasure of tears.' It is true that with us French people, the people of Gaul, it reacts against this with our bold and boistrous joyful legends. Is there none of this kind of thing in India? *Chandravati* is a very charming story and *Mahua, Kanaka* and *Lila* are charming.....From where have these great primitive epics and balads come ? It seems very likely that they have always come from some poetic genius whose invention has struck the popular imagination. But the question is how much people deform his idea in putting it into the shape in which we find it ? Which is the part of the collaboration of the multitude in this work of re-casting, which is continuous and spontaneous ? Rarely has anyone the opportunity to seize an epic, as one might say, on the lips of the people who have given birth to it, before writing has fixed it in some shape as you and Chandra Kumar have succeeded in doing in this case."[1]

Chandra Kumar Dey collected old Bengali ballads in Mymensingh district, and Dr. Sen who edited them for the University of Calcutta, observed in the Introduction, "I would not have been more pleased if these lines were all good. The songs perfectly artless, written mostly by Hindu and Mohammedan peasants, often show the real heart of poetry, and some of of them at least, I believe, will rank next only to the most beautiful Vaishnava songs in our literature..... Through all these narratives, Bengal, with her vast rivers, her dead pools and her red *sandhya malati* and *java* flowers, her white *kunda* and yellow *atashi*, with falcons hovering over her sky—with her evergreen shrubs and flow of rains—with her rustic women hailing their peasant lords with festive songs when the latter returned home at the close of the November day, when the golden ears of new ripe crops hanging down from their heads—the picturesque Bengal, seen a thousand times but never grown old, appears again and again with a new charm every time."

Romain Rolland's sister, Madeleine Rolland, translated some of these Ballads into French. Her book, *Viellses Ballades Du Bengale*, illustrated with woodcuts by Andre Karpeles contains nine ballads: (*i*) Mahua, (*ii*) Kanaka and Lila, (*iii*) Chandravati, (*iv*) Malua (*v*) Kenaram, (*vi*) Kamala, (*vii*) Divan Bhaban, (*viii*) The Marriage of Rupavati and (*ix*) Andha Budua. This publication roused a great enthusiasm for Indian folk-poetry in France. Commenting in a broadcast talk on

1 From a letter, dated March 3, 1924, addressed to Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen, who quotes it in his *Glimpses of Bengal.*

folk-peotry, some French critic rightly observed, "I am not disinclined to think that the joy of the Blind Flute Man is equal in beauty and profundity to Tristam and Isolt..... The sound of the flute acts on the princess in the same way, as the philtre on the lovers in the Celtic legend...It is not the musician, whom the Hindu princess loves, but the love which he expresses by his song, and the music which by its power of ecstasy delivers human love from its limitation and tears away the soul from the prison house of the body. Could not one be permitted to think of the death and transfiguration of Isolt, if Vagner had knowledge of this ballad ?"

Malua's scorn of the Kazi, who wants to win her heart while her husband is away, sounds a strong note. She openly tells the go-between, "The wicked Kazi has not the worth of my husband's toe. Take this insult from me and go to your Kazi and tell him all.... I take him to be my foe and hold him as a dog. I hit his face with a broom from here."

The female characters dominate throughout. The ballads, rich in rural landscapes and human types, seem to cover three centuries, from the fifteenth century onward. Almost inhuman harshness and unbeleivable forgiveness, cruelty and refineness, social injustices and sublime devotion and love stronger than death—this is the stuff that influences the entire range.

Distinct in origin and development is the song of the boatman, the *Bhatial* as it is popularly known. The singer knows its power. *Bhata* is the downstream ; the boatman need not ply his oar while going downstream, and he takes to singing freely. Deep plaintive appeal of the *Bhatial* has a peculiar power of creating indescribable pathos, and the entire river scene, with its foaming waves, the swampy grounds run over by the flood, seems to yield to the song of the boatman. In harmony with the prolonged notes that symbolize the vast expanse, every *Bhatial* song emerges from the waves that make a constant background. At times, as the singer is enchanted by his own tune, it becomes an almost endless span of sound. It is, again, East Bengal, which can claim to be the birthplace of the *Bhatial*. Even while discussing at large, it may be emphasised that the folk music of East Bengal, once we submit to its spell, is superior. It goes deeper in rhythm and colour. It seems to sublimate the eternal yearning of man, bringing him into immediate contact with nature.

The *Bauls*, or the mendicants, who move about from place to place singing to the accompaniment of the one-stringed *ektara*, are devoid of all learning, but they have their own mystic songs. *Maner manush*, or the Man of the heart, is the term for God in the *Baul* vocabulary and it is really in search of God that the *Baul* wanders through land near and far.[1]

The *Bhawaiya* songs, more popularly sung in East Bengal, are light-hearted and humorous. The *Bhawaiayas*, to whom these songs owe their origin, are wandering minstrels. The climax of the *Bhawaiya* music may be a song seemingly rough and coarse, but the listeners would always lend it their seal of approval.

The *Kabiwalas*, now becoming rare, are village poets, who draw on the old traditional stock, and can sing *extempore* a good number of semi-dramatic doggerels. Some of the *Kabi* songs portray the coy village wife; in other songs she may be whispering her tale of grief to her maid.

The *Kabiwalas* were once the rage in the countryside and the towns alike with their wordy duels; it is really a treat to see two *Kabiwala* poets, singing competitively, freely quoting from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the *Bhagvata*.

Jatra, or the open-air opera, generally follows one or the other Puranic theme; actors are men and boys, dressed to suit even the female roles. Be it a wedding or a festival like *Puja*, the well-to-do man in the village engages a *Jatra* party; the villagers, sitting under the starlit sky, enjoy every song, used to tone up the dialogue and story. The action is frequently interrupted by the chief singer, who gives running commentary; it continues with no attempt at scenery or stage-fittings. The *Jatra* songs reveal freshness of outlook, drawn freely from legend and history. The soul of Bengal seems to interpret everything with mature consciousness in some of the *Jatra* songs.

Gajan songs, sung at the *Charak* festival in March, move round Siva. *Gajan* has developed into a dance as well; Siva and Parvati compete as they dance.

The *Kirtan*, surely, is Bengal's speciality. The colour and idiom, conveyed from the *Vaishnava* point of view, are no less

1 In his *Creative Unity*, Rabindranath Tagore pays a great homage to the *Baul* poetry. In a foreword to Mansuruddin's *Hara Mani*, an anthology of Bengali folk-songs, Rabindranath Tagore comments on the *Baul* songs, "I doubt whether the folklore of any other part of the world can yield anything so unique."

homely. Chandidas, the contemporary of Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Mirabai in the fourteenth century, wrote the most beautiful Vaishnava lyrics in Bengali. Radha and Krishna, though idealised as lovers, are portrayed as human beings in the lyrics of Chandidas. The *Kirtan* singer lays stress on the language of the drum ; the listeners join him in chorus in the refrain.

Sakti, or Power, is a goddess, and her devotee is the Sakta. She is Kali, and the Saktas, fascinated by her dreadful beauty, worship her to get her blessings. She is Durga. She is Chandi, who slew the buffalo-demon and protected men and gods. She is Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. She is Manasa, goddess of the snakes. She is Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge and arts. She is Shasti, the bestower of children. She is Sakti, the Mother, as addressed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in his famous *Bande Mataram* song, for, in the Sakta tradition, he believed the Mother alone can help the children. Ram Prasad Sen composed some of the most popular Sakta melodies in the eighteenth century, and it is said that Ramakrishna Paramahamsa listened to them, as Chaitanya did in case of the *Kirtan* of Chandidas's lyrics.

Durga Puja, Bengal's greatest festival, is observed in October. This is the occasion for Durga, or Uma, to visit her mother, who is portrayed as a Bengali housewife, ever longing to see her daughter. Uma's father, Giriraj, feels the pathos of his wife's motherly love no less, but is more reticent. The mother longs for Uma throughout the year. At last Siva consents and sends her back to her parents. Bengal welcomes the arrival of Uma with the *Agomani*, or welcome songs. It is only for four days that Uma can live with her parents. Soon Siva comes to take her back. The *Vijaya*[1] songs are sung amidst tears. Uma is helpless ; she must return with Siva.

The Vaishnava and Sakta songs owe a good deal to folk melodies. They display a remarkable musical development through communal singing.

The musical tradition of Bengal thus provides significant material. It has great possibilities, for it touches the inner world of thought and melody. It has the very essence of Bengal. We are all the time aware that Bengal in her innermost spirit rises from her villages—the nerve centres of ancient culture, that still clings to the soil.

Man, like the eternal child, yearns to meet the mother.

1 Farewell.

'Return-to-mother culture' attitude must dawn upon the society, if it must survive. The musical tradition of Bengal has always retained the fertility of the folk-mind. Mysticism, or any other form of religious expression, may only be a passing phase. The focus of interest is life itself with absolute human details.

III

THE SONGS

Folk-songs of Bengal may be studied in view of the geographical contrast between West Bengal and East Bengal. Surely, the racial and the historical forces, which have gone a long way to develop the general outlook of the people, should not be ignored in any discussion of Bengali folk art and culture.

The *Song of the Sun God*,[1] still sung by the women folk in Vikrampur Pargana of East Bengal, shows the people's faith in the forces of nature. Obviously, it shows no blur about the colours, depicted in the various shades of the sunrise. The conception of the sun god is very homely. Summoned to get up early, he is the friend of the people, who must seek his blessings.

288 The sun rises with what colours ?
The sun rises the colour of fire.
The sun rises with what colours ?
The sun rises the colour of blood.
The sun rises with what colours ?
The sun rises the colour of betel-juice.
Rise, rise, O sun, giving light,
We cannot rise early because of the cold.

Throwing off five loads of cold
Beside the pillow,
Which side will the sun rise ?
It will rise touching the corners of the Brahmin's house.
The Brahmin's daughters are clever,
Daily at dawn they make the sacred threads.
Rise, rise, O sun, giving light,
We cannot rise early because of the cold.

1 For the text of this song I am indebted to Satyaranjan Ghatak of Calcutta.

Which side will the sun rise ?
It will rise over the top of the banyan tree,
Wearing the new sacred thread,
Putting on the *kamaranga*[1] mark on the forehead,
Keeping the red napkin on the shoulder.
Rise, rise, O sun, giving light,
We cannot rise early because of the cold.

Which side will the sun rise ?
It will rise touching the corners of the goldsmith's house.
The goldsmith's daughters are clever,
Daily at dawn they are busy in the *puja*.
Rise, rise, O sun giving light,
We canmot rise early because of the cold.

Which side will the sun rise ?
It will rise touching the corners of the gardener's house.
The gardener's daughters are clever,
Daily at dawn they gather flowers.
Rise, rise, O sun, giving light,
We cannot rise early because of the cold.

Which side will the sun rise ?
It will rise touching the corners of the oilman's house.
The oilman's daughters are clever,
Daily at dawn they clean the utensils.
The water shaken by utensils flows in the tank,
Seeing it the gardener's daughter laughs.
Laugh not, O Gardener's daughter, you are my sister,
Where else shall I find the ghat to observe *Magh Mandal*[2] ?
Rise, rise, O sun, giving light,
We cannot rise early because of the cold.

The song refers to various classes of the village community with a deep sense of familiarity and understanding. Surely, one may place this song to represent Bengal in any anthology of folk-songs.

1 A native fruit. The reddish mark put on the forehead of the sun god is compared to the colour of this fruit.

2 The name of a *brata*, or fast, observed ceremoniously by the women-folk in *Magh* (January-February) every year.

Another song portrays the sun god's attempt to marry a peasant girl.

289 I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But I shall be put to trouble for cloth.
I shall make in every town
A weavers, colony, my love.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But I shall be put to trouble for vermilion.
I shall have in every town
The *bania's* shop, my love.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But I shall be put to trouble for oil.
I shall have in every town
The oilmen's colony, my love.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But I shall be put to trouble for rice.
I shall have in every town
A peasants' colony, my love.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But whom shall I call mother ?
My mother your mother-in-law,
You will call her mother, my love.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But whom shall I call father ?
My father your father-in-law,
You will call him father, my love.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But whom shall I call sister ?
My sister your sister-in-law,
You will call her sister, my love.

I will go with you to your land, O sun,
But whom shall I call brother ?
My brother your brother-in-law,
You will call her brother, my love.

The *Magh Mandal* is sometime called *Magh Moral Brata*. *Moral* means the headman. Magh is auspicious as the precurser of Phalgun, the spring month. Another *Magh Mandal* song refers to the sun-worship that seems to have influenced the Hindu mind of Bengal generation after generation; the entire scene, as described in the song, looks like a living picture of the season.

290 This year *Magh* is very cold,
As sun *mama*[1] ascends the eastern fringe of the thatch,
We shall sing our song.

Our *anchal*[2] full of the red *java* and the white *bhati* flowers,
The *doob* grass wet with dew,
The dew drops look like pearls.

We sit with old ashes in a broken winnowing-fan,
When birds would call us from bushes,
We shall feel relieved basking in the sun.

Come, elder sister, if you will see,
Dawn Queen leaves for her father-in-law's
The garland in her neck, the veil drawn over her face.

We sit facing the east to observe the *brata*,
We are not fully dressed,
Our parents' barns are full with the grace of *Surya Thakur*.[3]

The tyranny of caste always stands in the way of lovers, yet elopements are not rare. Love-songs are alive with dramatic duets that sometime seem to open in the middle of the story. The girl has no heart to refuse the lover, as seen in a charming song, for the lover tickles her fancy with a subtle note of flattery. Again it may be added that the song seems to open in the middle of the story.

1 Maternal uncle.
2 The fold of a *sari* used to hold something.
3 *Surya* is the sun. He is called *Thakur* as a mark of respect.

291 What a fun, dear, what a fun,
If you show four black things, I will go with you.
The crow is black, the *koel*[1] is black, black is the *phinga*[2]
Still more black, O girl, the hair on your head.

What a fun, dear, what a fun,
If you show four white things, I will go with you.
The heron is white, clothes are white, white is the swan,
Still more white, O girl, the conch bangles on your arms.

What a fun, dear, what a fun,
If you show four red things, I will go with you.
The *java*[3] is red, the *karbi*[4] is red, red is the *kusum*[5]
Still more red, O girl, the vermilion on the parting of your hair.

What a fun, dear, what a fun,
If you show four bitter things, I will go with you.
Neem[6] is bitter, *nisunde*[7] is bitter, bitter is the *makal*,[8]
Still more bitter, O girl, the house with a co-wife!

What a fun, dear, what a fun,
If you could show four cool things, I will go with you.
Water is cool, earth is cool, cool is the mat of reeds,
Still more cool, O girl, your bosom.

The girl seems to have always longed for a youngman, who would rouse her imaginative power to a higher level. In a number of songs the lover is addressed as *bhramara*, or the bumble bee, and in some of them the description and the portrayal of the atmosphere are highly poetic.

292 At midnight come to the flower-woodland, O *bhramara*,
At midnight come to the flower-woodland.
I will light the lamp of the moon,

1 The Indian cuckoo.
2 A kind of bird.
3-5 Indian flowers.
6 An Indian tree with leaves that taste bitter.
7 Name of an article that tastes bitter.
8 An Indian tree.

All the night I will keep awake,
To dew drops I will tell my tales, O *bhramara*,
At midnight come to the flower-woodland.

Should I drop asleep,
I shall tread the path of dreams towards you,
Come with silent steps, O *bhramara*,
At midnight come to the flower-woodland.

See your song stops not,
See my sleep breaks not,
See the flowers' sleep breaks not,
See the twigs' sleep breaks not, O *bhramara*,
At midnight come to the flower-woodland.

The odours of the earth add to the beauty and effect of the folk-song, be it a song of the sun-worship or a simple love-song. Nature shares the lover's mood.

From across the Mansi, flowing by the little village, comes the singing voice of the lover's flute, and it is at once recorded in the song.

293 Across the Mansi along the bank, my *didi*,[1]
The golden friend sings as he walks,
Across the Mansi along the bank.
Is he your friend or mine, *didi* ?
Listen, *didi*,
Across the Mansi along the bank.

The elder sister pounds the paddy,
The younger sister does the winnowing, my *didi*,
The younger sister does the winnowing.
The middle one's tears roll down,
Listen, *didi*,
Across the Mansi along the bank.

How shall I call him, my *didi* ?
Ever at a distance he walks, *didi*, ever at a distance,
Within my heart ever burns a fire.
Is he your friend or mine, *didi* ?

1 Elder sister.

Listen, *didi*,
Across the Mansi along the bank.

Marriage is a problem. A girl may have to be given to an unmatching man. May be, she gets no husband, for her father cannot pay rich dowry.

294 In the prime of youth my marriage did not take place,
How long shall I live here all alone ?
O my cruel fate !

In the south-west monsoon my golden youth began,
Mother and father turned enemies, for they never gave me to strangers.
O my cruel fate !

I didn't tell my father for shame, didn't tell mother for I felt shy,
Dhiki dhiki burns the fire inside my body.
O my cruel fate !

My belly would burst, not my mouth, all for shame,
If I open my mind, everybody will abuse me.
O my cruel fate !

I have a feeling in my mind, O fate, a feeling in my mind,
That I should elope with a man of my heart.
O my cruel fate !

People will call me unchaste, I have no fear,
My husband by my side, I will know the taste of love.
O my cruel fate !

You have father and brother, O *Sadhu*, but unluckily I have none,
On what branch of the tree will you place a woman ?
O my cruel fate !

No girl would like to have anything with a villain, as is evident from some of these songs.

295 O fair one, I was a fool to send you to your mother's house,
As if binding your life to a stone, you stick there forgetting me.
No more shall I come to your land, O *Sadhu*,
I have no mind to look at your rotten house.

O fair one, I have dug a tank, and built a house all new,
At one corner I have a vegetable garden.

O fair one, I am in the Rajah's service, pulling your hair I can force you to come.
But you are a woman, I have some respect for you.

I know that, for I am of the same sex as the Rajah's daughter, O *Sadhu*,
The Rajah is not stupid or uninformed.

The marriage drum sounds effectively. Surely, it seems to mingle the bride's fear with pleasure. At times, it brightens the imagination of a girl, whose marriage day is not fixed. Every girl must leave the place of her birth one day, the marriage drum says repeatedly. Wildly the drum speaks in the eternal language of the heart, as the women of Tippera district in their marriage dance address the drummer.

296 Beat the drum, beat the drum,
Beat the drum to such a rhythm;
Beat, it may please the ears.
You will get a good reward,
Beat the drum, beat the drum,
Beat that it may please the ears.

We will give you a good break-fast,
The bride's mother will give us a good break-fast,
She will give you vegetable fried in cream.
Beat the drum, beat the drum,
Beat that it may please the ears.

We will give you a good *baksheesh,*
The bride's father will give the *baksheesh.*
He will give you a silk cloth.
Beat the drum, beat the drum,
Beat that it may please the ears.

The night next to the wedding is called *Kal Ratri,* when it is unauspicious for the bride and the bridegroom to see each other. But the night next to the *Kal Ratri* is auspicious when the bridegroom brings a present to the bride—sweets and fruit beautifully arranged in a plate or basket, known as *bhat kapar.* As he puts it on the hands of the bride, the women sing in chorus.

297 You won't go to a distant land, O bridegroom
Else the lonely fair one will die shedding tears ;
From today onward, O bridegroom, you will have chains in your feet,
Her face will be sad if you come home late.

Under the mango she will stand silently watching
There the golden cuckoo eats the mango blossoms,
While eating the blossoms the cuckoo says *kuhu kuhu,*
How will the lonely woman have patience ?

Rest assured, fair one, have patience,
I will bring vermilion in a packet for you,
Rest assured, fair one, for three days,
I will bring a *pateshwari sari* for you.

Rest assured, fair one, looking towards the road,
I will bring from Dacca the conch bangles for you,
With these words the bridegroom gave the *bhat kapar* to the bride,
Women in the four directions shouted *jai jai kar.*[1]

The Durga Puja songs have a wide range. Menaka, the mother of Durga, who calls her daughter Uma or Gauri endear-

1 Shouts of Victory.

ingly, asks her husband Giriraj, the Himalaya, to go to Siva's land and bring back Uma for the festival. Every girl comes to her mother like Uma. The *Agomani*, or welcome songs, portray the mother's longing for the daughter.

298 When will you bring my Uma to me, Giriraj ?
Tell me at once.
I am dying without Uma,
She is my only daughter,
There is none to call me mother.
It is my ill luck,
My son-in-law is a mendicant.

299 My Uma is a suckling child,
She must be weeping calling : mother, O mother !
O Giriraj made of stones,
Siva has no father or mother,
Who will bestow affection on Uma ?
Whom will she tell her sorrow
Uma, my golden creeper, my moon-faced daughter.

300 How many days more will you sleep over, Giriraj ?
You never feel for Gauri,
You must bring her back.

Winter and summer and the rains have gone,
Autumn has come,
But Gauri has not come.

My life cannot bear this sorrow,
Gauri is a golden creeper,
You gave her to a mendicant.

Binding a rock on your heart,
How long will you delay ?
A dark spot is formed on my heart.

