The workshop on documenting creative processes of folklore, was meant to bring together people actively concerned with folklore issues in India in order to initiate a process of interaction among them, and as a follow-up explore possibilities of cooperation between the National Folklore Support Centre (NFSC) and the participants, in whatever form and context deemed appropriate to the objectives of NFSC. The deliberate choice of Jaisalmer is to focus on the cultural potentialities and artistic capacities of deprived communities and popular performers. To this effect, NFSC intends to cooperate with Indian Universities and support folklore researchers.

The Far-East regions having been neglected by India since Independence, NFSC purposely organised a first training workshop in Shillong in May 2000 for mid career Indian folklorists to reflect upon their practice. The second one was decided to be at Jaisalmer with Rupayan Sansthan. The workshop was organised to offer an opportunity of intense exchange of views and experiences to selected participants, either in general sessions through immediately reacting to the presentations made by the faculty members or in the small groups of five which were arranged as their follow-up and animated by a rotating faculty member. These small groups were recomposed every five days. Field visits were generally arranged in the afternoons to get acquainted with various facets of folklife and interact with them in their life environment. Evenings were earmarked for performances of music, puppetry and dances. The latter again gave opportunities to personally relate with the performers and express our appreciation for an expertise, which often compared with that of professionally trained artists.

This report deals with the general sessions only. It does not intend to be an objective recapitulation of the lectures made by faculty members and following general debates. The richness of these lectures and discussions would only make this task impossible. I mean something else, namely, to point out a few issues, which seem to me particularly relevant in the field of folklore studies and practices in India. I intend on the one hand to stress points which should become matter of consensus and be remembered as significant landmarks for reference by the participants keen on proceeding further along ways chalked out by the workshop. I shall on the other hand take this opportunity to occasionally raise critical questions on issues, which in my opinion remain problematic and require further consideration.

Identification of core issues

The workshop was meant to possibly identify programmes to be further carried out with NFSC support. This implied that basic perspectives be shared in order to work actively upon whatever be the fields of social involvement or the domains of research. It was essential to that effect that right at the outset the concerns and expectations of every one be spelt out in order to facilitate a broad homogeneity of perspectives. The participants were therefore requested to make a short self-presentation and state their main fields of involvement or areas of research. This gave an initial idea of what actually folklore means for them, practically and theoretically.

The concerns of most participants can be categorised as follows: (1) the publication of articles, documents, books, video-tapes, visual and audio-documents and films on folk traditions; (2) the promotion of folk arts and support to performances, sometimes the organisation of traditional artists' melas, talks and meets, one of the significant aims of such activities being of presenting these living traditions to a large public which ignores or even looks down upon them; (3) the preservation and reactivation of people's traditions and knowledge for the next generations at a moment where their survival is problematic, but their heritage significantly relevant. The aim of most of the participants is of strengthening such potentialities, enhancing their resilience, propounding their social relevance and availing of them as assets for cultural activities in front of destructive social challenges.

Issues of theoretical concern

The preliminary self-introduction pointed to a few theoretical issues bearing on methods, perspectives and the clarification of which motivated the wish of the participants to come and attend the workshop. Their hope was that workshop would provide fruitful insights. The particular expectation expressed by several participants was of discovering through a direct contact with the rich Rajasthan folklore especially its music,
craft, tales, songs, dances, etc. The holding of the workshop in Jaisalmer was indeed meant to offer a singular opportunity of personal experience and exposure to Rajasthani folk traditions through directly relating with artists and their communities at home in the course of the *field work* visits arranged in the afternoon, and evening performances.

The preliminary question raised by many was: *What is folklore?* The question of the theoretical status of folklore as a constituency of knowledge proves a crucial and pervasive issue, at the cognitive as well as at the practical level. Those who try to enhance the validity and survival of oral traditions especially in tribal communities raised another important issue: *What does creative process mean?* The question has reference to language, social forms, marriage customs, tales and myths, melodic heritage, etc.

