Purushartha 18, *Oral Traditions in South Asia* (Catherine Champion, ed.), 1998, 448 pages

This thematic volume on oral tradition privileges the notion of circulation of texts and inquires on urban forms of civility in which folk literature is involved. Three relevant questions arise here:

- Evolution and transmission of traditional repertories in a context of growing urbanisation.
- How to face the competition among massprinting, « filmi git » and cassettes.
- Orality as a mode of expression of a collective imaginary or of a more individual and emotional style.

Purushartha 20, *Indian Theatres* (Lyne Bansat-Boudon, ed.), 1998, 368 pages

India has a love for theatre. This is what this volume accounts for, in its plurality and from various points of view, such as, philology, literary analysis, history, sociology, actresses’ testimonies and even poetry.

The scope to the scene of ritual as well as to aesthetic and philosophical reflection allows for an analysis of the relationships between theatre and reality, together with an exposition of arguments on degrees of embodiment: theatrical characterisation and ritual possession.


Classic literature, oral « folk » literature, cinema, painting: the approach of these cultural subjects can be inspired by ethnology, stylistics, philosophy, or can use the methods of cultural anthropology, of textual analysis, of sociocriticism, or of the theory of reception.

This book combines the contributions of researchers and famous artists, writers and painters. Its diversity gives an idea of the aesthetic creation in contemporary India. The glance of the artists themselves, parallel to the critic’s one, answers to the general plan of this volume, i.e., to grasp the modes of consciousness and knowledge in the aesthetic shapes, today, in India.


Rituals are generally understood as repeating expected patterns of movement and utterance, either transmitted within one’s own group or borrowed from others, but always originating from within a “tradition”. They are “age-old” practices. However, even when a ritual is said to have been preserved, or carefully reproduced in case of borrowing, its relative importance, motivation and “meaning” (for the people concerned) necessarily vary. The contributions in the present volume, document and critically analyse “Hindu” rituals as social and historical constructs, by focusing specifically on their circulation in space, society and time: what determines the fate of rituals across history and cultures? what is at stake behind their continuous (re)appropriation / rejection by a given society? and which are the mechanisms involved in their constant interpretation? The approach is based on epigraphy, history of religion, history of literature, sociology and anthropology.