Gauri must have turned dark-complexioned,
How long will you sit idle Giriraj,
Imagining Siva will himself come with Gauri ?

301 What sort of heart you have, I know not, O Giriraj ?
Do you feel no attachment for your daughter ?

Every time I asked you to go
To bring Gauri from Kailash.

Every time you try to console me with side-tracking,
What will I say ? I am a woman,
I cannot go myself to her.
I am dying of shame, thinking of old traditions.

What did you do ?
You followed the tradition of the immovable
They call you mountain,
Is your heart made of stones ?

302 O immovable one, move a little,
You must go to bring Gauri.
Don't you know how much attached to the daughter does a mother feel ?

Had I been able to tear open my heart,
I would have shown you what sort of love is that.
What good speaking to you ?

Yours is a body of stones,
My life is really sinking
Without seeing my Gauri.

In *Ashwina*, (October-November), when the Durga Puja festival is observed all over Bengal, the *Agomani* songs are sung everywhere. The first day commences with Uma's coming to her mother. But soon arrives the day when Siva comes to take Uma back to his place. Uma's mother weeps like a common village mother. The *Vijaya* songs are the farewell songs ; the Mother gives a tearful farewell, expressing a deep sorrow.

303 Uma will have to go away today,
Why did the ninth night pass away ?
The seventh and the eighth night is the time for Uma's stay,
Siva has come prior to the day.

304 If you must take away Gauri with you, Siva,
Is it that all my requests to keep her have failed ?
Ah me, whom shall I tell my sorrow ?

She whom I kept in my womb,
While giving her farewell,
Can life remain inside my body ?

Tell me, tell me, what to do ?
The ninth night has passed away,
The tenth night is a fire that will burn me to ashes.

Life dominates with joys and sorrows. Man laughs and weeps at the same time. Some of the peasant songs portray the sorrow of a bride and in the background remains the impression of her parental home, where she was free and happy.

305 Didn't you tell me at that time
I never eat the coarse rice,
We have no scarcity of fine rice ?

As I came to your house I saw,
You played a trick with me,
You haven't got a single grain of rice.

Didn't you tell me at that time,
I never wear the coarse cloth,
We have no scarcity of fine cloth ?

As I came to your house I saw,
You played a trick with me,
You have got not a torn piece of cloth.

The boatman goes on with his flashing, long-drawn sad melody. It is *Bhatial*, the melody that has drunk deep at the fountain of his emotion.

306 At sunset I go rowing my boat,
The breeze is sweet, the waves look purple.
Where the river takes a winding course, I see a house of red clay.

Across the river on the green grass,
Whose blue *sari* is spread to dry ?
At sunset I go rowing my boat.

The evening shadows seem to be stooping,
From the temple across the stream
The sound of the bell comes ringing.

With anklets on her feet ringing *jhumur jhumur*,
Whose young daughter comes at the *ghat* and stoops
While at sunset I go rowing my boat?

In the flashing light of her charming face I have gone mad.
This time when I go home, longing for her, how shall I live,
While at sunset I go rowing my boat?

The *Baul* is the eternal mendicant, his songs have a deep effect even on those who have no mind for the mystic appeal. The song, supposed to be originally sung by Madan *Baul*, has the delicacy and finish of mystic poetry.

307 Temples and mosques conceal your way,
I hear your call and cannot come, O Lord.
The Gurus and Mursheds stand barring my path.

If that which must cool the body plunged in it sets the world on fire
Where am I to take my stand tell me, O Lord ?
All striving for Unity dies in conflict.

Many are the locks on your door,
The Puran, the Koran, the Hindu and Muslim rosaries.
Most annoying the ascetic's garb, laments Madan in sorrow.

Peasant songs dominate the scene. In the face of a tragedy, the loss of his harvest, the peasant thinks of his promises given to his wife, and he cannot but curse his fate.

308 It was not in my fate,
The flood came and the river overflowed.
Everything that belonged to me is gone,
It was not in my fate.

With your miraculous power, Allah, you created man,
Today you have taken away all my paddy, all my jute.
Everything that belonged to me is gone,
It was not in my fate.

How many sorrows you wrote, O God, in my fate ?
I will sell my jute to get you a gold nose-ring, I told her.
The same jute is gone with the cruel flood,
It was not in my fate.

Another song, addressed to a boatman, expresses the peasant's sorrow more deeply. It seems that the hand of pain itself has painted the entire picture—a sort of etching that will look valuable in any anthology of world folk-poetry.

309 Listen my woeful tale, O listen, O brother boatman,
How many men and cattle died
In the monsoon storm, O brother,
In the monsoon storm ?

The *salik* bird is hatching its eggs on the toddy tree,
O brother, it is hatching its eggs.
My wife is gone to her parents, her father's sister has died,
Listen my woeful tale, brother.

Love of home is the climax of peasant poetry. New songs are always added to the old stock—songs of hope and freedom, of justice and peace.

In 1945, the Annual Session of the All-India Kisan Sabha was held in a village about a mile from Netrakona town in Bengal. The life-size statue of a peasant breaking his chains attracted large streams of visitors from the town and surrounding villages. The model was taken from Hirdey, the peasant leader, who comes from the Hajang tribe. The sculptor was Lakhipal from Krishnanagar, who was born in a family of clay modellers. The peasants beamed with pride as they gazed at the statue. Everybody felt thrilled at the thought of the peasant being raised to a statue of a god, for statues had always been made to represent gods. Here was the *Annadata,* a new god. Peasant dances and songs were kept in the forefront on this occasion, as P. C. Joshi observed :

"Every provincial squad sang one or more of its own folk-songs. And the Bengali peasants, though they did not understand Punjabi, Hindustani, Telugu, etc., listened patiently not out of politeness, but because they said they enjoyed hearing music. Folk music appeals to common folks all over.

"Most of the troupes were naturally enough Bengali and instead of any jealousy or factional squabbles as would have happened in any other similar gathering, I heard the cultural leaders spontaneously admitting that the folk music of East Bengal was prominently the best. The movement had killed all traces of chauvinism but created a spirit of solidarity, and socialism had given them a sense of objectivity.

"Twenty-three local Muslim peasant lads did their traditional *Jari* dance. We were all admiring the vigour of the movements, when we were told that the song was composed by the Brahmin village poet Nibaran Pandit and that his popularity extended beyond his district.

" The *Baul* songs of Majid and Rashiduddin, two local peasant bards, were immensely appreciated. They had composed new songs on the occasion.

" *Gambhira* is a folk form from Malda in which banter and irony are used plentifully. Satish Mandal, self-taught poet of a poor peasant family, had brought a troupe of peasants and labourers and his victims were Amery and the gang of profiteers whom he mercilessly exposed as soulless liars and enemies of the people.

"The Chittagong squad, composed of Hindu boys, sang in Muslim folk tunes of Surya Sen, Ganesh Ghosh and Ananta Singh in a manner as to rouse anybody's drooping spirits; and when they described what scars famine has left in their social life, in the tune of their boatman's song with its long-drawn lilt, several wiped thier eyes.

"Tippera folk artists played on their famous flute and sang their soulful *bhatial*. They were in the unfortunate position of the Rangpur *kirtanwallas* in that the rain cut out most of their items.

"The Surma Valley Squad, composed mostly of ex-students and led by the young poet Hemanga Biswas, scored over others in music. Because they were a wholetime troupe, they had learnt several tunes; peasant troupes generally stick to the one traditional tune most popular in their own area; and secondly, their teamwork was better because they were always together to be able to rehearse like professionals.

"The dancing honours went to the Manipuri Squad, composed entirely of peasant lads and personally led by their beloved leader Irawat Singh. The latest prison term had thinned him and he was double the age of the others in his troupe and yet he danced most gracefully. I had never seen real Manipuris before and as I saw their dance, Irawat's words 'Dancing is in our blood' became real in me.

"The blind instrumentalist Tagar Adhikar from Cooch-Bihar captured the audience with his *dutara*. And he in turn has been captured by the Central Squad of the People's Theatre, and people in Bombay and Calcutta will see more of him.

"On the second night, *i.e.*, April 9, the main item was *Kabi Larai* (poets' contest) in which the star attraction was the famous hoary village bard from Chittagong, Romesh Seal, and his opponents, a team of young poets. He had had to leave his pox-ridden wife to his village home and yet he had come to express his solidarity with the Kisan Sabha. In his own words, he could not keep off from the pilgrimage to Netrakona.

"The subject was the hoarder and the peasant. As Ramesh Seal composed impromptu verses putting the kisans' point of view, every hit against the hoarder was clapped, and when the other poets spoke for the hoarder, they were booed.

"Countless thousands sat throughout the night on wet ground watching the performance. When I asked them if they were not feeling sleepy, they promptly answered, 'Why, these are our own

things. We are ignorant villagers and understand these better than the speeches. The comrades have done one real thing. In giving us the message through our own songs they have made it so easy and clear to us. We feel clearer in the head and bigger in heart.' "[1]

As intermixture of blood gave birth to a common culture, determined by geographical conditions, the centuries of hard struggle for bread brought a new vision to the people of Bengal. Even gods seem to tremble before the people and surely it will add new images in the folk-poetry of Bengal, a new homeland of the people, raising from the earth with her face towards the future though not wholly cut off from the past.

1 P. C. Joshi, *Festival of Folk Culture*, People's War, May 6, 1945.

ASAMIYA SONGS

USED for both the people of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam and their Indo-Aryan language, *Asamiya* is an endearing term, as one realizes while talking to an Assamese friend. *Prag Jyotisha* is the ancient name of Assam, mentioned in the Ramayana and the Mahabharta. In classical Sanskrit literature Assam is also mentioned as *Kamrupa.*

First referred to in the Allahabad inscriptions of Samudra Gupta in the fifth century of the Christian era, Assam tickles the imagination of the Assamese people. Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim, who visited *Kamrupa* during the first half of the seventh century, on the invitation of the king of *Kamrupa*, Bhaskar Barman, says in his account that the people here were of 'honest ways' and 'their speech differed a little from that of Mid-India.'

Asamiya folk-songs, rich in lullabies and cradle songs, marriage songs and *Bihu* songs, sung during the *Bihu* festivals, in the months of *Baisakh*[1], *Kartik*[2], and *Magh*[3], had a special appeal for me, when I first visited Assam in 1930.

The *Bihu* celebrated in *Baisakh* is called *Bohag Bihu.* Surely, it marks the advent of seedtime and has a special charm for the agricultural communities. The *Bihu* celebrated in *Kartik* is the *Kati Bihu*; it is time, when the sowing and transplanting are over. The *Magh Bihu* again, marks the gathering of the harvest. The first of the three *Bihu* festivals, lasting for several days, is known for the arrival of spring that brings the greatest enjoyment. The young people, gaily dressed to celebrate the *Bohag Bihu*, move about in circles; the boys sing most erotic songs, while young girls dance in the midst of the circle. They all feel that the pairing time has come. The climax of the *Bihu* dance offers an opportunity that was once availed by their forefathers.

The *Bihu* songs are short pieces of Asamiya folk-poetry. It is not easy to say that their language has not much changed, for the vocabulary cannot remain untouched generation after generation. But their character remains unchanged, the simple and highly emotional moods of the people have found a similar

1-3 Indian months corresponding to April May, October-November and January-February respectively.

expression in the domain of love.

The real merit and worth of *Bihu* songs lies in their relation to life. The whole range of *Bihu* songs is marked by poetic fervour and sincerity. We can see distinct images of lovers throughout. As revealed here, Assam is rich in imaginative genius as well as the distinctive precision in expression. It may be added that a number of *Bihu* songs exercise a great influence even on old men and women, though seemingly they may dislike them. Obviously, it is the undisguised emotion that persists to give a new colour to the values of life.

310 Why are you in bloom, *madar* flower ?
Why these buds ?
You are of no avail to the priest and devotees,
Your lot is to fall and lie unseen.

311 The fallen leaves and branches obstruct the Dhansiri.
Who dammed up the Subansirai ?
The potter made the pitcher that lies broken,
Who made the youth ?

312 I shall be a swan and swim in your tank,
I shall be a pigeon and sit on your roof ;
I shall be perspiration and shall enter your body,
I shall be a fly and kiss your cheek.

313 You and I fell in love,
God witnessed,
Had I been a bird I would have come,
Alas, God did not make me a bird.

314 Colour your hands with the yellow, as the spring comes,
Shed a tear for the far-away lover ;
In the festive season if you don't weep,
How will you recall the far-away lover ?

315 Full of doubt and yearning is my love,
It is a difficult knot;
Twist it this way or that,
No untying for the knot now.

316 On the Brahamputra stands a *brahamthuri* tree,
Daily I go there for the fuel;
Accept prayer, O god Brahamputra, don't remove it,
Alas, I am unable to offer you betel leaves.

317 The sands of the river stick not to the same place,
They are borne by the course of water;
Youth is ever on the shift, my love,
In forgetfulness it is lost.

318 I can climb over hills and mountains,
Hard to climb a creeper;
I can tame the wild elephants,
Hard to woo my girl.

319 Far away you blow the pipe,
I look around for a passing glance;
My hands quiver, the shuttle drops,
As I sit beside my loom.

The *Bihu* singers, boys and girls, seem to have experienced love very deeply. Poetry lives in the depths of their souls, and the *Bihu* songs show a notable artistic achievement.

The marriage songs have their own quota of Asamiya poetry. Every bride is compared to Sita, as the women address her in song.

320 On a betel leaf you wrote a letter,
Ram Chandra has sent you these ornaments.
Your parents' gifts now put aside;
How nice these ornaments sent by Rama,
Take them, O take them with folded hands.

321 On the eaves shine purple beans with leaves,
Our bride looks so darling,
As if made of diamonds and pearls.
Like the burning candles, her fingers,
Bracelets add to her beauty,
Behind her dark hair, like a rose she blooms,
In the midst of all, her face is another moon.

There is no end to the praise for ornaments and the bride whom they adorn. Every girl has a special liking for ornaments and they find a special mention in marriage songs.

Some of the marriage songs move round the bath given to the bride or the bridegroom. There may be an interesting talk between the mother and the daughter recorded in song, or it may be a note of praise for the flowers.

322 What for is the toilet ?
You are a blooming *ketaki*.

Bath is over,
What shall I put on, mother ?

A piece of dress drying in the shade,
Hide it with the palm of your hand, daughter.

Bath is over,
What flower shall I have, mother ?

Why this question ?
The divine flower is blooming across the ocean, daughter.

The climax of every marriage ceremony is the sorrowful note that at once makes the women-folk sad at the bride's departure, and perhaps the bride herself is no less sad.

323 Don't bring up a daughter,
Pray make no room for her
Inside the womb.

324 You were in your mother's bed
Yesterday at this hour ;
Bidding adieu,
You are making the flame wild.

325 Birds bring their offsprings up
To adorn the boughs of their trees ;
Ah me, it is to adorn another's home,
My mother brought me up.

Man pays off his debt by adding another baby to the family, for, as his own father brought him up, he must also do the same in his turn. Asamiya songs take special pride in lullabies, *aee nam*, or mother's songs, as they are called by the people. Here and there, a lullaby opens like a landscape painting.

326 Sleep, O Mother Sleep,
Under the plantain lies your home.
Come, Mother Sleep,
Into my child's beautiful eyes,
Leaving aside your kingdom.

Surely, Asamiya songs are charged with the joy of life. They look fragmentary at the first sight, but even a little stanza, with its parallel images taken from nature and life at home, seems to connect itself with another stanza, as if to form a long chain. A girl may be no body's sweetheart ; she is likened to the unfragrant *madar* flower. The new lover tells the girl rather tauntingly that she may shed a tear for the far-away lover if she wants to do justice with the festival. Love is not so easy always ; it may be likened to a difficult tie that may not know any untying now. The god Brahamputra is requested to be kind to the nearby *brahamthuri* tree that provides fuel for the poor villager.

Like the waves of the Brahamputra, every Asamiya folk-song touches the Asamiya soul. Every little bit of Asamiya folk-poetry, it may be emphasized, is a sensitive medium of

expression, and without any loss of words it brings the culture of the people before our eyes. Thus, it may be asserted that Asamiya folk-poetry provides all the necessary facts to visualize everyday life of the Asamiya-speaking people. Constantly, we see the panorama of images rich in outline and colour.

Allusions do not enter the realm of Asamiya folk-poetry. The image of society is drawn straight away, and we actually see the hand of the folk-singer constantly working, for Asamiya folk-songs are a living instituion and especially new *Bihu* songs are added to the old stock in every *Bihu* season.

HOMAGE TO ORISSA

SINGING across the centuries, Orissa, or *Utkal,* as the Oriya-speaking people call their homeland, can claim to have a long tradition of folk-poetry. So much of it is concerned with the earth that one feels like listening to the soft whispers of Mother Earth.

At Puri, where I began my Orissa tour in 1931, an Oriya friend said, " Very little Oriya folk-poetry has been recorded so far. You will have to go to village huts and ricefields, if you must listen to the singing voice of the Oriya people. You won't find even the slightest mention of the crash of the biggest of our kingdoms in the peasant songs, but so far as the emotions of the heart are concerned, you will find an excellent record."

I came down to Cuttuck, and visited the surrounding villages to gather peasant songs, all sharply etched on the mind of Orissa that I saw all around. I visited some of the States as well, enriching my collection, and marked how the half-starved peasant had been facing hunger and poverty.

I found some rare stuff, and it was really astonishing that the Oriya peasant, even while facing starvation, rejoiced in the kingdom of the heart, and derived peace and a sort of detahcment.

We hear the singing voice of the people and see them busy in household work. Finding their companionship in trees and birds, hills and streams, they make a living poetry of nature. Words, as simple as the daily speech, have the morning freshness. Occasionally, one feels that the song must have been composed by nature herself.

The villager earned a difficult livelihood, but his cultural training has been such that he did not lack in appreciation of life in its loveliest aspects. Amidst the grinding poverty runs the wonder of nature with the brilliancy of lighting. May be, the flash of joy is brief, but, for the same reason, it is all the more precious. The conception of beauty in the human form and the consolation of the human personality have always touched the mind of the villager, even when his truggle for bread is grim.

There is very little bitterness. No great fuss is made about domestic problems. But the variety of human personality, drawn with accuracy, passes before us. The village flirt, the

conceited lover, the hard-working housewife, the new bride under the folds of the bridal *sari*, the guest seeking hospitality, the old man with a bit of advice to the younger ones—you find such stuff.

The four-line piece with a common refrain is generally sung as a song by young girls. The first line forms a background, an image taken from nature or home life ; sometime it directly deals with the following comment. The refrain may be *Jamo dali lo*, i.e., O branch of the *jamun* tree.

327 At the doorway lies a round stone.
Your back received beating like a stone,
You look clever.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

328 The bamboo with four branches,
My four brothers wear ear-rings and bracelets.
They work in the Cuttuck *durbar*,
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

329 Rub your bangle, rub your finger-ring,
All know, including your neighbours.
Why do you feel shy now ?
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

330 On the road goes a chariot.
I have been with you for twelve years,
You didn't get me a nose-ring.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

331 O firefly,
Don't be sad that you are nothing,
There is light at your back.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

332 Water below the boundary-line,
You may frighten, I don't fear,
I shall wear a flower on my hair-knot.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

333 The betel-nut is cut into pieces.
Give up the State service, my love,
My royal forehead is paining.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

334 Stone-bits on the new road,
Our Raja has a white mare,
She runs towards the battle-field.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

335 Everyone shouts, rupee, rupee, rupee.
I could not buy beauty for silver,
I have lost all means.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

336 Water of the new tank.
You gave me in a big house, mother,
They give me even the *kerandi* fish after counting.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

337 The bangle touched the elbow.
No justice left at Gumma village,
Brother exploits sister.
O branch of the *jamun* tree.

The refrain may be *Mo Ramo re, i.e.*, O my Rama, *Lo Koili, i.e.*, O *koil*, or still different. The singer, addressing the branch of the *jamun* tree, the god of her heart, or even the little bird, comments on her life.

Marriage-songs are many. The mother, soothing the weeping bride, who feels sad and dejected while bidding adieu to her parents' home, addresses in a soft tone. In some of these songs even the bride opens her heart.

338 Selecting a good house,
Your father gave you in marriage, my golden daughter.
Father-in-law and mother-in-law are alive,
Theirs is a *zamindari*,
They are in State service.
You will have no trouble, my golden daughter,
Our son-in-law controls the affairs,
He carries a business in rice,
Everything will be in your hands, my golden daughter.

339 Don't weep, don't weep, I say, my golden daughter,
After eight days we shall know your news,
Your aunt with her *sari* wiped out your tears,
Why are you so much dejected ?

340 O *koil*, my silken swing on the sandal tree,
With tears I sat on it, O *koil*.

O *koil*, the gold comb I have at mother-in-law's,
The sandal oil I left back at my mother's home, O *koil*.

O *koil*, the honey at my mother's home was so sweet,
My childhood days I passed in joy, O *koil*.

O *koil*, has my mother no memory of mine ?
Is her soft heart a stone now, O *koil* ?