Aruna Roy and others, not as a fact to be deplored but a boon to be worked out, naturally stressed the question of multiplicity of cultures alive and vibrant in the whole Indian subcontinent.

Folklore is a matter of speech and not of pure textual traditions, which possibly exist only as mental fictions. (The word *text* is being used in this report in the sense it was later defined by the Faculty as a metaphor borrowed from the world of weaving to mean *what has been woven together*, that is to say, elements that somebody puts together as to shape a distinct object). In this regard several questions arise. First, what are orality and its function versus the written? What can people’s oral traditions mean in the context of present day development and in general with reference to cultures and civilisations grounded in the written text which use to entertain disregard for the oral texts of *primitive societies*? Secondly, what cognitive status and authority do we recognise to oral texts when our documentation means and procedures are guided by principles and concepts framed by systems of knowledge based on the predominant authority of the written text? In other words, we may try and know how to let performers of oral texts speak for themselves with an authority of their own, but to what extent are we able to apprehend the logic of their oral regime of expressivities? Thirdly, human rights and the rights to information were strongly stressed by Aruna Roy and brought forward time and again by the participants as a core issue directly connected with our interest in folklore. How would we figure out this political connection between peoples’ traditions and democratic rules of social communication?

From the outset questions were raised about *what do we do when we document? What is the meaning of documentation? How and why do we document?* The question is an ethical one. It bears on the rapport between the scholars, the research worker, or, for that matter, the activist, and the people with a different culture and a much lower social status. How would we like to qualify and figure out this rapport? The question is one of the core issues to be addressed by a workshop on documentation. Why do we collect songs and wish to archive oral traditions? What are our motives? What are we looking for? How to secure continuity and survival for disappearing traditions (songs, tunes, tales, crafts)? What are the means to preserve them? Why and how to preserve them when styles of living change drastically and changes do not care for continuity. How do we manage or negotiate such ruptures? What are the means to reactivate traditions? How can we base on them processes of cultural action in the modern context? How do we concretely figure out the continuity or of tradition and modernity in the case of folk-tales, songs, myths, music, etc? How do they enter in and be represented by our modern discourses? Traditional societies are swept away off their social and cultural moorings (family customs, ways of living, cultural wealth, occupational skills, etc.). How can we reactivate a collective cultural memory found fading away, and save its relevance, if any, and, if so, which one, in a modern environment, to the benefit of the overall polity and culture of India to-day? Are we only enjoying a role of mourners with no other purpose than the dubious pleasure of an aesthetic contemplation of the beauty of the dead?
Cultural memory may draw upon the inner dynamics of old folk forms and incorporate their semantics and values in a new life style, in different systems of social relations. Why should we not even continue using old instruments and react against their falling out of use? A mental shift is needed to prompt new people to adjust to old instruments on account of their musical potentials. Why not create this opportunity and devise a new lease of life for them in our times? remarked Komal Kothari.

From the outset, a kind of principle for action was stressed, namely, that at a time when many traditional forms are disappearing, these forms should be carefully documented and systematically studied for whatever they are worth for (social form, musical tune, myth, tale, etc.). Save one percent in your budget for pure folk studies is the motto and request of Komal Kothari to all social action groups. But how to solve such difficulties as the availability of time and funds, have concerned and competent people, of means and methods?

Then how to do good work and do justice to the traditions themselves? This applies to musical knowledge as well as to mythological logic. This implies firstly that forms be studied in their whole human context, not as isolated folklore item. There is no more pure music or pure technical craftsmanship without concrete human social communication, human expression and as a consequence constant variation are the three characteristic modes of living oral traditions.

Pure excellence is always defined out of context. Folk traditions have their own life; they constantly change according to time and historical transformations. They are never fixed and isolated objects. They are historically conditioned inventions. The workshop was precisely meant to examine ways and methods of documenting the particularly significant dimension of creativity of people’s traditions.