O *koil*, I am a fish out of water.
Shall I not once see my mother, O *koil* ?

There is a four-line pattern sung in the fields while the day's work goes on. It is also adapted to a dance with a variance of the rhythm and the tune.

341 The branch of the *kakharu* looks lovely,
When will the flower blossom ?
Looking towards the fair-faced one my years are passing,
When will she be kind to me ?

342 The bird of this side of the stream
Flew across,
The dark-faced girl
Got one pice from me.

343 The drum is torn, the drummer is dumb,
The one-eyed dancing girl is dancing ;
The *Raja* is deaf, the minister is foolish,
He follows as he likes.

344 The lower leaf drops,
The upper leaf laughs,
The middle one says,
My day draws nearer.

345 The shining white stick.
How do you get the beating ?
O God, I shall die,
My bones are crushed.

There are other songs sung by the carters as they drive the bullocks. The reference to the bullock-cart forms a special note.

346 The bullock-cart makes the creaking noise
By the side of the Bentu tank,
The cartman's face looks pale,
He longs to see the fair-faced woman.

The ploughman has his own high-pitched, long-drawn tune. He talks to the bullocks and likes to share his feelings with them in a mood of confession. He knows his limitations, yet he declares that he is no less than Ban Mali, or Krishna, in his humble vocation, while he dreams of a plough made of gold and yoke of silver,

347 Tiny, tiny, the black bullock's eyes,
Put your feet nicely, O black one,
Fine sand will rise before us.

348 Go on, go on, O bullock, do not brood over,
After a while you will be free,
You will get green grass and cold water.

349 I haven't yoked the bullocks in the company of ploughmen,
I haven't taken lesson at a school,
What song shall I sing, O ploughman,
I am ploughing with the old bullocks.

350 Red, red, son of the cow is red,
More red is the god of *Dharma.*
The god of *Dharma* is true for the four *Yugas,*
He drove his chariot in the dry sand.
Take the chariot across, O charioteer,
Let the night be passed in Lanka.

351 For the gold plough the silver yoke,
The bullock made of diamonds and gems ;
Ban Mali himself is the ploughman.

Certain Oriya folk-songs are known for the sense of humour and irony. Sometimes, the singer shows a remarkable craftmanship, singing extempore banking upon stock phrases and idioms.

352 You came to see me, dear, you did well,
No place have I for you to sit ;
The way you came, dear,
The same way you may go.

A drop of water I would offer you, dear,
The earthen pitcher is broken ;
Don't sit, go away hastily, dear,
How long will you keep standing ?

I would give you a *peerha*, dear,
You would rest for a while ;
Some child took it away, dear,
I had only one.

I would give you oil, dear,
You would rub on your body ;
Some chilli is mixed in it,
Your eyes will burn in case you use it.

I would give you utensils, dear,
Not even a brass pot in the house ;
I would have brought one from a neighbour,
My leg got crippled.

We would talk of joy and sorrow,
Dear, I have got fever ;
Do not sit beside a sick person, dear,
Make haste to go back home.

I would give you money to spend, dear,
I have nothing with me ;
I really feel, dear,
I should curse my luck.

Had you been here yesterday, dear,
I had prepared sweet cakes ;
For life-time you would have remembered, dear,
They were so sweet.

It is my bad luck, dear,
It didn't happen that way ;
Who will know my heart's pain,
All that I feel, dear ?

It is getting late, go back, dear,
Your residence is far away ;
Come some day again, dear,
Stay with me.

After some days, dear,
My son will come to invite you ;
Don't take it ill, dear,
Hurry up to go.

My house must have always, dear,
Persons staying as guests ;
Last month I had to spend, dear,
One maund of extra rice.

How will you go on foot, dear,
Tell me, how will you go back ?
If I had a bullock-cart I would offer you, dear,
I am not such a miser.

I shall give you a spinning-wheel,
It is lying broken ;
Have it repaired and send it back, dear,
Through a person coming this side.

Last year during the *Dol Purnima*, dear,
At your residence, dear,
The comforts I had, dear,
All I remember.

It will not be over if I go on, dear,
All your love ;
It will be night, day is no more,
How long will I tell ?

The voice of the Oriya woman is heard in the entire range of these songs. Her greatest wish is that she should at least get one son, for in the absence of one, it will be impossible for her to enter the doorway of heaven.

353 O *kharkhari* flower, I worship you,
Any goddess may keep me under her protection,
The rice is seven-year-old,
Let the son of my lap sleep in the folds of my *sari*,
While I die, send me to heaven.

Sometimes at the pitch of her voice, she addresses her husband, when he thoroughly disappoints her.

354 Hell with you, O man with burnt face,
No more will I stay in your house ;
At daytime I will beg some rice,
At daytime I will eat,
With my hands I will cook and eat and get fat,
In the open will I sleep.

But the husband may still seek her companionship, while he invites her attention to his plan to leave for Burma, where he will work hard to make a good living.

355 Come, O diamond girl,
We will leave for Rangoon.

Rice and vegetable curry,
What more will I say ?

Tea leaves in that country,
You can save money and keep in your hands.

Trunks and boxes in that country,
Rupees you can keep one row above the other.

Come, O diamond girl,
We will leave for Rangoon.

And ultimately the quarrel between husband and wife may end in the *Song of the Stomach.* It is a free confession of one's disappointments in the daily struggle of life.

356 For this stomach,
For this stomach I left for Bengal,
For this stomach I had all struggle,
For this stomach I pounded rice,

For this stomach I reaped the paddy.
For this stomach I worked on a shop,
For this stomach I received cane-beating on my back,
For this stomach I went on dancing
For this stomach I took to spinning,
For this stomach I find abuses on my lips,
For this stomach I met *Yam Raj.*
For this stomach.

Some of the songs deal with the seasonal outlook and the influence of every month of the year on the mind of the singer is depicted in the *Bara Masi* songs. The *Chait Parva* songs breathe the air of the spring festival. It may be merely a love song with a little twist, or it may be symbolic of the new sap rising in the trees ; the whole month of *Chaita* is spent in singing and dancing, young men and maidens, ever eager to take up opposite sides, sing in competiton. Every *Chait Parva* song draws upon nature ; it strikes the passions and emotions of both the singers and the listeners.

Oriya folk-songs are an integral part of Oriya culture. Many songs deal with images of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana, as they passed their days in the forest. Some move round Radha and Krishna.

Surely, whenever one happens to listen to an Oriya folk-song, and, thereby gets a useful hint of the people's musical tradition, ones's heart jumps with joy, saying, ' Sing, Orissa, sing, dear ? '

ANDHRA CALLING

HUNDREDS of Telugu folk-songs have been collected in Andhra; many more are still being collected. The Telugu periodicals take keen interest; *Bharati*, *Graha Lakshmi*, *Andhra Bhumi* and *Andhra Patrika*—all of them have published some of the most genuine Telugu folk-songs. The educated classes now understand their value.

"Telugu is the Italian of the East" an Andhra poet, quoting some European scholar, told me with gusto, "the charm of Andhra folk-songs is due to the sweetness of Telugu. South of the Vindhyas, we are proud of our own oral tradition. Surely, like the rest of India, real Andhra lives in villages, where you find the real bed-rock of culture."

Nedunuri Gangadharam, an Andhra young man, has over four thousand Andhra folk-songs to his credit. Some of these have appeared in *Bharati* and other Telugu journals; most of the songs in his collection remain unpublished so far. He took me to Kontamuru village, three miles from Rajahmundry, his birthplace. He serves as the head-master of the Elementary School at Kontamaru. His students, pretty little boys and girls, smiled at me as they sang the nursery rhymes and game songs. Gangadharam helped me with the text of these songs; word by word, line by line, he explained through an interpreter.

The story of Gangadharam's song-pilgrimage greatly interested me. Every year, during the vacation, he goes about from village to village, district to district. He has no funds at his disposal and his own savings are quite meagre. It is the people's spirit of hospitality that comes to his rescue, though everybody is not equally good, and he remembers some bitter moments, too. He carries on with his journey, covered with dust and sweat, hunting songs of wild beauty. Every visit to a new village could enrich his song-bag and fill his heart with joy. Songs of one district he would sing to the peasants in the next district. They would sing their own songs, adding new riches to his collections.

Gangadharam's song-bag is precious. Surely, after the day's work in the school, he has time to look into his collection. Many songs he has already learnt by heart; many more he is learning. Vacation comes and he is on the move. A genuine, silent worker, he enjoys the charm of the nomad spirit, and he does not run after publicity. Andhra will one day recognize the great

work of Gangadharam, the required funds will not be missing to publish his collection of the ancient Telugu folk-songs that followed the people's march through the pages of cultural history.

Some of the Andhra folk-songs seem to go back to the prehistoric days. They have all grown with the people's life. They are life-like, natural and unposed. Some are merely work-shanties ; the time-honoured rhythm is retained for pulling, pushing and other communal work and they help to maintain the spirit of joint labour.

The Andhra maidens, even today, join in chorus at evening, when the cows return from the pasture. The peace of dusk dwells in the human soul, and we do not fail to find its expression in Andhra folk-poetry.

357 It is time now, when the *muggu* is made
With a lotus design :
It is time now when the jessamines
And the *jaji* flowers bloom.

Time now, when water is fetched in brass vessels :
Time when flowers of the *karela* creepers bloom,
Time now when water is fetched in earthen vessels.
Time now when the lamp is lit.

Time now when the washerman brings clothes,
Time now when the cow and calves return home.
Time now when the brothers, younger and elder, say their prayers :
Time now when the daughters-in-law put *kum-kum* on their foreheads.

Time now when the daughters-in-law besmear turmeric on their legs :
Time now when the younger brothers' wives cut jokes :
Time when brothers give betels to each other.
Time when brothers' wives throw saffron-water on each other.

The virgin's face looks like a mirror,
My own face looks like the lotus *muggu*,
Whosoever recites this song will have marital bliss
For years sixty and three hundred.

The lotus *muggu* is drawn ritualistically before every house with some simple powder ; it is called *alpana* in Bengal.

Poli, the Andhra harvest god, is addressed very intimately in peasant songs, and every Andhra village seeks to be sure of his blessings.

358 Poli, O Poli, oh, why don't you come ?
Oh, why don't you come ?
Pray do come, O Poli.

Poli, O Poli, oh, you have a concubine,
So fond of the swing you are, O Poli.
Lo ! there stands a pair of *bilva* trees—
Their flowers and leaves
Are all for the worship of Ganapati.

Poli, O Poli, oh, why don't you come ?
Oh, why don't you come ?
Pray do come, O Poli.

Our Poli, the *Yaggenna*, as he sits,
Looks like a *kundi* mortar :
While he lies down, he looks like a pig :
As he gets up, he is a deer.

Poli, O Poli, oh, why don't you come ?
Oh, why don't you come ?
Pray do come, O Poli.

The peasant feels the hand of the harvest god on the golden ears of the paddy. Sometimes, Poli seems to merge in Ganapati[1], the son of Siva. *Yaggenna* is the nickname ; the peasant ad-

[1] In a paper on Ganapati, better known as Ganesa, read before the ninth All India Oriental Conference held at Trivendrum, Lachmidhar Sastri maintained that Ganesa was originally a corn-god. For the possibility that early in his carrer he was 'lord of the harvest,' Sastri quotes Alice Getty (*Ganesa*, p. 2), who herself cites Gupte for the translation of *ekadanta* as 'one tusk' or 'ploughshare.' Sastri goes on to say that the tusk may be the sickle with which the corn is reaped. *Proceedings and Transactions of the ninth All India Oriental Conference*, Trivandrum, December 1937, published at Trivandrum, 1940.

dresses him in terms beyond awe and formality. He is his god, and he can cut jokes with him, even touching a note of satire, when he thinks that the god is getting fat eating too much of the harvest. While rushing forth to take the last sheaf for threshing, the peasant cannot miss the song of Poli.

Gauri Burst with Laughter is another typical Andhra folk-song. It is sung in chorus, as the women of lower classes visit the well-to-do people. This song is popular at every door.

359 In the time of *Uttrakarte* star, O bee,
In the period of *Dakshnayana* sun, O bee,
Dakshika's wife, a laceer, O bee,
Gave birth to one hundred and one daughters, O bee,
Seven of her daughters are still unmarried, O bee.

Two of my daughters, O bee,
I gave in marriage to the god of dust, O bee,
Two more I gave to the god of air, O bee,
And still two more, O bee,
I gave in marriage to the god of fire, O bee,
And Gauri alone is unmarried, O bee.

To whom shall I marry you, O Gauri, O bee,
O my little Gauri, O bee ?
Shall I marry you in a Brahmin family, O Gauri, O bee ?
The baths the Brahmins take are simply terrible, O bee,
O they bathe at every step, O bee,
O we can't do so, O Gauri, O bee.

Shall I marry you in a *Komati* family, O Gauri, O bee ?
O the turmeric-pounding in a *Komati* house, O bee,
O we can't do it, O Gauri, O bee.

Shall I marry you in a *Kamma* family,
O Gauri, O bee,
O my little Gauri, O bee ?
O the great mass of paddy,
To be measured and given to many a *Mala* coolie,
O we can't do it, O Gauri, O bee.

Shall I marry you to a *Janga* mendicant ?
Siva is such a man, O Gauri, O bee,
O my little Gauri, O bee.
Soon as the word Janga was uttered, O bee,
Lo ! Gauri burst with laughter, O bee.

It belongs to a special branch of Andhra folk-songs, called *Tummeda Patalu*, or Bee Songs. The bee is addressed again and again, as if it can understand the human voice ; the bee, however, is not expected to answer. Immersed in various pages of mythology and tradition, the Bee Songs are sung during the first two weeks of *Dasahra* festival. The women and girls of the *Harijans* alone sing these song, as they go from door to door ; they receive at every door some rice, and even some pennies. Gauri, more known as Gauramma, was married to sing ; she is treated, however, as an Andhra girl. She laughs sportively. The song rises to a high level of humour. Gauri is a *Harijan's* daughter; a Brahmin boy she won't marry, nor a boy from the *Komati* money-lender community, nor indeed a *Kamma* peasant boy.

Love-songs are sung everywhere. The *Song of Ranga*, originally known as *Chal Mohan Ranga*, is a fine piece of Andhra folk poetry.

360 Don't you feel a joyful throb, my love ?
Under the sweet, bright moon,
Didn't I pray you to come and sleep ?
Come on, charming Ranga,
Didn't I pray you to come and sleep ?

I have come across the hillocks,
Many an ant-hill, a dense forest I left behind,
Didn't I pass them all to reach this wilderness ?
Come on, charming Ranga,
Didn't I pass them all to reach this wilderness ?

You've none to call your own,
I, too, have none to call my own ;
Let's go, a home we'll make on the river,
Come on, charming Ranga,
We'll swim across the waters if there comes a flood.

Let our hearts couple together,
Making a raft of jessamines,
We'll launch together, let's go.
Come on, charming Ranga,
We will launch together, let's go.

My eyes, beautiful with *kajal*,
A pitcher between my hip and arm,
Didn't I fill it with tears ?
Come on, charming Ranga !
Didn't I fill my pitcher with tears ?

Where men are not to be seen,
Where gods are lost in mirth and play,
Tying our garments' ends like husband and wife,
The holy *Sari Ganga* bath we'll take.
Come on, charming Ranga,
The holy *Sari Ganga* bath we'll take.

If you become the moon, my love,
I'll be the light of the moon,
How close ever I'll follow you.
Come on, charming Ranga,
How close ever I'll follow you.

Chal Mohan Ranga is the text of the refrain— come on, charming Ranga. Everywhere in Andhra this song of Ranga's sweetheart is sung again. Unnava Lakshmi Narayana, an Andhra man of letters, procured for me these original stanzas of the song ; it is one of the genuinely poetic love-songs, as almost every poet of contemporary Andhra would say. In 1937, C. Pullayya brought it on the screen. Pushpavalli, an Andhra actress, acted as Ranga's sweetheart, with Vali Subbarao in the role of Ranga. Many variants of the original stanzas of the song obviously less poetic, are sung side by side. Perhaps the eyes of every Andhra youth in the countryside turn toward the daughters of the soil as they pass carrying their pitchers; and someone would like to see if his sweetheart too can fill her pitcher with her tears, like Ranga's sweetheart.

The *Song* of the *Chandragiri Saris* is another popular love-song, It appears to have been sung in every home, whenever there is an occasion to celebrate some social function.

361 Putting a ladder to the lemon tree,
My hand as I stretched to pick some fruit,
A thorn pierced my breast, O my golden *Mama*.

O do send me some Chandragiri saris,
Between you and me, O what a strange remoteness befell,
You blue hills impede our way.

To the hill I went, the sheep was grazing,
O handsome youth, my golden *Mama*,
Send me some Chandragiri saris.

The maternal uncle, *mama* in Telugu, figures in many Andhra love-songs as the sweetheart. Unlike the marriage-customs of the Hindus in Northern India, a boy can marry his sister's daughter. A young *mama* is expected to be a dandy ; more so, when a niece, just a sweet sixteen, walks before his eyes. As obvious from the image of a grazing sheep, the heroine of the *Chandragiri saris* belongs to a shepherd family.

As V. N. Srinivasarao comments, " The picturesque little town of Chandragiri in the district of Chittor lies at the foot of the sacred Tirupati hills seven miles south-west of Tirupati town. Its situation on the right bank of the Svaranamukhi in the centre of the valley commanding the Kullur and the Mamandur passes in the Eastern ghats, through which alone the road to the south lay in the past, made it one of the most important strategic posts either for defence or aggressive operations. Its position amid mountains with the Seshadri range, rising to a height of about 2,000 feet on the north, the Pattikgonda hills on the south, with their narrow passes and precipitous height, makes it appear as if it had been designed by nature as an ideal fort. The innumerable spring channels and the river Svarnamuhki, helped by the rich alluvial soil brought down by the mountain slopes, have rendered the valley one the most fertile. That these natural advantages were recognized and availed from very early time is amply testified by the existence of the fort which, with the *mahal* it encloses, is the sole architectural legacy of the past ages to us. This circumstance and its lose association with the renowned shrine of Sri Venktesvara have always contributed to its history in the past. According to a local chronicle, a visit to the shrine and a subsequent desire to be in sight of the god have always been

the beginnings of the Chandragiri empire under various dynasties. Chandragiri is now familiar to the devout as the place from which the ascent to the Tirupati hills is the easiest and to students of history as the capital of a Yadava dynasty of kings about whom few historical details are yet available."

The *Song of the Fisher Boy* brings an intimate picture of Andhra life. It is a cry against all social injustice.

362 Me, a fisher boy, O babu,
Beat me not, abuse me not, O babu,
A small fishing-boat I row, O babu,
A net to be hurled I throw, O babu.

At Poolapilli Punta was I born,
In the fair at Pedapoori was I brought up,
My father's name is Jalla Konku,
My mother's name is Mattagirsa.

My sister's name is Chedupariga,
My brother's name is Royyipeechu,
My wife's name is Yisukadondu,
My own name is Bommirayyi.

Me, a fisher boy, O babu,
Beat me not, abuse me not, O babu,
A small fishing-boat I row, O babu,
A net to be hurled I throw, O babu.

The fisher boy represents the voice of the oppressed classes ; the babu stands for those who have the upper hand.

" The fisher boy's image has a tragic face," remarked Chinta Dikshatlu, the well-known Andhra writer, " I got it from the lips of a beggar and got it published in *Jayanti* which is not current now."

The fisher boy mentions different kinds of fish as the names of his father, mother, sister, brother, wife and even his own name. The *jalla konku* is an important fish. The *mattagirsa* fish has a flat back and is very pleasant to taste. The *royyipeechu* is a long and thin fish with big moustache. The *yisukadondu* and *bommirayi* are two other members of the vast fish family. The

fisher boy must use his net while he goes out fishing ; the babu, however, may catch him by the neck without a net, without a trap, and he has no escape.

The features of various castes, *Kapus*, *Kammas* and *Reddis*, etc., who are all peasants, may look, more or less the same ; and even a Mala, treated as an untouchable, has no less a physical charm. As Couldrey puts it, "In the next field we came upon young Gubbayya, so he names himself, sitting under a stack, and twisting palmfibre into plough-ropes with the air of a copper angel. He is only a Mala, it seems, though he wears curled locks like a Rajput. "[1]

Some of the Andhra folk-songs are tribal in character, their features varying in strength and spirit as we go from caste to caste, clan to clan. *Mother Calf, Calf, O Calf* is a rare piece of tribal poetry.

363 To Jaggaipet I went all agog,
As seeds are thrown in the field, he sowed his love.
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

For rupees five-and-twenty a shapely cot I bought,
I slept not on it even once :
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

For half a rupee a bodice, bedecked with mirrors, I bought,
O this bodice of mine is not even a bit torn :
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

To Kotappa fair I went and a half-wig I bought,
O this *koppu* of mine is not even a bit ruffled ;
Mother calf, calf, O calf ?

Milk of the white cow I brought, *ghee* of the black cow I brought,
I had all my heart upon my man :
Mother calf, calf, O calf ?