### Careers and concerns

Under this title faculty members shared introspective reflections about their individual journey as folklorists so that the lessons that they drew from their professional career may help us to avoid dead ends and suggest a way to us. Lee Haring was initially a performer of banjo and singer of traditional American songs. He realised later on that songs were coming from country people whom I had no connection with. We had no concern for their context. We were selling ourselves as guardians of authentic American songs taken often from commercial productions. A second lesson is the discovery of the importance of music in the European songs that his students, sons of migrants, were learning at home as part of their culture. When folklore became a reality in the North America in the 60s, another discovery was the retrieval and the investigation of the text as a form of creative process. In Kenya, in India and in Madagascar, I discovered complicity between the ignorance of their folklore by people and European colonialism. Their folklore became less isolated and ultimately appeared to me as equivalent to people’s culture, and culture equivalent to history. Folklore studies became then a way to acquaint people with their own heritage. Ultimately, ethnicity and nationalism appeared to me narrow approaches, if not altogether wrong perspectives. Notions of endangered species and pure forms were also discarded as misleading, as there is only mixture, métissage, diversity and hybrids. This would apply to situation in the USA also, confirmed Lee Haring in reply to a question. There is a history of the concept of folklore in the USA as well, with the same need to transcend concepts of ethnicity, otherness, purity, and nation.

Pravina Shukla reflected upon her professional experience as folklorist in Brazil (carnival), Benares (women’s practices of body adornment) and in organising exhibitions and museums in the USA (see Pravina Shukla’s article in this issue–Editor). She pointed out practical difficulties encountered in fieldwork while taking photos or shooting to document the carnival, in particular to gender constraints. Documentation from collecting material and displaying objects to present the findings and the ultimate results of an investigation with possibly the help of visual and audio material or exhibition of objects and texts raises a number of questions. Venugopal wondered about the cognitive status and extent of validity of a document, which claims to actually represent the reality. There is in a document more than what one sees. There is first what we selected and choose to present, and how and why we gave it a definite signification. Usually this is not spelt out when we write a book. What is beyond or behind? G. Poitevin raised the point of another distinction to be made especially with reference to documenting through visual material, to two cognitive processes, the one of the scholar constructing a document and the other one of the receiver whose insights depends on the symbolic values that the images have for him. The image has an uncontrollable effectiveness of its own. Here are two separate worlds of meaning construction. Henry Glassie shared reflections on the nature of folk creativity. His experience taught him to move from a song text and singer’s song towards the whole life environment and culture of those concerned (housing, cloth and dresses, cooking and food habits, architecture and material culture in general), which are consonant with the song, People sing songs as...
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their house looks. The best way to protect people and document their potentialities is, first, to reveal their names and identity as individuals with reference to their environment, instead of hiding them under empty generalisations or deleting their personal life features. Extracting a performance out of the performer's life space and social relations cannot apprehend individual's creativity. A performer's creativity lies in their rapport. Secondly, with regard to the performance itself, no tune repeats itself two times absolutely equal to itself. A story once repeated will adapt to each particular situation and only variants exist. The storyteller's creativity is realised when we listen several times to the same story in different moments and situations. The tale is affected by the interaction of the teller with his audience, and the ethnographer as well, while being narrated. Creativity is the function of interaction. There is no pure, original folk-tale. The text of a tale or song that remains with the ethnographer is only an abstract, an emblem or a short sample of the reality of the singer and his culture.