1 Gewald J. Couldrey, *South Indian Hours*, p. 102.

When bread is baked, I'll cook the *gongura* leaves in the evening,
And at night on them I'll feed you:
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

The kernel of a tender cocoanut I'll get and keep it in milk,
O the skimmed juice I'll give you:
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

My *siga* I'll take away; rather a *koppu* I'll make and I'll put on the forehead a vermilion-mark,
Else my coiffure itself will laugh at me:
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

The mat of date-palm leaves is for my man, jute stuff I'll spread for the guest,
My man and me haven't met since long:
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

This side a *kulthi* field, that side an *anumula* field,
And down below a cotton field:
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

For rupees three a pearl-spangle for my forehead I bought,
O this spangle of mine is not even a bit worn off:
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

Boorele I made by frying and kept for him in the basket,
O now you take these *boorele*, my darling,
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

Stand on the boulder on your way beside the rock,
Leave some hint before you go:
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

Seated on a gold-flowered *peeta* I was married to the youngman,
O love I haven't tasted so far:
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

A royal calf you are, a calf of Rajamahendri,
A calf capable of going to the ghat :
Mother calf, calf, O calf.

It comes from the Gangi Reddis, as Adivi Bapiraju, dean of new Andhra art and literature told me. " I knew this haunting melody since childhood days," he said, " in July 1939, I got the text from a woman. Jaggaipet is some 40 miles from Bezwada; the seeds being thrown in a field is, indeed, an apppealing image of love-making in peasant-life. *Dooramma*, or mother calf, is a term of endearment for the calf ; the whole refrain being *dooramma doora doora*, mother calf, calf, O calf. The peasant woman tells her story to her calf. The *koppu*, in the fourth stanza, is a simple hair-arrangement while the flowing hair is tied in a knot at the back; this knot is thrust underneath the hair from below. The *siga*, in the eighth stanza, is an elaborate piece of coiffure ; the hair, turned into a beautiful pig-tail, is coiled up at the back following the old, rich tradition. *Boorele* makes a special item of the Andhra dinner ; the *urad* species of pulses turned into a sort of paste, a hole is made in each piece with the finger before it is fried in sesame oil. The pearl-spangle, bought for three rupees, is made of imitation pearls. The bodice, bedecked with mirrors, in the third stanza, throws light on the old age of the song ; one could have it for half a rupee in the happy past."

Andhra dance songs have a charm of their own. Many of these songs are drawn from the ancient epic stories and legends. Others come from daily life.

Couldrey's impressions of Andhra folk-dances have genuine words of praise and insight, "It was the custom for the various guilds and castes of the neighbourhood to send choirs of dancers to the Dhavleshwaram car-festival, which was held every year on a day in February about two miles from the river. These choirs danced in the village-street after nightfall, each choir forming a ring about a lamp with many branches, like a burning bush of brass, and singing in response to their choirmaster or coryphaeus, whose exacting business it was, not only to lead and inflame the dance and song, but to keep alive the many fiery tongues of the lamp as well.....the feast of god Narsimham, who dwelt in the temple on the Dhavleshwaran promontory..... there was no formal competitiom between the dancing-choirs..... The orchestral lamp of the smiths of Dhavleshwaram, for ins-

tance, was glorious with parrots of brass and branching tracery, and twinkled with points of light like a little universe, while the choristers themselves were nearly as splendid in their golden ornaments and muslin tunics of purple and crimson ; whereas the Malas danced naked to the waist, and their candelabrum was a sorry skeleton of scrap-iron. But in actual dance and song the poor outcasts were by no means out of the running...they yielded to none as regards the grace, the usefulness, and the transfiguring fervour of their youthful coryphaeus. These heroic dances are performed by the villagers themselves in every village."

The leader of a dancing-choir may be a poet-musician, and he may compose a new dance song as the choric dance continues. Every new dance-song is a real folk-song for its seed lies in community-singing. The original poet-musician, who composes the new song as he leads the dance, is no more an individual ; he is the mouthpiece of the whole community.

The dance-forms have their own local variations. Every dance-form should be studied separately. Some of the dances may vary from distric to district, clan to clan. They must be seen over and over again before their steps and mass action sink into the mind.

Andhra folk-dances and songs should be preserved by the modern scientific apparatus: folk-dances must be recorded through the cinematograph and folk-songs through the phonograph.

P. Sambamurthy commented on South Indian music, " South India is at present in need of a Cecil Sharp to give a stimulus to the study of folk-music. Something should be done to record the rich folk-songs of the country. The sooner it is undertaken the better, for the folk-music is already beginning to perish on account of the in-roads of the modern civilisation into rural parts. The easiest and the cheapest method of recording folk-music is through the phonogram. The Madras Government might be invited to inaugurate a Phonogram Archive (on the model of one in Berlin), wherein the recorded folk-music in cylinders from the several districts might be made available to the public. The initial and recurring cost of such a scheme is very small."

Folk-dances, like the ancient folk-songs, are rapidly disappearing. If we are going to have phonogram archives to save the folk-music of various parts of India from sinking into oblivion, we must also have cinematograph archives for our folk-dances,

which may be recorded on sound-and-colour films. Their genuineness and originality must be preserved scientifically in the phonograms and cimematographs. Songs and dances must be picked out according to their quality. Each province must have its own fund for inaugurating the much-needed museum of folk arts.

The revival of Andhra folk-songs will give birth to a new kind of Andhra poetry. Rabindranath Tagore knew the value of the people's poetry when he said, " Of course, as in the case of all poetry, folk-poems have different degrees of merit. The living stream that flows from the genius of a true poet has its origin, like the mythical river *Mandakini*, in an unattainable world. Then come those others who set to work digging canals to take the water to the cornfields. They labour hard, but at their hands, it becomes variously tainted by artificiality."

The modern poetry seeks new inspiration. The poet to-day must respond to the people's emotions and similes of life and death. He must listen to the peasant singing of his plough and sickle. He must listen to the mother singing the eternal cradle-songs. He must sit by the fireside where the sons of the soil gather to celebrate the eternal spirit of friendship. He must know the thoughts that the spinning-wheel brings to the minds of the spinner. And in his own poems and songs he must interpret the real power of the people. His poetry should be the mirror of the people's mind struggling for new life.

Andhra would do well to hurry up to inaugurate its National Museum of Folk Arts ; almost all the expressions of Andhra folk-songs deserve to be preserved and revived through it. Before the actual phonographic and cinematographic recording is started, a complete academic edition of Andhra folk-songs may be brought out utilizing the services of all the folk-song collectors including Nedunuri Gangadharam.

THE ROLE OF TAMIL SONGS

SURPRISINGLY enough, an interesting story is told in Tamilnad about Kamban, the well-known Tamil poet. This story pays a great homage to Tamil folk-songs. The poet was moving about in the countryside, when from a distance he listened to the water-lifters' song. This was a four-line piece. The poet, somehow, missed the third line. The water-lifters, working at the well in the fields, had left for home, while the day's job was over in the evening. The poet tried his level best, but failed to capture the third line; he failed even to fill up the blank with all the imaginative faculty at his disposal. He had to spend the night in the field. Next morning, as the peasants resumed the work of watering the field with the help of well-irrigation, someone again sang the same song, and this time the poet could clearly follow the third line. It was so befitting, yet so simple. He was known for his great experience as a poet, yet he was not able to have the slightest approach to the third line of a piece of folk-poetry, though he had put his whole energy at the stake. So he paid homage to the song, which is still sung by the water-lifters.

Moongi Lilaee mele,
Tungu pani neere,
Tungu pani neeraee,
Vang kadirone.

These are the words of the water-lifters' song, showing the supreme effect of beauty and harmony derived at once from the blending of poetry and music. It has been widely sung in the fields with an ageless appeal ; certainly, it looks fresh even in the English rendering.

364 O dew drop, that sleepeth
On the bamboo leaf ;
O sun, that drieth the dew drop,
Sleeping on the bamboo leaf.

Perhaps no other Tamil folk-song is more popular than the *Song of the Dew Drop on the Bamboo Leaf*, as it may be called. It

has all the morning freshness about it; the image is so clear that at once it reminds of the early Chinese poetry.

I remember to have made an attempt to recite this Tamil folk-song at Madras in 1940 in the course of my public lecture presided over by C. Rajagopalachari, who further praised the poetic delicacy in the presidential remarks; Tamil folk-songs should be collected even by professors of Madras University, he stressed, but while approaching the people, one has to be in full sypmathy with their culture and it is possible that a real folk-song may dry up in fear before a professor just as the dew drop on the bamboo leaf is afraid of the morning sun.

Many of the Tamil lullabies and cradle songs were already old when the early Tamil poets were alive; variants of the same lullaby existed in various corners of Tamilnad. Various other types of Tamil folk-songs, still buried in the oral tradition, may rank with the oldest songs available anywhere in the world, and the ardent Tamil scholar Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Swaminatha Aiyar was right when he told me, "The greater book of Tamil songs still remains unwritten, for the songs everywhere hang from the living lips of the rural communities, and someone should only catch hold of them to restore a great antiquity—the very life-story of the musical folk genius of Tamilnad."

Surely, the ceremonial use of many Tamil songs is obvious; marriages have their own songs, used as a significant appendix. Similarly, many social activities find a vital expression in folk-songs. Some songs are vital as work songs, and have to be studied in relation to a particular occupation or form of labour to which they are attached. A song may essentially carry a note of some village amusement, or it may have to deal with the cultivation of a crop; another song may excel in ritual imagery. The climax of a ceremonial or social function may be the birth of a new song, or even the joy of labour itself may find expression into a new song, and, obviously, the stability of any new composition depends on its poetic image and musical value. Of all the forms of Tamil folk-song it is the Tamil lullaby that has the greatest vitality. Very many Tamil lullabies have not been recorded as yet, but, evidently, some of them, which could be brought to the notice of the scholars, seem to rank with poetry of high order.

The *Song of the Ak-Kati Bird*, sung by the shepherds, has a note of tragedy. It is striking, for the whole situation is visualized, as a piece of bird-lore.

365 *Ak-kati* bird, O *ak-kati* bird,
O where did you lay
Your eggs ?

Raising the small stone
On the rock in the dense forest
I laid my eggs.

I hatched and got only three little ones
Searching the grain for the first little one
I crossed three *kadam*[1] distance.

Searching the grain
For the middle one
I crossed four *kadam* distance.

Searching the grain
For the third one
I crossed greater distance.

The cruel washerboy
Sat there seeking game
He spread his net.

My feet were caught in the snare
Fluttering my wings I lamented
Tears of sorrow flowed back the
four *kadam* distance.

Another piece of bird-lore is a peasant song. The bird's point of view is put forward with all the poetic delicacy.

366 The toddy-seller, that blasted rogue
Has cut my wing,
Open the door,
Hear my tale,
Light the lamp,
Soothe my pain.

1 An old Tamil word depicting a distance of three miles.

As the palm leaves rustled,
Couldn't you hurry homeward ?
As the dry palm leaves crackled,
Couldn't you hurry homeward ?

The *Lament of the She-Frog*, sung by children in chorus, further shows an attempt to see at things from the animal's point of view.

367 Here and there and everywhere, my lord, my god,
At many places, my lord,
I searched and searched for you, my god,
But I found you nowhere, O nowhere.

Insects have gathered round you, my god,
Your feet are dangling down ;
Riding the black horse
You are leaving me, my lord.

Under the tall plantain
Stands your mother-in-law's hut ;
Without telling anybody,
You are leaving me, my lord.

The lullaby takes the colour of a national song in the full sense of the term. It never loses its flavour.

368 The milk overflows from your lips,
The coral string I have attached
The milky, silken cloth I spread in the cradle.
My green parrot, go to sleep.

The Kaveri flows into two streams,
Between them stands the Sri Rangam temple ;
Like a lotus closing its petals,
Close your eye-lids and go to sleep.

Laughing and sleeping in the shell,
O little pearl of the southern sea,
Drink up the whole milk from the earthen pot,
O red flower, go to sleep.

Sucking the juice from the new flowers,
O you buzzing bumble-bees,
Till the new flowers blossom,
My golden bumble-bee, now go to sleep.

While the moonlight pours down milk,
The shining stars are winking their eyes ;
My white flower, close your eye-lids
On your soft bed go to sleep.

While playing hide and seek, the song opens with a question and answer pattern—the girl, with the piece of cloth bound on her eyes, puts the question and the others answer.

369 What are the things your mother gave you ?
She gave milk and boiled rice,
An unripe fruit for me,
A ripe fruit for you.

Search and bring.
Come, O unripe fruit,
Come, O ripe fruit,
Come, O paddy of Conjeevaram.

Conjeevaram is known for good paddy. The latter part of the song is sung in chorus.

Another song, sung by little girls, offers happy images. The climax of this song is the consciousness for adorning the hair with flowers.

370 Small, small plants are swaying,
The chariot with gems of various colours is swaying,
The *vanni* tree is swaying.

Come behind me,
There are cows and bullocks
In the flock.

We are magic girls,
I have flowers in my hair-knot,
What is the harm to have them, O *Raja* ?

A simple complaint may be the theme of a love-song, not more than a couplet, sung again and again to give a deeper impression.

371 Filled with flowers' fragrance,
In this forest of small thorny bushes,
Asking me to keep standing,
You left this place for good.

The rain-song has its own appeal. Possibly the effect of the song becomes an obvious factor if it begins drizzling as the song continues.

372 It will rain nicely, mother,
The country will turn green, thus will it rain.

Shining like the needle,
The village will turn green, thus will it rain.

Shining like the cowrie,
The forest will turn green, thus will it rain.

The village may be under the weight of water,
Thus will it rain, mother.

Roundly, roundly will it rain,
Everywhere in the world will it rain, mother.

Rain of wealth—thus will it rain.
It will rain nicely, mother.

Pillaiyar is the Tamil name for Ganesha, the son of Siva. He

is one of the Tamil gods, yet it is admirable to note that the song depicts him in a way, as if he were a member of the family.

373 Pillaiyar, O Pillaiyar, O god Pillaiyar,
Why are you calling the poor god ?

Pillaiyar is busy in weeding in the brinjal garden,
I went there and searched, where is Pillaiyar ?

Pillaiyar is playing in the cucumber garden ;
I went there and searched, where is Pillaiyar ?

Pillaiyar is playing with the soft ball in the money-lenders' street ;
I went there and searched, where is Pillaiyar ?

Pillaiyar is playing with the ball in the Brahmins' street ;
I went there and searched, where is Pillaiyar ?

Pillaiyar is discussing in the oilmen's street ;
I went there and searced, where is Pillaiyar ?

Pillaiyar's yard lies in disorder,
How to arrange, how to make ?

The four walls may be of gold,
The sun gate may be of gold.

The inner temple may be of gold,
The palace gate too may be of gold.

But perhaps gold is not available so easily. The village girl, as depicted in a marriage song, addresses her *Mama*, or maternal uncle, expressing unfulfilled wishes. She is going to be wedded to the *Mama's* son, as the social custom permits.

374 On many occasions, O *Mama*,
The toe-ring is sold.
If you buy me a toe-ring, O *Mama*,
I shall see how it looks on my toe.

In every village, *O mama*,
The wooden pestle is sold ;
If you buy one pestle for me, O *mama*,
Pounding, pounding,
I shall get some flour, O *mama*.

At distant places, O *mama*,
The bridal veil is sold ;
If you buy one veil for me, O *mama*,
I shall see how it adorns my shoulders.

Immediately after marriage the couple has to face life more realistically. The husband's complaint is the theme of a nice little song.

375 We have rice and we have *dal*,
No oven, that's the trouble.

The wind blows carrying dust,
Alas, we have no door, that's the trouble.

My wife comes and stands before me,
No *sari* to present her, that's the trouble.

The beggar comes and stands at the gate,
Not a *dhela*[1] to give him, that's the trouble.

E-le-lo, E-le-lo is the running note in the work shanties sung by the labourers on every building work or some other heavy labour. The labourers have to be more realistic than others for they face the difficulties of economic pressure.

376 *E-lo-le, e-le-lo*, O pea-hen, *e-le-lo, e-le-lo*,
It matters little if you have good qualities,
It matters little if you come of good family,
If you have money the village will bow down,
E-le-lo, e-le-lo, O pea-hen, *e-le-lo*.

1 A coin equal to half pice.

You should turn *damaris*[1] into a pice,
Should keep the money secure,
Spend a single pice like a spendthrift,
E-le-lo, e-le-lo, O pea-hen, *e-le-lo, e-le-lo.*

You should ever seek to possess a silver rupee.
If you know the art of making garlands,
You can give this art to others and make money,
E-le-lo, e-le-lo, O pea-hen, *e-le-lo, e-le-lo.*

Add to your wealth as the moon gets brighter,
Lend it and charge the interest,
Turn one into ten, ten into hundred,
E-le-lo, e-le-lo, O pea-hen, *e-le-lo, e-le-lo.*

The singing voice of the people, somehow, makes their burden lighter ; they have to spend a good deal of time together. There is a lot of gossip, but it is the song that gives the deep and lasting touch to their cultural friendship.

As I look into my collection of Tamil folk-songs, the faces of my friends at Madras, K.V. Jagannathan and K. Srinivasacharya, rise before me. Surely, they have a good deal of claim on my study of Tamil songs. Final responsibility for translation of each song is mine, but no translation would have been possible if Srinivasacharya would have refused to sit with me for long hours. I know it was boring for him to work with a person who did not know Tamil and for whom Tamil words sounded all strange. But he had to yield to my unusual eagerness and untiring will to work, and for this long-cherished co-operation, K. V. Jagannathan always inspired Srinivasacharya with his ready smiles, whenever we met him to report how long we had proceeded in our work. The faces of my friends will ever shine in my vision.

1 *Damari* is a coin equal to one-fourth of pice.

SING KERALA

KERALA, or Malabar, as the Malayalam-speaking part of South India is known in more recent history, has her own cultural heritage, her own tradition of song and dance, engraved in the herats of the people.

"Kerala is a tract of country where Nature has lavished her gifts in profusion," said a Malayalam scholar, C. I. Gopala Pillai, at Trivandrum, "Ridged by lofty mountains on the east and washed by the deep ocean in the west, this strip of beautiful land has afforded ample facilities to its inhabitants to develop their own culture without any serious obstruction from outside. From ancient times, the people here have been tillers of the soil in times of peace and fighters of battles in times of internal strife. Travellers from foreign countries have time and again borne eloquent testimonies to the martial spirit and dauntless courage of the people of Kerala. Their exploits have been made the theme of many a ballad sung throughout the country even today."

We have a long talk one evening, and I must express my deep gratitude for the fund of information that Gopala Pillai put at my disposal.

My difficulty was about the language of the songs. I had to take great care to take down the words of the songs in the *devanagiri* script and translate each word and each line with the help of friends. The transcription and translation work looked awfully boring, but I did not lose patience.

I listened to some of the songs entranced. Songs of shadowy silence. Songs of the paddy fields. The basketmakers' songs. Boat songs. The fishermen's songs. They all called up old visions. Some of them sounded like incantations. They shared the blessings of Nature and intimate pictures of daily life of the people. Everybody sang full of energy, and at times I felt as if the landscape gave its magic touch to the voice of the singer. Sometime the tone of the song seemed to be submissive; occasionally, the tone got the upper note, as if to retouch the whole outline hastily.

As Gopala Pillai explained, the occupational songs included many songs, sung by various castes and communities like the Parias, the Valluvans, the Pullayas, the Mukkuvas, the Valans, the Pulluvas. The songs of the Pulayas included the paddy transplantation songs, mostly sung by the womenfolk;

one woman or girl leads the song, others follow. He also stressed that the different gods of the Hindu pantheon and the old Dravidian gods and goddesses admitted into the Hindu fold play a prominent part in the religious songs. Again, he spoke at length about the songs of adventure, the ballads about the old warriors; fight and quarrel between two rivals was generally the theme of these ballads.

I met another champion of folk-songs of Kerala, V. R. Puduwal, Director of Archaeology in Travancore State. We discussed about the various types of folk-songs sung in Kerala on more than one occasion.

"So far as one could gather," said Puduwal, "there are over five hundred songs even now extant in Kerala, as I wrote in one of my reports as early as 1932."

"Now how would you classify the folk-songs of Kerala?" I readily enquired.

"I have my own views," said Puduwal, "others may differ."

Puduwal came out with his classification. He suggested that we could have these songs classified into eleven groups in the following order.

1. Songs with Puranic and legendary themes, such as *Guru Dakshina Pattu* and *Santana Gopalam.*

2. Songs in praise of the gods to invoke their help, such as *Stotras* and other prayer songs; anonymous in nature, they are sung in every home.

3. Songs with moral instructions, and didactic stuff, such as *Thumpi Pattu* and *Ariva Pattukal.*

4. Songs based on *Vedantic* and *Sastraic* teachings such as *Valluvar Pattu.*

5. Songs of heroic exploits, such as *Vattakahn Pattukall, Tampuran Pattu, Anjuthamburam Pattu, Eravikuti Pillai Pattu.* etc.

6. Songs of historical nature such as *Mamankam, Margam Pattu, Pallippattukal.*

7. Professional and religious songs:

(*i*) *Sastranaga Pattu*, sung on occasions of marriage, anniversary, etc., among Nambudiri Brahmins and Kshattriyas.

(*ii*) *Nangiyar Pattu* sung in the *Nangiyar Kuttu*, a dramatic performance, wherein dancing and acting are prominent.

(*iii*) *Brahmani Pattu*: songs that resemble the songs of the Todas in certain respects, and also the chanting of *Sama Veda* by Nambudiri Brahmins. They are sung

on ceremonies such as marriage, among the higher castes.

(*iv*) *Tiyattu Pattu*: sung in a religious show based on the popular theme of the killing of the monster Daruka.

(*v*) *Pullwar Pattu*: serpent songs, sung in praise of the serpents to please them.

(*vi*) *Panar Pattu*: songs to ward off the evil eye as well as the mischief of one's enemy.

(*vii*) *Manar Pattu*: songs based on the story of *Chilappatikaram.*

(*viii*) *Velan Pattu*: songs sung for the eradication of evil done by foes and intended for their annihilation.

(*ix*) *Aivar Kali Pattu*: song play performed to the accompaniment of dance in Bhadrakali temples.

(*x*) *Bhadrakali Pattu* or *Kalameluttu Pattu*: songs meant for propitiating the goddess Bhadrakali. Sung by the professional singers and drummers of the temples, these are sung not while making the image of the goddess, but after the image is made with powder of lime, charcoal and dry leaves, etc.

(*xi*) *Kaniyar Pattu*: songs of the *Kaniyars*, or the village astrologers. These are sung on occasions of their dance.

8. Songs of amusement and entertainment such as *Ona Pattu*, *Kummatti Pattu*, *Unnal Pattu*, etc.

9. *Pura Pattu*: obscene songs sung in praise of the goddess Bhagwati.

10. Cult songs such as *Castam Pattu* or *Ayyappan Pattu*. The *Pantalam* Rajas of Travancore are frequently mentioned in these songs.

11. Miscellaneous songs: they include various songs touching any aspect of social life.

Puduwal believed that folk-songs of Kerala have an unadorned purity and simplicity of diction in addition to an impassioned sweetness of melody. Songs sung to the accompaniment of dance follow the ancient rhythmic movement and lend a special grace to music. They are valuable to the antiquarian for their primitive spontaneity of melody and rhythm and perhaps more precious as human documents, with a unique vitality to infuse new spirit even in modern poetry. The music is almost instinctive throughout taking its origin from the human urge to express in voice what nature has bestowed upon man. One can really appreciate the folk music of Kerala as an unconscious art with its roots going deep in the very soul of Kerala.

Now coming to the songs, we may begin with a popular song of snake-worship.

377 Whence do you come, O dark she-snake ?
My eggs I laid, I'm going away.

Dark mother, you are never kind, O never,
Innumerable eggs you have laid.

Now hundreds and thousands of serpent-kins
Will come out.

When so many of them will appear, O father,
Where will be shelter for son of man ?

Sung by the Pulluvas, who pay periodical visits to every house of the upper classes, it shows the influence of snake-worship in Kerala. The snake-songs are chanted at every door in the village. Obviously, the people have developed a special liking for the music and words of snake-songs. The cry of man for protection from the poisonous snakes symbolizes man's urge for long life, and the image of the she-snake, who is passing after laying her eggs, brings at once the fast-approaching death.

The song of the basketmakers has a note of romance as its climax. The girl attracts a boy with the art of her daily labour. *Teyyantara* is the typical burden of her song.

378 I reached the place of *champa* plants, *teyyantara*,
I reached the place of *champa* plants, *teyyantara*,
I placed its bark in the sun an in moisture, *teyyantara*,
I took the thread from the bark, *teyyantara*,
I made each thread into seven, *teyyantara*,
I kept them lengthwise and breadthwise, *teyyantara*,
Like a fish, *teyyantara*,
I laid the basket design, *teyyantara*,
I completed the weaving of the basket, *teyyantara*,
I came out at the doorway, *teyyantara*,
He was going out, *teyyantara*,
He is an interesting youngman, *teyyantara*,
He saw the basket, *teyyantara*,
He praised me, *teyyantara*.

The song of the paddy transplanters may have *timi timintam* as the burden of the song and, may be, the girl, who is expected to give lead to the party of paddy transplanters, freely draws upon some topic from the Ramayana.

379 She was born in Atura forest, *timi timintam,*
Tevaki grew up happily, *timi timintam,*
Her nose was punched, *timi timintam,*
She wore an iron nose-ring, *timi timintam,*
Tevaki grew up happily, *timi timintam,*
She put on ear-rings of palm leaves, *timi timintam,*
Tevaki grew up happily, *timi timintam,*
She approached Lord Rama, *timi timintam,*
She wished Lord Rama to marry her, *timi timintam,*
Said Lord Rama, *timi timintam,*
I am destined to have Sita as my wife, *timi timintam,*
Go and approach Lakshmana, *timi timintam,*
She said, ' Lakshmana, marry me,' *timi timintam,*
On hearing this, *timi timintam,*
Lakshmana got angry, *timi timintam,*
Lakshmana drew out his sword, *timi timintam,*
He chalked off her nose and breasts, *timi timintam,*
Tevaki fled away, *timi timintam,*
She approached Maricha, *timi timintam,*
Maricha asked, ' Who has committed this sin ? ' *timi timtam,*
Tevaki said, ' He is Lakshmana,' *timi timintam,*
Maricha on hearing this, *timi timintam,*
Disguised himself as a deer, *timi timintam,*
He reached the Dandaka forest, *timi timintam,*
He looked like a golden deer, *timi timintam,*
He hopped and jumped, *timi timintam,*
Sita having seen the deer, *timi timintam,*
Says, ' Listen, my lord, *timi timintam,*
We see a golden deer, *timi timintam,*
You must bring the deer alive to me, *timi timintam,*
Lord Rama left, *timi timintam,*
He put on *karup kacha* cloth aoround his waist, *timi timintam,*
With strong bow and arrow, *timi timintam,*
He reached the Dandaka forest, *timi timintam,*
Rama runs and approaches, *timi timintam,*
The deer jumps, flees and escapes, *timi timintam,*

The Pulaya women, who sing this song, find some cultural affinity with Tevaki.

Another Pulaya song describes the poor lot of the labourer, and, as a cry against injustice, it is a valuable document of Malayalam folk-poetry.

Says the landlord, eat the coconut, drink the toddy,
I say, I will die and you won't mourn for me ;
Grow, O paddy, full and swet,
The landlord wears silk,
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.

Says the landlord, birds are happy but you are sad,
I say, I will die to be born a bird on earth ;
Cry, O drums and bells,
Our sweat the landlord fails to see,
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.

Says the landlord, trees are green but you are withered,
I say, I will die to be born a tree on earth ;
Blow, O sea breeze, tell your tale,
The landlord never hears our cry,
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.

Says the landlord, don't we pray to the same gods ?
I say, no home have I, nor temple for the gods ;
Go deep, O plough,
The landlord does whatever he likes,
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.

Says the landlord, I will give you a piece of land,
I say, don't tell a lie ;
Come milk, come honey,
The landlord carries bags of silver,
I see no justice, O earth, O sun.

The Pulayas, as some scholars believe, are the earliest inhabitants of Kerala, but they submerged in the later arrivals of the Dravidians and Aryans. They are known as Cheramar or Cherumakkal in British Malabar. They had been slaves to the

high caste Hindus, and even after the abolition of slavery their rank in the social life of the country has been very low.

The peasant songs in most cases come from the Pulayas, who possess a keen sense of observation.

381 Sitting on the stone, O crab,
Move a little
From the stone, O crab.

Let me plough the field, O crab.
Move a little
From the stone, O crab.

382 Oh, having taken the untrustworthy landlord's food,
I can neither sit nor stand.

383 In our paddy field lies a frog dead,
A frog came and took it away.
He took our frog and dug a pit,
He buried it there.

384 Can we separate a useless coconut,
When mixed in one thousand coconuts ?
Can we separate a useless grain of paddy,
When mixed in one thousand grains of paddy ?

385 O pretty maiden,
Where have your brothers gone ?
They are out to collect the reeds.
What is the use of the reeds ?
The reeds are good for making cots.

386 O sister-in-law, it seems
Your brother does not like me,
Pray, ask him to send me back to my home.
I am not used to taking stale rice gruel,
Pray, ask him to send me back to my home.

I am not used to wearing
The old and torn clothes,
Pray, ask him to send me back to my home.
I am a boat without a boatman,
Aimlessly moving about,
Pray, ask him to send me back to my home.

387 Kunnan[1] and Chakki[2] got over the bridge,
The bridge shook with alarming sound.

388 When my father married my mother,
There was plenty of sweet potatoes.[3]

389 O black girl, O black beauty,
You have a lover in the east.

390 My wife's house is in Ambili Kunnu,
If I go there I shall be happy.
My mother-in-law will give me coffee without jaggery at morning,
I shall go to market-place for jaggery, O gentleman,
She gives gruel in a big pot at noon.
For one or two grains of rice
I shall have to dive deep in the pot.

391 As I see the waves in the southern lake,
I think of my husband.

A true husband is he, a brave man,
I feel distressed in his absence.

I have promised to offer a cock to the Pudupalli church,
He is not back.

1 A common name for a boy.
2 A girl's name.
3 The marriage season among the Pulaya community of labourers March-April (season of harvest), when there is plenty of sweet potatoes.

I said I shall give a pretty good fish to the Vakatanam church
It is all in vain.

I promised to give a chicken to Kottayam church,
He is seen nowhere.

I promised to give a young lizard to Kolladu church,
He is not seen anywhere.

Some of the Pulayas have taken to christianity, and the reference to various churches is the special feature in their songs of recent origin.

The Pulaya children have their own songs, some of them associated with their games and others sung to express their view of life as they understand it.

392 Where is your nest, O crow ?
Have you any little ones ?
If you feed not your little one,
He will cry of hunger,
You took away bread from my hand, O crow.

393 We will go, we will go
To the yellow bush.
Let me know what shall we do
If we go to the yellow bush.
If we go to the yellow bush,
We will catch the yellow bird.
Let me know what shall we do
If we catch the yellow bird.
If we catch the yellow bird,
We will fry it in the frying pan.
Let me know what shall we do
If we fry it in the frying pan.
If we fry it in the frying pan
We will take it with the toddy.
Let me know what shall we do
If we take it with the toddy.

If we take it with the toddy
We will beat our wives and children.
Let me know what shall we do
After beating our wives and children.
After beating them we can sell
The paddy field near our gate.

The boat songs have a significant appeal and bring us in intimate touch with the boatman's life.

394 Whose boat comes upon the waves ?
Is it not the merchandise boat of a Cochin merchant ?
What are the goods in the boat ?
Stores and throne and many a fish without intestines.

395 My husband, Oh my husband, brave and sweet,
My mind melts when I don't see him.
My husband, Oh my husband, brave and sweet.

I made an offering of a buffalo-calf to Etatua church,
I cannot see my darling,
My husband, Oh my husband, brave and sweet.

I made an offering of a small bird to Raiumala church,
I cannot see my darling,
My husband, Oh my huskand, brave and sweet.

The influence of christianity is evident even on the boatman's life.

The fisherman in his song cannot forget to make frequent reference to the various varieties of fish.

396 There is a vaka fish in the river,
Mark its rhythmic movement ;
Catch one for me, O Mannava,
O my Elava.

The fishing rod is addressed as a person of the Elava caste which has been an untouchable caste for centuries.

The folk-songs of Kerala show an utmost degree of diversity, though we find a sort of family likeness throughout. They never lack picturesqueness. Kerala smiles through them and also sheds tears. Kerala really talks to us through them. Songs of long memory. Songs of man and woman. Songs of fields and village homes. Songs of deep interest in life. They all evoke our admiration and envy.

Gopala Pillai spoke highly of a popular song motif coming from North Travancore. A dispute between the paddy and the coconut ; each trying to assert its superiority over the other. It was really interesting to note a dispute as such in the two staple products of Kerala. The paddy and the coconut agree to remain under water for some days, and ultimately the superiority of the paddy over the coconut is admitted, for whereas the paddy began to put forth sprouts while under the water, the coconut began to get decayed.

" It is a pretty long song," said Gopala Pillai, " and if you stay for some days, it may be procured for you."

But I had to bid adieu to Kerala without acquiring the song of the paddy and the coconut, though I had to admit that the song motif itself gave a clue to the eternal touch of the soil.

THE THREE-LINE KANNADA SONGS

As Masti Venkatesa Iyengar wrote, " One of the most important directions in which literary work is going on in the Karnataka is the collection and publication of the folk-songs of the country. A group of workers in Dharwar has, within the past year, published a valuable collection of three-line pieces sung generally by women grinding corn in the northern parts of the country. These pieces are perfect specimens of folk-poetry. Their words are simple, their imagery is natural, their thought pure and innocent. There is hardly one mood of woman's heart which does not find easy and graceful expression in one or another of these pieces.....All lovers of literature should be grateful to the workers of the *Geleyara Gumpu* (Association of Friends) of Dharwar who, under their leader, Mr. D. R. Bendre, have brought the poetry of their sisters in the sun out to a larger world."[1]

My Kannada friend, Maddikere Dwarkanath, as he recited the three-line Kannada songs, mostly taken from *Gartiye Haru* (Songs of the Housewife), an anthology of Kannada folk-songs, further inspired me to make a close study of this form of Kannada folk-poetry. The songs included in this anthology, reminded him of many variants current in his homeland, and freely he selected some pieces for me which he himself remembered.

No sooner he recited one piece, I rushed to take it down, closely following the Kannada accent. This process looked boring to my friend after some time, for he had to recite word by word, line by line. Moreover, I had to read out the transcription of each piece to be doubly sure of its exactness. He would correct here and there. The translation, again, was no less boring for him, but I kept him inspired, quoting from my store of songs in various languages, whenever he felt tired.

I approached other Kannada friends as well and tried to compare notes taken from Dwarkanath, and, occasionally, more songs poured in and every time I took them down.

The responsibility for the versions of the three-line Kannada songs, which follow, is entirely mine. The method has been to be literal as far as possible and to reproduce every piece as a human document of some importance.

1 Masti Venkatesa Iyengar, *Folk-Song in the Karnataka*, Triveni, Nov.-Dec., 1931, p. 12.

397 The fig trees stands at the barren woman's door,
Parrots sit on every branch and say :
Your life is for others, O barren woman.

398 Talk between mother and daughter is the rhythm of a song,
Like the two one-stringed instruments played together,
Like the sound of the Halasangi temple-bells at sunrise.

399 Don't give birth to a daughter, give her not to others,
Don't shed tears as I leave for my father-in-law's, mother,
Don't curse Siva in anger for all your sorrow.

400 As father's memory comes, the stale food gets hot,
As the Ganges-like mother's memory comes,
My dirty hair look clean.

401 With a girl friend I went to fetch water,
We suddenly talked of my mother,
In joy the spring overflowed.

402 Mother, how can I praise my father-in-law's before you ?
Mother, my life is not happy,
It is like the plantains artificially ripened in the basket.

403 It is cool beneath the *neem* in summer,
The Bheemarati river is cool, mother,
You are cool at my birthplace.

404 The shawl is lovely, brother,
It has no border,
My husand is good, though we cannot get on together.

405 Did you know her husband, that pot-bellied fool ?
He did nothing but eat and roam about,
He passed away in the last famine.

406 If you must marry, have a youth from Kuppalli,
He will rear a horse and make it jump.
He will load his bride with jewels.

407 An old legend has a living truth.
The song of moonlight follows
The footprints in the sandal forest.

408 Better be mud than a barren woman,
On the mud will grow a tree
Giving shelter from the sun.

409 Our grain is finished, not our song ;
We don't want your grind-stone, mother,
It wears the rings on our fingers.

410 The road to the weekly market is lined with trees ;
In the weekly market I left my boy,
The trees shed their flowers in grief.

411 He beat his wife and afterwards felt sorry ;
He took hold of her *sari* and said :
Your mother is more to you or me ?

412 When my sirdar brother comes, jasmines drop on him ;
The ears of cardamum bend down to my princely brother
And sprinkle their juice on him.

413 Every week the widow visits the weekly market,
She oils her hair, she combs her hair,
She is the ruin of the village boys.

414 I wait at the Vithala temple,
Vermillion with sweat sticks on my forehead,
Give me a son, O Vithala.

415 What a life is the barren woman's life ?
Like the hired bullock's constant labour,
One day lying and dying.

416 The quarrel between husband and wife is like rubbing sandalwood,
Like pouring water on the image of a god,
Like the swift flow of a river.

417 The bird of sandal forest flies swiftly ;
He must be knowing the secrets of trees, mother,
He loves the fragrant breeze.

418 When will you come back, my sweet-scented lover ?
Your head-dress full of fragrance,
When are you coming back, my love ?

419 Comes the large *bore* fruit in the market,
Take some for my god-sister, brother,
She will soon be a mother.

420 Only six months that I came to my mother-in-law's,
The moonlight turned into sunshine for me ;
Here comes my brave brother to take me back.

421 Born of a poor woman I never saw the *arati*[1] lamp,
Never could I put on a silken *sari* woven with gold thread, mother,
Yet how much I owe to you for the milk I suckled.

422 I won't have a bride from West Coast,
She would stretch her legs on the ground before everybody,
Will she be able to live nicely in fear of the neighbours ?

1 The lamp waved before the deity at prayer time generally made of flour, burning *ghee*.

423 I have no care for the *sarkar* ;
From the *sarkar* he brings half the share,
In my house I have my sirdar son.

424 Our grain is finished, not our songs ;
We need your grind-stone no more, mother,
It wears rings on our fingers.

As seen in a number of three-line Kannada songs, the woman straight away invokes the gods for divine help. The deep affection between mother and daughter or brother and sister is a regular motif. The woman must beget children, preferably one son at least ; love for children runs throughout like a crimson thread. Love of nature is another predominant feature. Love of music itself is expressed with poetic delicacy. The reference is made even to the grind-stone.

Masti Venkatesa Iyengar, dealing with a large variety of Kannada folk-songs, makes a special reference to the three-line songs, " At its best this poetry is classic in manner and content. The only reason for calling it popular is that it comes from the people and is understood by the people ; and that the verse is often in local dialect. The three-line verses picturing the life of women are of high level."[1]

So far as the pattern itself is concerned, we find the experienced poetic hand making images in words and giving them the eternal life with the touch of the musical airs.

1 Masti Venkatesa Iyengar, *Popular Culture in Karnataka*, pp. 133-4.

THE MARATHI OVI

OVI in Marathi means 'something which is strung'. As a song of the grind-stone, the Marathi *Ovi* shows the spontaneous flow of emotions. In form it is a sort of a couplet, each line further divided into two. It may again be noted in the text of an *Ovi* that the two parts of the first line and the first part of the second line are of equal length, and the second part of the second line is comparatively much smaller. In such cases the smaller part simply mentions the *motif* or the name of the person about whom a particular *Ovi* is sung. While singing the smaller portion of the song is properly adjusted in the tune. But in most cases, the *Ovi*, as current among the womenfolk of the lower classes, contains four parts of similar length.

As suggested by Sane Guruji in his anthology[1] of 2592 popular Marathi *Ovis*, references to women in Maharashtra singing songs in accompaniment of grinding are found in seventh and eighth centuries. Presumably, the literary Marathi *Ovi*, when it was first introduced by the poets of the Mahamadhavi sect in the twelfth century, paid a homage to the traditional *Ovi*, so far as the easy-flowing form of this poetic pattern was concerned.

Like the spinning-wheel, the grind-stone has been associated with the life of the womenfolk for many centuries. The woman of a family, or in certain cases the hired woman, had to work on the grind-stone for grinding various grains. It was very tedious as compared to spinning. The woman began to sing so that the weight of the labour could be lightened. May be, long before the birth of the *Ovi* form, specially suited to the rhythm of grinding, the woman sang any song that she could catch.

In most cases, the first three parts of an *Ovi*, eight syllables in each case, rhyme together ; the fourth part is of seven syllables, or even much smaller, and so far as rhyme scheme is concerned, it is free. The freedom of form provides elasticity. The *Ovi*, based on the rhythm of the grind-stone, helps the *Ovi*-signer to make a garland of emotional expressions. May be, a particular *Ovi* looks unconnected from high standard of poetry ; or like a string of beads in the hands of a child, who can neither take care about the size of the beads nor can have any claim about the matching of the colours. But if we see with more sympathy,

1 Sane Guruji, *Stri Jiwan*, published in Marathi in two volumes.

the *Ovi* looks fresh and vital. The *Ovi*-singer, if she has more understanding of the poetic art, gives a new polish to the old *Ovi* or fits the old words expressing her own joys and sorrows.

Like folk-songs everywhere, the Marathi *Ovi*, as a work-song, is known for dozens of variants of the same piece.

Says the Marathi riddle about the grind-stone, '*Narani palata, titse dudha galata*,' *i.e.* 'The doe runs, her milk trickles.' Thus the white flour is compared to the doe's trickling milk. To take the metaphor further, one could say that the poetic stream of the Marathi *Ovi* itself may be compared to the doe's trickling milk.

It is not the same tune throughout. Every line of an *Ovi*, repeated at least twice; in certain cases it may be repeated as many times as the singer would prefer. The womenfolk have evolved more than one tune, all suited to the monotonous rhythm of the grind-stone. Surely, every tune follows the minor keys with some provision to raise the voice to a few high notes. The *Ovi*, somehow, rides over the bass rumble of the grind-stone. A bad singer may sing through the nose—a shrilly sort of sing song; but if her voice can touch the depth of folk-music, the case is quite pleasing and the *Ovi* seems to surpass everything.

The woman in the interior, where flour mills are rare, has to get up in the early dawn for grinding. She is forced to do this so that there is enough flour in the house for the family's bread. The stillness of the night gives a peculiar depth to the *Ovi*. The earthen lamp, with its tiny flame of a twist of cotton, makes an attempt to give a touch of familiarity to the scene. The moon and stars in the sky may be visible, for she feels their presence in the *Ovi*. It may be on a summer night or during the winter of the rains; or may be, it is a winter night, when the wind blows adding to the sharp cold, for all the shades of season seem to touch her imagination. Since the work must begin before the dawn, she can mark the fading of stars, the moon fading into something unreal, as the rising sun appears on the scene. This interprets life itself. She can forget her little worries in the glory of Nature.

The grind-stone is a simple thing made of two stones, rough and round. Two inches thick is the lower stone, set in the earthen floor which is smeared with fresh cowdung; in a hole in its centre is fixed the wooden or iron peg round which revolves the upper stone, two or three inches thick, and in its centre is provided an open mouth that encloses the peg of the lower stone and

gives enough scope to feed it with grain from time to time. The handle, or the *khunta*, as it is called in Marathi, is fixed on the edge of the upper stone. The grinder, with her legs stretched out one on either side of the grind-stone, sits on the floor ; or perhaps she would prefer to bend one leg inward from the knee. Now grasping the handle steadily with one hand, she must turn the upper stone ; with the other hand she would put in small amount of grain taking it from a basket kept by her side. She is free to use the other hand for turning the upper stone, whenever grinding tires her hand. It may be noted that the lower and upper stones are cut from one stone, so that the grinding is even. The grinder must understand the requirement. She must not turn the upper stone too fast, nor should she feed the mouth too frequently or in more amount at a time, if she wants to avoid coarse flour. In any case, the flour dribbles out between the lower and upper stones all round and is afterwards taken up with the hands. Surely, the diameter of the stones may vary from fourteen to eighteen inches. The smaller grind-stone may suit two little girls ; the larger one may only be used by elderly women.

As the tradition goes, the grind-stone is generally turned by two grinders at a time, or even by three if the grind-stone is big enough ; the grinders, as they grasp the handle, keep their hands one above the other. May be, the women in the joint family can help each other ; more often the woman neighbours co-operate, as evident from scores of *Ovis* addressed to the woman neighbour.

Some of the *Ovis* are of Brahmin origin, though they are sung by all castes. The influence of Sanskrit vocabulary is not so evident on the *Ovis* of Mahar origin, for Mahar women, unlike Brahmin women, cannot claim to have any ear for the sonorous beauty of the Sanskrit *mantras* daily chanted in Brahmin families. The Mahar women, untouchable by caste, can only pick up words of daily use while moulding their ideas and fancies into *Ovis*.

Stock phrases are common in many *Ovis*. For instance, some *Ovis* have *pahili majhi ovi, i.e.*, my first *Ovi*, as the first part of the first line in common, for different grinders try to give their own stamp or label to the first *Ovi*. The face of the *Ovi* is the same, yet the shade of expression is different in each case. Similarly, *dusari majhi ovi, i.e.*, my second *Ovi*, or *tisari majhi ovi, i.e.*, my third *Ovi*, may be the opening phrase of more than one *Ovi*. Many women would try to give this sort of numbering to a good many

Ovis which will look like a series for the numbering label itself. Sometime the fourth part—the second part of the second line —may be a sort of stock phrase or common label. For instance, many *Ovis* end with the phrase *bhai raiya, i.e.*, O princely brother ; some *Ovis* would end with the common address *Panduranga, i.e.*, O Panduranga. It may be added here that Marathi women find common relief in addressing Panduranga, or Vithal, whose temple at Pandharpur is the famous shrine of Maharashtra ; the Marathi saint poet Tukaram wrote his *abhangs* for Pandurana.

To have an exact idea of the form of the *Ovi*, a piece addressed to Panduranga may be reproduced.

Deva mi dubali *nesen dhavali*
Adhar tujha gheten *Panduranga*

It may not look well to show all the four parts of the *Ovi* in translation separately. We may straight away translate it in two compact lines without sacrificing any poetic grace. In that case, the *Ovi* quoted above will read as follows :

425 O god, I am lean, moving about in the wind,
I depend only on you, O Panduranga.

This method has been followed throughout, for it would have looked odd if we had to show the four units of every *Ovi* separately.

426 The black kapila cow's milk is more in quantity,
With this milk you are bathed, O Mahadeva.

427 My life gone, in the shade burns my pyre,
Mother alone will grieve of all the folk.

428 Three hours before dawn the *kansi karna*[1] sounds pleasingly,
Mahalakshami mother's chariot moves.

1 A musical instrument.

429 I grind corn, coarse and fine,
The greatest of all the guests... the god Panduranga.

430 The grind-stone's mouth is like the coconut bowl,
Its maker lives at Balaghat.

431 I visualize the river at my mother's village,
Stands my mother filling her pitchers.

432 The day is over, the shadows are vanishing,
None except mother has a real affection.

433 I cry, mother, O mother, a mother of clay I made.
A heavy rain followed, water could not remove it.

434 In the gardner's garden a snake crawls in the shade,
Do not kill it, O gardner, your mother is pregnant.

435 Going to mother's village one is happy,
Going to the father-in-law's village the coconut breaks.

436 Running, running where are you going, O god,
There are pregnant women, to untie their fetters I go.

437 On the way to mother's village is an arched gate,
On the way to father-in-law's village are pricking thorns.

438 The first time she is pregnant at the father-in-law's,
She is eager to eat bread with mango juice.

439 My fifth *Ovi* to the five Pandavas,
To my brothers may the kingdom come.

440 What village have you reached, tell me when will you return ?
A jar on the palm of my hand, I shall stand by the road, brother.

441 The butcher slaughtered a cow,
Father feared not while giving his daughter as a co-wife.

442 The knife placed on my kneck, my life be saved or lost,
My own brother—O how could I swear by him ?

443 My hands have done their work, not my throat,
Even one hundred lakhs of *Ovis* will not do for my mother.

444 Brother and sister quarrel in the forest,
In the sister's eyes tears flock, brother grieves at heart.

445 We may talk secrets, we need no lamp,
The air of the stars coming in the door, mother.

446 The roots of the banyan spread below,
Many daughters I got, far and wide they spread.

447 My grind-stone I pull like a running deer,
In my wrists plays my mother's milk.

448 Father says, daughters are my rice sacks,
Father acted like a trader selling his daughters in the full assembly.

449 The handful of my sari's folds I arrange hastily
Brother begot a son, I go to attend the naming ceremony.

450 The village is deteriorated, everybody a bad character,
Gajanan with his bent face will get annoyed.

451 The village is deteriorated, no one acknowledges any body,
Everybody says, I am the cleverest in the assembly.

452 The grind-stone is of *kurand*, the handle is of *anwala* wood
My dark-complexioned female friend's throat is sweet.

453 I need no wealth, no gold coins, nor pearl necklaces,
Give me a stream of tears of affection, brother.

454 My grinding ends, one shouldn't say it is over,
My mother's and mother-in-law's homes are happy with milk and sons, O female friend.

455 The grinding ends, let us put the last handful of corn,
Give it motion with your hand, you alone would help me, O neighbour woman.

456 The grinding ends, the remaining corn is like the last stream,
From here I salute the god Jytirlinga of the Ganges Kashi.

The woman, while she sings her *Ovis* at the grind-stone, depicts her position in the family. The troubles of the joint family system reach their climax when she even thinks of her death, her pyre burning in the shade, and in such a state of mind she can only think of her mother's affection.

The pride of the family is another motif. The brother has his own importance on the emotional map. In fact, life passes before the *Ovi*-singer as a long scroll, and it is Maharashtra, rooted in the simple joys and sorrows of the people, that provides the background.

The emotions rise and fall depicting the shades of life. We clearly mark that the Marathi woman's emotions are greatly influenced by the economic factors of life.

FOLK-SONGS OF GUJARAT

GUJARAT, or *Gurjara Rashtra* as known in earlier literature, derived its name from the Gurjars, who settled in this region about the sixth century A. D. So far as folk-songs are concerned, Gujarat freely shares the songs of Kathiawar, known as *Saurashtra* or Sorath in early history.

Ranjitram Vavabhai Mehta was the first scholar who emphasized the need of research in Gujarati folk-songs, and, surely, it roused a good deal of enthusiasm in the Gujarati-reading public. But it was left for Jhaver Chand Meghani to uphold the cause of Gujarati folk-songs, for with a zeal of a missionary, he succeeded in recording thousands of songs from the living lips of the people in Kathiawar. His name will always be associated with Folk-Song Movement in India, for if he would not have taken tremendous pains, many of these songs would have perished on the lips of the communities who had sung generation after generation. Mahatma Gandhi paid a homage to Meghani's efforts while pointing out the national importance of folk-songs in a Foreword to K. M. Munshi's *Gujarata and its Literature.*

Gukuldas Raichura is another scholar, who still carries on the collection of Gujarati folk-songs.[2]

"Folk-songs are the first nursery rhymes of humanity," says Gurdial Mallik. "In them is contained the wonder of wisdom, which is born of the intoxication of imagination and ecstasy of intuition. And as the essence and idiom of childhood everywhere, East and West, is the same, similarly, in the folk-songs of various countries there is an emotional and intellectual identity. But as our age is far removed from the dawn when humanity in the cradle was learning the alphabets of expression, we often fail to perceive this golden thread of unity running all through the texture of folk-literature."[3]

Coming from mother to daughter, women's songs in Gujarat and Kathiawar make a wide range as compared to the songs sung

1 *Radhiali Rat*, in four volumes, *Chundari*, in two volumes, *Holardan*, *Lok Sahitya*: *Dharti no Dhavan*, and *Serath no Tire Tire* are some of the well-known Gujarati publications by Jhaver Chand Meghani, dealing with folk-songs.

2 *Kathiawari Duha Rasia na Ras* and *Duha ni Ramjhat* are the three anthologies of Gujarati folk-songs collected and edited by Gokuldas Raichura.

3. Gurdial Mallik, *Some Folk-Songs of Kashmir*, The Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Nov. 1945-Jan. 1948, p. 175.

by the men folk. It may be a lullaby or cradle song, sung by the mother rocking her baby to sleep, or it may be a long series of marriage songs, significantly attached to each phase of the ceremony, it is the singing voice of the Gujarati woman that comes to us like revelation. Sung in chorus, most of the marriage songs show a remarkable sense of ease and confidence. It may be a song meant to lighten the burden of some domestic task, the woman's ability to catch hold of the necessary threads to weave a song is always evident. The mind of the Gujarati woman is quick and balanced, as seen in most of her songs. Every song sung by the Gujarati woman is a living symbol of long-cherished musical tradition.

A number of songs are sung by bards and wandering minstrels. The story-teller's art is the speciality of the bard in Gujarat and Kathiawar. Obviously, apart from the content, it is the method of recitation that adds to the real charm of a ballad. *Duhas* and *Sorathas* are just couplets, always on the finger-tips of the bard, who skilfully strings them together to give his individual stamp on the old stories of lovers and outlaws.

Shepherds and cowherds, on the opposite banks of a village stream, sing *Duhas* competitively, and the melody shows a remarkable lilt and drawling span of sound. The *Duhas* often revel in a mixed dialect of *Braj Bhasha*, *Rajasthani* and Gujarati.

" Professor B. K. Thakore has mentioned," says Krishnalal M. Jhaveri, "the instance of one Zakkadai Bhavsaren, the wife of a neighbouring Dhobi at Rajkot, who used to come to his mother to help her pass her lonely nights, when she had to be by herself, his father being away, by reciting to them stories of Ebhal Valo, Jesal, Todi Rani, the Ras of Junagadh, Jehthawas of Ghumli, and Sumras of Cutch and Sind, with the assistance of *Duhas* and *Sorathas*. Indeed she told them so well that they all lost the count of time."[1]

The bard may take to the story of Ranakdevi while reciting his *Duhas* and *Sorathas*. She was the charming consort of Ra Khangar of Junagadh. Siddharaj, the ruler of Gujarat, invaded Junagadh and succeeded in his mission with the help of Ra Khangar's nephew who killed his uncle rather treacherously. Siddharaj had a desire to possess Ranakdevi as his queen, but she refused point blank. Siddharaj, however, took her away forcibly. The climax of Ranakdevi's tale of pure love is her decision to be a *sati* near Wadhvan, for she succeeded in seeking Siddharaj's

1 Krishnalal M. Jhaveri, *Milestones in Gujarati Literature*, p. 362.

consent. The bard shows all his art, as he describes Ranakdevi mounting the funeral pile. She addresses her son, advising him not to show weakness and face the situation boldly.

This is how the bard in a string of five *Sorathas* puts forth the spirit, for to her Girnar hill was the dearest symbol of the honour of Sourashtra.

457 My child, don't weep, don't make your eyes red,
Don't disgrace your ancestors, don't think of your dying mother.

458 I descended Girnar fort, my body reached its foot,
Never again shall I see the Damodar Kund lake.

459 Girnar Fort is high, it talks to the clouds,
Ra Khangar passed away, Ranakdevi is a widow.

460 Round about Patan[1] the country is desert-like, people die of thirst,
Prosperous is the land of Sorath, where tigers drink their full.

461 The wind is stormy, sand burns in the hot wind,
There stands Siddharaj watching the feet[2] of the lady of Sorath.

Grierson was right when he observed, "A more important side of Gujarati literature is the corpus of bardic histories none of which, so far as I am aware, has been published."[3] Thanks to the efforts of Jhaver Chand Meghani, work of considerable importance has been done in this direction. *Saurashtra ni Rasadhara*, published in four volumes, and *Sorathi Geet-Kathao* offer a good many sheaves from Bardic literature—all recorded by Meghani in Gujarati with scientific accuracy.

1 The capital of Siddharaj in Gujarat.
2 The miraculous power of a chaste lady.
3 George A. Grierson, *The Linguistic Survey of India*, Part 1, p. 333.

It is a treat to listen to a bard reciting the *Doohas* centring round the story of Halaman Jethava and Sona Rani. The bard would describe how Sona Rani, daughter of Rana Rajsinh of Balambha, took a vow to marry a person, who would answer her riddle, '*Ghanvan gharian, erne arian nahin, i.e.*, it has been made without hammer, never placed on the anvil.' The family priest of Sona Rani's father went about from one durbar to another to find out if some prince could solve the riddle. Disappointed at some places, the priest reached the durbar of Rana Shiyaji of the Jethava clan of Rajputs. The Rana failed to solve the riddle, but his young nephew Halaman gave the required answer :

462 The mother lives, the father lives in the sky,
If you like I would send you old ones, the new ones would come in *Aso*.[1]

Halaman actually referred to pearls. In some versions, Halaman is supposed to have said, '*Sarvar swat tanan to moti neepaje, i.e.*, if rain drops fall into the mouths of oysters while the sun is passing through the *swati nakshatra*, pearls are formed.'

It is said, Rana Shiyaji bribed the priest, who agreed to go back and report in favour of him. Princess Sona was immensely pleased and came to Ghumli with the royal equipage in charge of the priest. Halaman thought he is lucky and now he will be wedded to Princess Sona, but soon he was disallusioned, for he learnt that it was his uncle who was dressing himself as a bridegroom. He somehow decided not to interfere. Some squabble started between the maidservants of Princess Sona and Rana Shiyaji at a well while drawing water, and, incidentally, the Rana's maid servant made a comment :

463 A shut hand may have a lakh of rupees, when opened it may be empty,
Halaman answers the riddle, Sona is going to be wedded to Shiyaji.

Sona's maidservant came with the news to her mistress, and ultimately the priest had to confess his guilt. Princess Sona at

1 *Aso* or *Ashwina* is the Indian month for Sept.-Oct.

once decided in favour of Halaman, and refused to accept presents sent by Rana Shiyaji:

464 The wedding presents coming from Shiyaji don't look well,
Halaman my bridegroom, Shiyaji my father-in-law.

Shiyaji got the news, and thought Halaman is responsible for it. He ordered that Halaman must quit the territory forthwith. Halaman had to obey. But he succeeded in sending a message to Princess Sona through one of her maidservants.

465 I leave for Hamba, Shiya Jethava sends me away,
Give her my respects, when you meet Halaman.

Sona got this message and said:

466 This house burns me like fire, Jethava has gone,
Wounding my heart, whither have you gone, Halaman ?

Sona fainted. Her maidservants somehow brought her back to consciousness. The Rana called on her. But she refused to see him. The Rana was very much upset, when he was told that Princess Sona does not appreciate it that her father-in-law should have evil designs on her.

Here is another turn in the story. As Shiyaji decided to ravish Princess Sona, he got the news that the Sindhis have attacked his territory. He had to leave at once, though he made arrangements that the princess may not be allowed to leave the premises.

Princess Sona somehow managed to leave the premises under the pretext of visiting a temple at some distance. Her maidservant got rid of the driver and successfully drove away towards Hamba.

Halaman was living with his aunt at Hamba. He wandered about in the jungle as a distracted lover. Looking at a bamboo tree, he remembered his birthplace, where bamboos grew in

abundance. It was but natural that he felt this bamboo tree was also passing its days in exile here :

467 My dear bamboo in exile, what brought you here ?
Coming from my birthplace, any message from Sona for me ?

The bamboo says :

468 Cut down by an axe, I was thrown in the ocean,
The waves made me senseless, I have no news of Sona.

Halaman asks a fisherman :

469 Throw your net into the ocean. O fisherman,
Has my good fortune come with me, or left behind at Barda ?

Halaman's aunt proposed a beautiful Sindhi bride for him. He refused to marry her. One day, as he sat on a rock in the jungle, a serpent bit his toe. Slowly, the poison began to show its effect. He thought death is fast approaching :

470 Come, Sona, I lie on my last bed,
O my soul , I didn't have even half a moment of happiness.

471 Your pretty face I saw consciously, nor unconsciously,
Hopes I kept within my heart, last moment has come.

Now on her way to Hamba, Princess Sona had reached the same jungle, and her maidservant, who moved about in search of water, happened to recognize Halaman lying unconscious. She ran to the Princess and soon brought her to the spot. Sona

fainted, and as her maidservant brought her to consciousness, she lamented :

472 Within the limits of Hamba, I lost a precious thing.
Necklace of my heart, he was Halaman Jethava.

473 Below the Hamba mountain, I couldn't rock Halaman to sleep,
I had many hopes to meet Halaman Jethava.

Sona decided to burn herself alive with the lord of her heart like a *Sati*.

474 Within the limits of Hamba, the colour of turmeric paste[1] is fresh today,
The *mindhal* nuts[2] are untied in the burning ground, I have lost Halaman.

475 Wood has been piled on Halaman,
I shall accompany him to Heaven, with the lord of Barda I shall burn myself.

Then comes the last twist in the story. A snake-charmer appears on the scene before fire was set on the pyre. He applied some antidote on the body of Halaman where the snake had bit him. Halaman regained life. Sona was happy. They married and returned to Ghumli, where Shiyaji passed away shortly after their arrival, and they lived happily. Their love became proverbial.

476 Sona was nice, so was Halaman a diamond,
Two bodies one soul, a match in every way.

1 Applied on the body of the bride before marriage.
2 Tied on the hands of the bride before marriage.

Another tale coming again from Barda hills commemorates Ujalibai and Meha Jethava. Meha somehow learns that Ujali, the daughter of a Charan, is unparalleled in beauty. So far as the native tradition was concerned, a Charan girl had to be revered like a goddess. But Meha was anxious for seeing Ujali. They saw each other and fell in love at first sight. Meha wanted to marry her. But the local money-lenders got startled at the news. One day, while Meha was returning after meeting Ujali, they managed to waylay him. Now some of them began to beat a cow on the way. Meha objected. They argued that if this is unusual, a prince marrying a Charan girl is equally unusual and sinful. Meha had to yield before the argument and gave them a word not to marry Ujali. But the day had already been fixed for the wedding. Meha did not turn up. Ujali got perturbed and reached Ghumli to meet Meha. She failed to meet him, for she was told that Meha will not have her as his bride. She passed the rest of her life as a devotee. Some of the couplets, depicting her love for Meha, may be recognized as real gems of Gujarati folk-poetry, for woman's love speaks here in genuine idiom.

477 I had a pearl, I lost it in the ocean,
Wearing black garment, I have to search the ocean.

478 Below Meha's balcony I stand and pray,
Show me your face, O Meha, so that I might live, O Jethava.

479 Coming from the sky, the Charan girl is hungry,
Whither shall I go, O Jethava, my mind is confused.

480 Leave me not after taking me into deep waters,
I may die, it won't add to your credit, O Jethava.

It is said, Meha had to send her his reply nicely couched in a couplet.

481 The Charans are gods, their girl is a Yogmaya[1] for us,
The ruler of Barda will die, if his mind sets on a Charan girl.

The Charans have been the principal bards of Kathiawar, though the Bhats and the Barots have been equally well-known among the bards.

Another tale centres round Nagbai, a Charan lady, on whom Ra Mandlik, a ruler of Junagadh, tried to put his violent hand. Nagbai's curse is well recorded in Kathiawari folklore.

482 Making a Charan maid unhappy, you won't rule over the mighty fort[2],
Your body will get leprosy, then you'll think of me, O Mandlik.

483 No gate-keepers of the Ra will keep watch at the gates,
Wandering about you will beg for alms, then you'll think of me, O Mandlik.

484 The ringing of the gong and the sound of the conch you won't hear,
Mullahs will say their *namaz*[3], then you'll think of me, O Mandlik.

485 The Puranas and the Bhagvata, you won't read,
The *kalama*[4] of the Quran will be read, then you'll think of me, O Mandlik.

It is said that the Charan maid's curse actually worked, for

1 Name of a goddess.
2 The fort of Girnar.
3 Moslem prayer.
4. The words from Quran, *la ila illaallah Mohammed Rasul Allah*, *i.e.*, Allah is one, and Mohammed is Allah's Prophet.

Ra Mandlik had to embrace Islam in 1473 A. D., when Mahmud Bagada invaded Junagadh.

"The bards have their own way of telling a story and reciting a poem," says Krishnalal M. Jhuveri, "The twang and the sing-song practised by them cannot be transferred to a talk. A bard uses words which strike more by their sound than their sense. A good deal of alliteration and very many mnemonic words constitute the beauty of bardic recitations, so says one, who, sixty years ago, underwent the expense and trouble of getting these bards to recite to him in order to put their performance on paper..... The same collector divides those who belong by birth to the profession of the story teller into Bhats, Charans, Ravalyas and Turees among Hindus and Mirs and Lunghas among Musalmans. Bhats and Charans are bards of the Rajput, Ravalyas of the Kathi princes and Ahirs of shepherd tribes and the Turees of the low caste like Dheds. Among Babi Musalmans there are besides Mirs and Lunghas, Dhadees who are especially their family bards and leeches. They say that what the Babis earn, the Dhadees eat. But besides the professional story tellers there are others also who recite stories with the ease and accomplishment of *bona fide* professionals. One must have come across many such including women."[1]

Coming to women's songs, cradle-songs come first.

486 You are my gift of gods,
You are my boon of prayers,
You have come, now live long.

Hurriedly I went to Mahadeva to offer flowers,
Mahadeva was pleased and a precious thing like you I got.
You are my cash,
You are my fragrant flower,
You have come, now live long.

Hurriedly I went to Mahadeva to offer flowers,
Parvati was pleased and I got my heart's garland.
You are my cash,
You are my fragrant flower,
You have come, now live long.

1 Krishnalal M. Jhaveri, *Milestones in Gujarati Literature*, pp. 361-63.

Hurriedly I went to Hanuman to offer oil,
Hanuman was pleased and I got cradle in my house.
You are my cash.
You are my fragrant flower,
You have come, now live long.

You are my gift of gods,
You are my boon of prayers,
You have come, now live long

487 The cradle is made of gold,
The bells make a jingling sound,
Sleep, baby.

Four dolls on four pillers,
Peacocks sit on strings,
Sleep, baby.

488 Sleep, sleep,
O prince of my hopes, now sleep.
My dearest brother, sleep.

If you weep,
Mother will feel uneasy.
Sleep, brother.

Marriage songs owe their origin and poetic delicacy to women. In one of the marriage songs, the bride shares the joy of greetings, as if she leaves adolescence behind and enters the domain of youth in one jump.

489 Mighty things were made in the world,
First the earth, second the sky ;
Day of greetings has come.

Mighty things were made in the world,
First the mare, second the cow ;
Day of greetings has come.

The sky showered the rains,
The earth bears the weight of the water ;
Day of greetings has come.

Son of the cow yoked to the plough,
Son of the mare took us to distant lands ;
Day of greetings has come.

Mighty things were made in the world,
First the mother, second the mother-in-law ;
Day of greetings has come.

Mother gave me birth,
Mother-in-law gave birth to the bridegroom ;
Day of greetings has come.

Mighty things were made in the world,
First father, second the father-in-law ;
Day of greetings has come.

Father endeared me in childhood,
Father-in-law made me bashful ;
Day of greetings has come.

The bride understands the importance of rains in an agricultural country, and it is not difficult for her to use the metaphor of the rains to express her life's joy. She takes to the image of a union between the sky and the earth. She further draws images of the mare and cow, for their sons are indispensable in war and agriculture—both symbols of God's mighty creation.

Th month of *Vaisakh* is good for marriage, as suggested by the bridegroom, who is depicted as Ishwara or Siva.

490 The tank is full of milk,
It is lined with pearls.
Ishwara is washing his *dhoti*.
Parvati comes to fetch water.

Slowly wash your *dhoti*, O Ishwara,
Drops of water fall on my *sari*.
In my house my grandfather has high temper,
My mother will abuse you.

Your grandfather is not of high temper,
Nor your mother will abuse me,
We shall marry
In the month of *Vaisakh*.

The people of Gujarat and Kathiawar take national pride in the Garba dance. The unrestrained sincerity marks a stamp of individuality on the lyrical outbursts of the Garba songs. The passions and feelings, emotions and potentialities—all have contributed their combined might to poetry centering round the Garba dance.

491 O Ambaji Aai Mother O Mother, Becharaji Bai,
Get high rooms built, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

When will you give me a son, Mother ?
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

Give a son to the younger brother, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

Fulfill younger daughter-in-law's desire, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

Get a gold cradle made, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

Get a *khinkhab* coushin made, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

Get the silken strings used, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

Auntie Sita Bai will rock the cradle, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

In her left hand is the string, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

In her right hand is a *laddu*, Mother,
O Mother Ambaji Aai.

492 Make the *garabo* ready,
Make holes in the *garabo*.
How will I, the fair one, come ?
Night is dark.

The thorn pricked me,
The anklets make sound in my feet,
Yes, the anklets make sound in my feet,
I put them off in the corn-bin.

In the corn-bin he sways,
I placed the lid on the mouth,
Water entered through the lid,
I placed pearls on it.

The *laddus* are of good quality,
The *khir* prepared with dry dates,
Brother sits to eat,
Bhojaee wears *sari*.

She puts *chunari* over the *sari*,
Its colour is good,
The colours shine,
The creeper climbs in hurry.

Put the *garabo* on your head,
Make it shine through the holes,
O Babubhai's queen.
Come to join the Garba at our place.

How shall I come alone ?
Night is dark,
The thorn pricked me,
The anklets sound in my feet.

493 One to twentyone Garba has come
Two to twentytwo Garba has come
Three to twentythree Garba has come
Four to twentyfour Garba has come
Five to twentyfive Garba has come
Six to twentysix Garba has come
Seven to twentyseven Garba has come.

494 In Malava grows the henna,
It has dyed Gujarat entirely,
The henna's colour comes up.

My younger *devar* is dear to me,
He brings the henna plant for me,
The henna's colour comes up.

He pressed the leaves and made a paste and filled a cup,
Bhabhi, dye your hands with the henna.
The henna's colour comes up.

What shall I do by dying my hands, *Devar*,
One who would see the henna-dyed hands has gone,
The henna's colour comes up.

One lakh of rupees in cash shall I give,
If someone will go across the river.
The henna's colour comes up.

Write to my lord this much,
Your mother has passed away, come home,
The henna's colour comes up.

Mother has passed away, it is good,
Make her pyre under the berry tree,
The henna's colour comes up.

Write to my lord this much,
Your sister is going to marry, come home,
The henna's colour comes up.

1 *Devar* is the younger brother of the husband, the Gujarati form is *Devar*.

Sister is going to be married, it is good,
Ask the marriage party to stop longer,
The henna's colour comes up.

Write to my lord this much,
Your brother is going to be married, come home,
The henna's colour comes up.

Brother is going to be married, it is good,
Go with a big marriage party,
The colour of the henna comes up.

Write to my lord this much,
Your beloved wife's eye is aching,
The henna's colour comes up.

Ye soldiers, ye my brethren,
Get ready to go back soon,
The henna's colour comes up.

495 To Gujarat you had gone, my love,
Anklets you have brought,
I, the wearer of the anklets, feel so happy.

Go slow, my love,
Follow in my wake,
I know your ways.

To Bombay you had gone, my love,
Halawa[1] you have brought,
I, the sharer of the feast, feel so happy.

Go slow, my love,
Follow in my wake,
I know your ways, my love.

The Garba, as a symbol of joy in the family or the community, may be danced in any season, day or night, though the real

1 A Sweet preparation.

Garba season comes during the *navaratra* festivities, when the nights are dark, and anklets on the dancing feet of women add a new charm to the atmosphere.

The Garba is danced by groups of men and women separately, though some scholars assert that in the beginning the Garba was danced only by the women. "Mixed dancing is not allowed," says Dr. N. A. Thoothi, "though with one exception, *viz.*, when on certain festive occasion, the head of a family and his wife, with a *mandavi* or *garba* over the head of each, dance together in the centre of a circle of women dancers....."[1]

The *mandavi* is a wooden construction ; a small basket containing wet clay, wherein tender seedlings of rice or *jowar* are sown in advance. It is ceremoniously placed in the centre and surely, it is supposed to be a living symbol of the goddess.

Among certain communities, the *mandavi* is replaced by an earthen pitcher perforated with numerous holes, an earthen lamp burning within it. It is called *garba.* In certain cases, instead of one *garba* they may have many such pitchers, each with an earthen lamp burning inside, all nicely arranged in the centre.

The Garba takes a lovely turn, when the dancers go round the circle carrying *mandavis* and *garbas* over their heads. There is no binding on the number of persons taking part in the Garba. The leader of the dance leads the song and rhythm. Moving in the circle, the Garba dancers take to various movements.

Out of the two types of the central object of worship in the Garba the many-holed earthen pitcher with an oil-lamp burning inside is certainly earlier than the *mandavi.* The argument that goes in favour of *garba* being earlier as compared to *mandavi* is that the name of the dance itself owes its origin to the many-holed earthen pitcher with an oil lamp burning inside—*garba,* or *garbha dip,* as known in earlier classical literature of India.

1 N. A. Thoothi, *The Vaishnavas of Gujarat,* pp. 300-1.

A SHORT ANTHOLOGY

INDIAN folk poetry has a wide range. Looking at the number of languages and dialects, it may be said with some emphasis that no attempt will really succeed to give a full view of Indian folk poetry in one volume. So far as the scope of the present publication is concerned, I have been able to introduce only a few linguistic regions and that too is simply a bird's-eye view, for if one had to discuss at full length a separate volume will be required for each region.

My effort in the present publication, however, has been to give a cultural map of Village India with special reference to India's folk poetry. I always knew my limitations, yet I am sure to have succeeded in pointing out some intimate glimpses of the Indian folk mind.

Since only thirteen linguistic regions could be covered in the preceding chapters, I decided to give a short anthology to cover the remaining regions and dialect zones.

Songs in this Anthology assess the values of tradition and creature force in some detail and offer a competent data for any discussion on the Indian people.

ASSAM

TWO MANIPURI SONGS

LULLABY

496 O you are like the tender cotton worm,
O go to sleep, my tiny bubble.

LOVE SONG

497 It is *herang khoi*,
A fruit to be tasted,
She is the king's daughter.
The jade of the interior hills,
A fruit to be tasted by a king.

Darling, come, come,
Let us go, come,
Many are jealous of you,
Many are envious of you,
Come, pass before me.

FOUR KACHARI SONGS

The Bride's Complaint

498 If I weave some cloth for him,
He won't wear it,
What a man is he !
I curse my life,
I curse my fate.
Give him advice,
O village headman,
Give him advice,
O pigeon of the forest,
What a man is he !

O Chinakona Boys

A girl sings—

499 O Chinakona boys,
Come and drive my buffaloes.

A boy replies—

I won't drive, nor would I have you as my bride,
Don't cry for me.
Rice in the cooking pot sounds *khuru khuru*,
My share indeed is *furu furu*,[1]
You feel the itching in your heart,
O flesh eater, I know you.

O Chinakona Girls

A boy sings—

500 O Chinakona girls,
Come and dance with me.

A girl replies—

I won't dance, nor would I look at you,
Don't cry for me any more.
Anklets on my feet invite you,
My *sari* says, look, I am red.
You feel the itching in your heart,
O flesh eater, I know you.

Song of the New Season

501 The rock won't move in any season,
The bird comes and asks :
Will you like to fly with me ?
The rock sits mum,
The doe comes running and asks :
Will you like to run with me ?
The bird says, I am greater than the sky,

1 *Furu Furu* in Kachari means 'all troubles'.

The doe says, I am greater than the forest,
The rock dreams,
Lo ! I fly,
Lo ! I run.

THREE KHASI SONGS

Love Song

502 Come here, sit in my pocket.
I love you.
Why do you hate me ?
I love you.

Christian Song

503 Be happy in the world,
God has tested us.

Wooing

504 I could not open my heart,
I cannot hide anything,
I am serious.
You may take tea with milk,
But if you do not agree,
We cannot love each other.

THREE GARO SONGS

Lullaby

505 The drum sleeps, baby, don't cry,
The flute sleeps, baby, don't cry,
Sleep, baby, as the forest sleeps,
Weep no more, baby, don't cry.

The Husband's Complaint

506 Her footprints say, she is gone to the forest,
I go to the forest and find her nowhere,
High up on the hills I wander,
Down in the valleys I wander,
She has suddenly disappeared.
Tell, ye gods, if you saw her anywhere.

The Wife's Complaint

507 I said, bring me gold anklets,
I said, bring me gold ear-rings,
He said, wait till next year,
I did not shed tears of sorrow,
He did not utter a single word,
Tell, ye gods, if you saw him anywhere.

SIX NAGA SONGS

Lohta Naga Lullaby

508 *Ole iyi le he-e,*
O iyi e he-e
Why do you cry, my baby?
O iyi e he-e

Is it because you like to sip *madhu*[1] that you weep?
O iyi e he-e
Well-kept *madhu* shall I give you to sip,
O iyi e he-e

Ole iyi le he-e
O iyi e he-e
Why do you cry, my baby?
O iyi e he-e

Even if you go on crying,
O iyi e he-e
Your father who has joined the dead heroes
O iyi e he-e

He won't come back and call you,
O iyi e he-e
He won't come back and take you in his arms.
O iyi e he-e

Ole iyi le he-e
O iyi e he-e.

Ao Naga Love Song

509 The road looks longer as I go to meet her,
The stars seem to whisper,
The moon seems to welcome,
The rising sun says, I know you.

Sema Naga Love Song

510 Seven girls from seven huts,
I know them all from head to toe:
They will make seven brides,
None of them can match my love.

Rengma Naga Duet

A girl sings—

511 Leaf cups are no good,
Bring me bamboo cups, darling.

1 Rice beer.

A boy replies---

What have you cooked for me today ?
I know your taste, darling.

ANGAMI NAGA SPRING SONG

512 O my ear-ring, spring has come,
O my anklet, spring has come,
O hills, you cannot speak,
O rock, you cannot sing.

KONAYAK NAGA PRAYER

513 May we have no scarcity of rice beer,
May we have no scarcity of feasts.
May our crops be plentiful,
May our huts be prosperous.
May our meat increase every day,
May the spring never forget to enter our village.
O Gawang, give us rice in plenty
O Gawang, be kind to fields and women
O Gawang, as a woman embraces her husband,
May the earth accept the seed.

TWO LAKHER SONGS

LOVE SONG

514 Your price has gone up,
I cannot marry you this year, O girl,
Must we marry first,
Then alone you will speak to me ?

NURSERY RHYME

515 Old hut, new doors,
The bird's nest has fallen,
The eggs have broken.
Laugh, O fool, laugh.
Loudly cries the mother bird :
Who will give me eggs now?
Mother, mother, do not cry,
We shall bring you new eggs.

THREE MIKIR SONGS

SILVER ANKLETS

516 Silver anklets are for the princess, you say,
It is a lie, I know.

LULLABY

517 Sleep brings pearl necklaces, do not cry, baby,
Sleep brings sweet dishes, do not cry, baby,

Do not cry, baby,
It is time, you must sleep now
As the fish sleeps in the pool.

SONG OF FOOTPRINTS

518 Your footprints I can know, my love
When you are not with me,
Footprints tell their story,
Footprints sing their song.

TWO LUSHAI SONGS

PRAYER

519 May we laugh till old age,
May we discuss for many years,
May we take part in the feasts,
O gods, accompany us to the fair.

SONG OF THE BIRDS

520 The birds are calling, my love,
The birds are calling.
The she-pigeon's wedding is near,
We must go to the wedding dance.

BIHAR

TWO MAITHILI SONGS

JHUMAR[1]

521 I shall serve you with good dishes, my love,
Get me tattooed.
Fair-complexioned arms,
The green bangles,
My wrists are shining, darling,
I shall serve you with water, my love,
Get me tattooed.

TIRUHATI[2]

522 Leaving me here my love has gone to a distant land,
How shall I pass my youth, O *Sakhi*,[3]
Eyes turned into a tank, *kajal*[4] turned into water,
Tears are rolling down, O *Sakhi*.
My bed turned into fragrance and took refuge amidst flowers,
In what country my hungry husband must be living now ?

1 Name of a folk dance.
2 A type of Maithili folk songs.
3 Female friend.
4 Lamp black used to beautify the eyes.

THREE URAON SONGS

KARAM[1]

523 You abuse me, mother, you abuse me,
All day, mother, you abuse me.
Let Magh month come, mother,
Taking my seat in the train,
I shall leave for Assam,
Oh, taking my seat in the train,
I shall leave for Assam.

SARHUL[2]

524 I went to Bendra village to attend *Sarhul* dance,
Alas, they took away my young man
For forced labour, *ho hai* !
He had to go, mother,
When will he return ?
Oh, when will he return ?

LUJHKI[3]

525 You thought it is easy to be a village headman,
But you say,
You cannot offer a pot of rice beer to the village.
In youth you had this temptation,
You thought it is easy to be a village headman.

SEVEN MUNDA SONGS

JADUR[4]

526 You have come after the winter
Like the Raja and the Rani,
You have adorned yourself.
I thought of you since many days,
You have come now, O Ba[5] festival.

527 Casting off the old leaves,
You have put on a *sari* of new leaves.
I went to the forest and saw,
The bunds are sprouting,
The flowers are blossoming,
The fruits are ripening.

528 The green and red sprouts are gleaming,
What oil have you massaged?

1 An Uraon folk-dance. Among the Gonds it is known as *Karma*.
2 Another Uraon folk-dance.
3 Another Uraon folk-dance.
4 A Munda folk-dance.
5 Festival of flowers.

The fragrance of fresh and beautiful flowers
Spreads in my bosom.

KARAM[1]

529 We live in this land
Where Sahibs have come.
What shall we do?
No joy from morning to noon, noon to evening.

530 Land and trees
All are taxed,
What shall we do?
No joy from morning to noon, noon to evening.

531 Huts and doors, pitchers and wooden spoons,
All are taxed.
What shall we do?
No joy from morning to noon, noon to evening.

MAGE[2]

532 Jarpi, O dove,
Jarpi is coming.
Karam, O pigeon,
Karam is going.
By the path of fine dust
Jarpi is coming,
By the path of dust turned into mud
Karam is going.

TWO KHARIA SONGS

KARAM

533 Five rupees worth are my anklets, mother,
Anklets strike against my anklets.
One *damri* worth is this vermilion, mother,
The vermilion adorns my parting of hair.

LUJHKI[3]

534 In the middle of the village.
Blossoms a *gulainchi* flower.
Daily my love
Weaves a garland.
While weaving the garland,
The needle pierced through your finger!
O my love, at night and at dawn
You weave a garland.

1 A folk-dance, same as current among the Uraons.
2 A type of Munda folk-songs sung in *Jarpi*, a Munda folk-dance.
3 A folk dance, same as current among the Uraons.

THREE SANTAL SONGS

SONG OF THE FLUTE

535 Play not, Badan dear, on your flute,
At the river bank, don't play this tune.
Water lies asleep below the rock, O Badan,
What for do you churn it?
What for do you tease it?

SOHRAI[1]

536 Sister, O sister, O elder sister,
Come, sister, come out.
Elephant-like festival, O sister,
Is passing.
It has no hands that I will drag,
It has no feet that I will catch.
Our hands cupped together,
In the fold of *saris* we will receive it.[2]

LOVE SONG

537 You are inside, my love,
Your flute is outside,
Your flute trembles, in the dew,
You are weeping for your flute, my love.
Your flute trembles in the dew.

THREE HO SONGS

LOVE SONG

538 While coming from the river,
While coming in the field,
You swing like the paddy ear.

MAGHE PARAB[3]

539 O Maghe Parab, come with songs,
O Maghe Parab, come in time.
The sun and the moon know you,
All the gods know you.

THE HEADMAN'S DAUGHTER

540 You eat rice
In a new leaf cup,
You drink rice beer
In the old leaf cup.

1 A Santal folk dance.
2 The Santal girl wants to point out that the festival is to end soon and it will be good to enjoy it fully before it ends.
3 The chief festival of the Hos.

Like a flower devoid of fragrance,
You look at me.
You sing a new song,
Wearing a new *sari*.
You will have to dance now
Tossing your hair-knot.

KONKANI CRADLE SONG

541 Shall I call my child fair-complexioned ?
Shall I call him turmeric dark ?
Who has blamed the fair-complexioned child ?
Who has spoken ill of him ?
O Govinda, I think of you,
The earthen lamp is lit in the *tulasi*[1] grove,
O Goddess Tulasi, I fall on your feet,
Save us from the evil star that comes this way.

KACHHI FAMINE SONG

542 We have no leisure,
This is *Chhappanu* year's famine.
We are insulted everywhere,
The seed is all burnt.

As I enter the field,
I cannot sleep,
We are insulted everywhere,
The seed is all burnt.

WARLI FAIR SONG

543 We went to the *jatra*,[2]
That home of the gods.
The bullock carts full of *saris* came,
The bullock carts full of finger-rings came,
The bullock carts full of bodices came,
The bullock carts full of bead necklaces came,
We went to the *jatra*,
The home of the gods.

CENTRAL INDIA

THREE BUNDELKHANDI SONGS

PHAG [3]

544 I shall till on the moon,
I shall make my threshing-floor on the sun :

1 An Indian plant considered to be sacred.
2 The religious fair.
3 A type of song sung during the Holi festival in Phagun (January-February).

My breasts will serve as bullocks,
At midnight my love will take them to graze..
Oh it rains like *Savan* and *Bhadon*.

545 The pipal leaves are soft,
Day and night they shine,
Love that began in childhood,
Day and night it strikes.
Now that we are in love,
Why do you keep me off your mind, darling ?

546 In the yard the washed cloth is drying,
In the forest the kachnar tree is drying,
Gori is drying at her mother's place,
Wife of a low person.
I had no relief,
Since I came at my father-in-law's place.

CENTRAL PROVINCES

NIMARI[1] MARRIAGE SONG

547 Flying in the sky, O she-vulture,
Take my message,
Tell the great grandfather in Heaven :
'In your house your grandson's marriage take place.'

' It is not possible,
We shall not be able to come.
The strong doors are shut on us,
The iron bolts are fixed.'

THREE GOND SONGS[2]

KARMA[3]

548 I sold my cow and paid the forest tax,
I sold my bullock and paid the land revenue,
That is not enough.
My mind is disturbed, my love,
It is difficult to live in Mandla district.

DADARIYA[4]

549 The leaves of the *pipal* tree are ever moving,
In the Englishmen's Raj, we are ever hungry,
In the Englishmen's Raj, O friend !

1 Dialect spoken in the country situated between Vindhyas and the Satpura.
2 Translated from Chhathisgarhi.
3 A Folk-dance.
4 A type of a short song.

Song of the Singhi Fish

550 In the fisherman's house is born a son
Carrying a net on his head;
The Singhi fish weeps, *dhar, dhar*:
My life's enemy is born,
Hai re hai.
My life's enemy is born.

TWO PARDHAN SONGS

Mandla District

551 Molasses are not available in Mandla bazar,
The Karma singers' voices are not in tune,
Oh, it is difficult to live in Mandla District.

Life's Philosophy

552 Feet are meant for walking,
Wings are meant for flying,
Mouth is meant for laughing and talking, my love,
Two eyes are meant for seeing.

THREE KAMAR SONGS

The Moon Weeps

553 Of whose house is the *lota* ?
Of whose house is the *thal* ?
Of whose house is the daughter
Whom the son-in-law is taking ?
The moon weeps.

Lota from a Kamar house,
Thali from a Gond house,
Daughter from a Baiga house,
The son-in-law is taking her,
The moon weeps.

Listen, Everybody

554 Listen, everybody,
Day has dawned.
While asleep,
While asleep,
The whole night has passed O.

Who abuses you ?
Who taunts you ?
Who drives you from the house ?

While asleep,
While asleep,
The whole night has passed O.

Forest Life

555 The tigress walked slowly, slowly, O,
By the side of the hill,
The tigress walked slowly, *hai re* !

Which branch of the tree you clasped ?
Which branch of the tree you embraced ?
Which branch of the tree you fluttered,
By the side of the hill ?
The tigress walked slowly, slowly,
By the side of the hill.

I clasped the *tendu* branch,
I embraced the *mahua* branch,
I fluttered the *chhindi* branch,
By the side of the hill.
The tigress walked slowly, slowly,
By the side of the hill.

TWO BAIGA SONGS

Rain Song

556 Which cloud roars ?
Which cloud rains ?
The white cloud roars,
The dark cloud rains.
The cloud rains and helps the corn,
The world lives on the corn.

The Drummer Guest

557 Where was your drummer guest created ?
Where was my lover created ?
In the city was created your drummer guest,
In the hills was created my lover.

TWO MARIA GOND SONGS FROM BASTAR

Water like Birds' Tears

558 Water like birds' tears,
Water like birds' tears,
O dear girl,
O dear girl,
Fill your pitcher,
Fill your pitcher,
O dear girl,

O dear girl.
If you do not fill now,
If you do not fill now,
O dear girl,
O dear girl,
When will you fill ?
When will you fill ?
O dear girl,
O dear girl.

NEELO

559 They have come to dance,
In the village, O Neelo,
They have come to ask for you, O Neelo,
Neelo, O Neelo,
They have come to ask for you.

DELHI

TWO JAT SONGS[1]

SONG OF THE BRIDE

560 In the gem-studded cup burns the *ghee*,
On the oven burns the *kasar*[2]?
Under her veil burns Gori,
Her husband is a fool.

SONG OF THE FAN

561 Lying here it gets old,
My fan is worth a lakh of rupees, mother.

My husband's elder brother behaved like an enemy,
He has sown the field at a great distance,
My fan is worth a lakh of rupees, mother.

My husband behaved like an enemy,
He joined service in a distant land,
My fan in worth a lakh of rupees, mother.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

THREE DOGRA SONGS

LOVE SONG

562 I found your land pleasant and charming, king of the hills,
I found your land all full of colour.
Yet one day I shall bid it adieu,
I shall leave my children behind,
Never again shall I come here, king of the hills.

1 Translated from Bangru or Jatu dialect spoken in Hariana.
2 A sort of sweet preparation for the woman at child-birth.

Had I been the lightning amidst the clouds,
I would have frightened you with a sudden flash.

Farewell Song

563 Sister, Banjara snatches you away from us,
Who will go with us
To fetch the corn-ears ?
Who will pluck the buds with us ?
Who will pluck the small delicious figs ?
Sister, Banjara snatches you away from us.

The Raj of Dogra King

564 The Raj of the Dogra king is hard,
O when should I come to you, my love ?
Small rain drops are falling,
The sky is heavy with the clouds.

Your shirt is made of the flowered cloth,
Inside it move two round lemons,
The Raj of the Dogra king is hard,
O when should I come to you ?

TWO KASHMIRI SONGS

Saffron Song

565 My love went towards the Papmur road,
The saffron flowers embraced him,
He is there,
I am here,
Listen to my cries, O God.

The Chenar Leaf

566 Sent by my love, O chenar leaf,
I offer myself, O god of love.
O prince of beauty, O chenar leaf, O god of love,
I offer myself, O god of love.

FIVE LADDAKHI SONGS

Love Song

567 Standing on the rock, O girl,
Raising your neck like a swallow,
Whither do you see ?
Whom do you await ?

Violet Flowers

568 I have come,
I have brought flowers for you,

Distant violet flowers,
Don't be silent like a rock now.

Song of the Snows

569 Snows are white like silver,
Snows are white.

Snows say, we are great,
Love says, I am greater.

What is beyond the snows,
What is beyond ?

Love

570 Flowers say, we have seen the gods,
Love says, I am greater than the gods,
The rocks say, we know the secret of the earth,
Love says, I know more.

Three Things

571 First thing is silver,
Second thing the girl,
Third thing the lake,
That reflects the girl adorned with silver.

NEPAL

FOUR NEPALI SONGS

Snow Song

572 O the path above the Himalayas,
O when will the snow gather ?
The rippling stream and the flying heart,
O where will they stop ?

The Soldier

573 The elder and younger sisters have gone
To graze the cows in the forest,
The soldier's life is not certain even for a moment,
He must face death in the battle-field.

574 A vegetable is delicious with spices,
The gram-curry is delicious with *ghee*,
The finger-ring looks nice with a gem,
The soldier looks nice in the army.

Heart's Secret

575 Nine lakhs of stars fill the sky,
I cannot count them,
My heart's secret reaches my lips,
I cannot speak.

RISSA

FIVE SAVARA SONGS

The Song of the Plough

576 I salute your hands, O plough,
I salute your feet,
The *sal* tree I ever praise
You are made of *sal* wood.
May you be ever strong.
May you be ever ready.
I salute your hands, O plough,
I salute your feet.

Earth Goddess

577 Earth goddess, you are our mother,
Give us a smiling look.
It is time to reap paddy, our heart is full,
We must spend the day in songs.

578 Earth goddess, as you smile for a while,
The paddy plants bear more corn,
Earth goddess, as you feel happy for a while,
The paddy-ears, shine like gold.

579 Earth goddess, we are born of you,
When we die, we return to you.
Again and again we are born of you,
Again and again we return to you.

580 Again and again you give us your smiles,
Again and again the paddy-ears give us new life,
Earth goddess, you are our mother,
Give us a smiling look.

SEVEN KONDH SONGS

581 I shall make a golden plough, O bullock,
I shall make a silver yoke,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

582 The monsoon rains will come,
The paddy will grow fast,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

583 Get along, O why don't you move ?
You are my dearest comrade,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

584 My house will be full of gold and silver,
Pull the plough, bullock, it is already afternoon,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

585 I shall bedeck your neck with diamonds,
I shall bedeck your neck with pearls,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

586 When I will be a rich man,
I shall feed you on delicious fruits,
Get along quickly,
Readily pull the plough.

587 I will keep you in a beautiful house,
Where mosquitoes will not bite you,
Get along quickly
Readily pull the plough.

TWO JUANG SONGS

Love Song

588 At dawn we met and now the sun sinks,
We met across the road, O dark girl,
As the rain drops fall, *jhimir, jhimir,*
You look lovely like a dark cloud.
You haven't seen me, O dark girl,
As I jump in the deer dance.

The Drum and the Flute

589 Says the drum, I come from Keonjhar,
Says the flute, I come from Pal Lahara.
Says the drum, I am Bhagwan,
Says the flute, I am Mahaprabhu.
Says the drum, I come from Dhenkanal,
Says the flute, I come from Korba,
Says the Drum, I bring news from Mother Earth,
Says the flute, I bring news from the moon.

BHUIYA MARRIAGE SONG

590 The girl who laughed till yesterday sheds tears,
The village sinks in sorrow,
The earth sinks in tears,

TWO BONDO-PORAJA SONGS

Song of the Dhangidi Ghar[1]

591 The mat talks to me at night,
As I sleep in the *Dhangidi Ghar*,
Don't marry so soon,
You will leave me,
If you become a bride.
I won't marry so soon, O mat,
I won't leave you, O, Dhangidi Ghar.

Rain Song

592 The clouds roar from hill to hill,
They hang like long tresses.
Don't be wild, O rain,
I cannot hear my dark girl's voice.

GADABA LOVE SONG

593 Love is like the home-spun yarn,
Sit beside the loom, O boy,
Thakurani[2] is my witness,
Life is like the home-made sweets,
Beauty is Thakurani's gift,
Sit beside the loom, O boy.

PUNJAB AND HIMACHAL

TWO SONGS FROM SIMLA HILLS

Love Song

594 The flowing water ripples,
The still water is calm,
O, I left coming to you, my love,
Since I knew your nature.

Memory of Birthplace

595 O stream, going downward,
With stones in your course you flow,
What makes me come beyond my village ?
Ah me, I was destined to share food in a distant land.

SONG FROM KANAUR[3]

596 Said Jang Mapoti,
Sakhi, O *Sakhi*, let us go to the upper hill,
We have to guard the field.

1 The village dormitory, the same as the *Ghotul* among the Muries in Baster,
2 The chief goddess of the Gadabas.
3 Kanaur was known as *Kinnara* in ancient times. The Dialect of this region Himachal has a special charm and musical idiom.

Krishna Bhagti said,
You ask me to go out,
What breakfast should I take with me ?

The fried wheat of Ropang,
The flour of Kilva Bhaphar,
Dal of black *urad* of Thokari.

SONG FROM CHAMBA

597 Gori feels at home
In the hills of Chamba.

In every house a *bindlu*,
In every house a *tiklu*,
In every house are comely brides,
Gori feels at home
In the hills of Chamba.

In the hills of Chamba,
Are ever falling showers.
Life is lovely among the dear ones,
Gori feels at home
In the hills of Chamba.

The Raja of Jammu,
Wants to be gratified,
He wants lovely eyes' glimpse.
Gori feels at home
In the hills of Chamba.

SONG FROM KULU VALLEY

My cat drank all my milk,
I gave my *ghee* to the gods,
O newly arrived guest,
Dry rice I offer you.

GADDI SONG FROM KANGRA

Marry me not to an old man, uncle,
Marry me not, uncle,
With fresh tresses I shall become a widow.

Marry me not to a servant, uncle,
Marry me not uncle,
As he receives the call he will run away.

Marry me not to sick person, uncle,
Marry me not, uncle,
With fresh tresses I shall become a widow.

Marry me to a shepherd, uncle,
Marry me, uncle,
Enough meat he will give me.

Marry me to a dealer in sheep, uncle,
Marry me, uncle,
The woolen *cholu* I will wear.

SONG FROM MANDI

600 My roll of carded cotton won't finish.
My thread won't break,
My mother-in-law won't say,
Go out to fetch water.

RAJASTHAN

TWO BHIL SONGS

DAMOR

601 Damor rides on the white horse,
Damor is very charming,
Damor comes with shield on his back,
Damor is very charming.
Damor comes with sword on his waist,
Damor is very charming.
Yours and mine heart is one, O Damor,
Damor is very charming.

CURSE

602 Thorn pricks me while I come,
My foot gets a hit while I go.
Let me see your dead body, O marriage maker,
You gave me to a place of sorrows.

TWO SONGS FROM UDAYPUR

PICHHOLA LAKE

603 Rubbing, rubbing I wash my feet, O Rasia,
I was on your steps, O Pichhola,
I have lost my toe-ring, my love,
O innocent toe-ring!

KALIA KHERI

604 Kalia Kheri is full of finger-rings,
Border of thorns on the ground,
Women fetch water,
Peacocks address rejoicingly.

SOUTH INDIA

TWO BADAGA SONGS

The Peacock

605 *Ha hani ga ha,*
He-e-e heni ga he.

O peacock, going proudly along the downs,
Show me your true colour,
I shall follow you.

O peacock, going speedily along the odakadu stream,
Show me your true colour,
I shall follow you.

Ha hani ga ha,
He-e-e heni ga he.

Love Song

606 *Lale lale lalale,*
Lasslo lilo leelilo.

Michchi, Michchi, O. Michchi,
Would you have sweets ?

I won't have, brother-in-law, I won't have,
If you want I shall give.

Lale lale lalale.
Laeelo lilo leelilo.

TWO TODA SONGS

Milk of the Buffalo

607 It became evening, it became morning,
The buffalo reached home,
The buffalo-calf may drink milk that shines like mirror
The work of the churning rod is over,
The milk is fit for churning.

Love Song

608 You blossomed into a cane flower,
I sucked you like a cane bee:
You blossomed into a water-lily,
I sucked you like a black bee.

INITED PROVINCES

AWADHI SONG

609 Don't cut this *neem* tree, father,
The neem gives rest to sparrows:
Let me clasp you, brother.

Don't trouble your daughters, father,
Daughters are like sparrows:
Let me clasp you, brother.

All the sparrows will fly away,
The neem will feel lonely:
Let me clasp you, brother.

Daughters will leave for father-in-law's places,
Mother will feel lonely:
Let me clasp you, brother.

SONG FROM BRAJ MANDAL

610 O mother, who gave me birth,
Why didn't you bring me up as a *koel* of the gardens?
In the gardens I would have lived,
Unto the gay flute player of the dance gathering.
I would have offered my cooing.

O mother, who gave me birth,
Why didn't you bring me up as a fish of the ponds?
In the ponds I would have lived,
Unto the gay flute player of the dance gathering
I would have jumped up.

O mother, who gave me birth,
Why didn't you bring me up as lightning of the clouds?
I would have lived in the clouds,
Unto the gay flute player of the dance gathering
I would have flashed.

SONG FROM KUMAUN HILLS

611 In the yonder village, uncle,
What a beating of drums.
Someone may be laying the foundation of his house,
What a beating of drums.
Someone may be entering a newly built house,
What a beating of drums.
Someone's birthday ceremony.
What a beating of drums.
Someone's marriage party for a wedding,

What a beating of drums.
Someone may be worshipping a god,
What a beating of drums.
Someone may be giving a feast,
What a beating of drums.

SONG FROM GARHWAL

612 Go to your father's house, lucky girl,
Take my message for mother.
Tell her: ' Mother mine,
I ever long to meet you.'

Tell my father: ' You did well,
For silver you sold me and threw in misery.'
Across the four hills, you wedded me off,
Brothers too only cared for silver.

Tell my mother: ' I wait for you,
My fate you will know when you see me;
A long way is the village spring, mother,
Winter in *Poos* is killing, mother.'

FOUR SONGS FROM JAUNSAR

Mother's Face

613 You have covered the footpath, O fog,
You have covered mother's face.

How shall I walk down to mother's village,
You are my enemy, O fog.

Drum Song

614 Listen, O village god,
The drum has a different voice today.

Flute Song

615 Come, O flute, the drum calls you,
Come, O song, the flute calls you.

Song of the Moon

616 Listen, ye stars, I cannot count you.
Listen, Mother Earth, the stars know your secrets.
Listen, O moon, Mother Earth knows your secrets.

APPENDIX ONE

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SIGNIFICANT and continuous work done on Indian folk-songs in English during the past hundred years is a unique contribution to world folklore. It is noteworthy that the lead was given by foreign scholars, who came in contact with Indian people, but later on a number of Indian scholars took up this work. An attempt is made here to collect full data about the work done by each individual, yet it is probable that some of the references are missing in this bibliography.

It is necessary to keep in view the entire range of India's Folk-Song Movement that had its origin in the field of anthropology. Indian folk poetry is bound to influence the future poetry of the Indian people, for it enshrines the true originality of the Indian spirit and wide-awake sensibility of the people's collective genius. It is from this point of view that the importance of work done on Indian folk-songs becomes more significant in any scheme of national consciousness, though it had to be carried on through a foreign medium. India must feel proud of scholars who first discovered the vitality of Indian folk poetry, and thus laid the foundation of a record of permanent international value.

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It is a significant publication, since it happens to be the first book on Indian folk-songs. Says Gover in the Introduction, "About half of the songs in the following pages were collected and translated for the Royal Asiatic Society, and were read before that learned body about two years ago. The essays containing them were thought worthy of

publication in the Journal of the Society, but have not yet been issued, as the Journal cannot keep pace with the more valuable demands upon its space. A few have also appeared in *The Cornhill Magazine*. Beyond this the present publication is original.

The contents are as follows: 1. Introduction, 2. The Folk-Songs of Southern India, 3. Canarese Songs, 4. Badaga Songs, 5. Coorg Songs, 6. Tamil Songs, 7. The Cural, 8. Malayalam Songs, 9. Telugu Songs.

Wrongly indeed, the Tamil poet Tiruvallava's *Cural* is mixed up in folk-songs, though Gover himself admits, "It will seem strange to a Western reader that the Cural of Tiruvallava should be the most venerated and popular book south of the Godavery....There is no doubt of the fact that the Cural is as essentially the literary treasure, the poetic mouth-piece, the highest type of verbal and moral excellence among the Tamil people, as ever Homer was among the Greeks." (P. 200.)

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APPENDIX TWO

BIBLIOGRAPHY IN INDIAN LANGUAGES

BOOKS on folk-songs in Indian languages show the roots of India's Folk-Song Movement going deeper in the soil. It has not been possible for two reasons to include references of articles that appeared from time to time in various journals and periodicals of Indian languages: firstly, for limitations of space, secondly, to avoid unevenness, for in certain cases a long list was available, whereas in certain cases such references could not be adequately gathered.

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