All theories are bound to disabuse

Folklore is not an anonymous cultural item. We often assume that a folk tradition such as a song or a tale is a collective wealth and has no composer. Even when the composer's name is not known, a great poet composer will be credited with the song creation, as is the case in Ireland. It was felt that the issue of the individual versus the collective in respect of oral traditions should not be viewed only with reference to a western approach to folklore, in which the concept is applied to modern practices and innovations which are launched by individuals before becoming popular in the opinion; as a consequence legal questions of authorship and copyright are to be acknowledged once the product has become a commodity. The example of a song composed by a Rajasthani traditional singer and shared by the whole community of Manganiyar singers for decades in Rajasthan before being commercially appropriated by mass media with an immense and profitable success becomes a legal question of authorship and copyright in a modern context only. The previous popularity of the song was not credited to an individual's rights and consciousness against the collective consciousness of his community. This does not mean that folk songs in India are cultural goods, which belong nowhere and stand as nobody's property; the performers own them as the common heritage of their community. Even when no name can be mentioned as the author of a given folklore, this does not mean that the latter can be considered as an aesthetic item isolated from moorings in a concrete community and surviving without performers or carriers.

This issue of individual carriers or performers versus a community was unsatisfactorily discussed. Let us refer to two instances of traditional practices. The story-teller of an oral narrative will put his name as being the narrator or carrier but not the author of the tale or myth which the whole community owns as his wealth; the narrative does not stand by itself as anybody's or nobody's story, but neither as a singular individual's property. Similarly, the formula of identification and the signature of authentification of the collective tradition of the grind mill songs in India are spelt out by the phrase: I tell you, woman. This implies a shared appropriation of the tradition by an individual woman singer in the performance itself, through embedding herself and incorporating her testimony within the common heritage; the question of ascribing the song to an individual artist's name never occurs and would seem incongruous. Artist's anonymity points simultaneously to a commonly shared heritage and a deeply personalised identification of oneself within the common heritage in the moment it is received and commonly carried over.

Should we not conceive of a process of individualisation or personalisation growing abreast with an increasing symbiotic interaction of each carrier with the other members of his community, each one reaching in each performance a deeper stage of himself/herself or shaping a new a material heritage through his/her identification with the very collective heritage of the community? The individual and the collective seem to be better construed interactively and communically than antithetically when we deal with traditional forms of tangible or intangible culture. This issue is crucial as it has a determinant bearing on methods and procedures of documentation. It calls for further elaboration as the creativity and fate of people's traditions depend constitutively on the interaction of all members through modes of symbolic communication and systems of oral
transmission of knowledge specific to cohesive societies. Here the process of cultural creativity of the individual agent significantly differs from that of a modern individual in a modern context where orality is no more the determinant and sole regime of communication.

Issues of documentation practices and documentation ethics, as well as issues of collective vitality and survival of traditional oral cultures are to be conceived along specific conceptual constructs. A debate remains necessary on the concept of living collective tradition and singular ways of traditional creativity with reference to the multitude of Indian communities, their systems of mutual relations and symbolic communication, their indigenous or autonomous knowledge, their expertise in crafts, and last but not the least their every day wisdom. Processes of creativity vary with each of these domains and should be documented in minute detail for each of them. In Japan, folk traditions are alive in plenty. Japan is extremely rich in folktales. Folk can be vibrant with high standard of living. It is equally wrong to connect folk creativity with illiteracy. Why then folk survive when comfort and high literacy are not adverse to folk traditions and may not mean their extinction? According to Henry Glassie, folk creation emerges when an individual feels furious against the collective. Three factors are required for folk to exist: 1) a brave individual ready to stand up and refuse the fashion of the many, 2) a group of people surrounding him and ready to be taught something else, and 3) a belief in a transcendence or an ideology, that is to say, a constitutive link between oneself and something beyond.

**Religion is the substratum of folklore**

When clarification was sought in a small group discussion about the third factor, Henry Glassie defined transcendent belief as a conviction transcendent to ethnicity, environmental constraints, economics and politics. Something deep provides a resource from within and is distinct from everyday constraints. This resource is usually sought in philosophy or religion. This transcendent resource offers a language different from ordinary language and allows us seeing life differently. That transcendent element is an ideological conception in the control of people, not imposed from outside. Folk creativity rests upon language or art as metaphorical form of expression and symbolic communication. The performers have the ability not only to make artefacts; they are moreover able to speak about their art with a language of their own. That language helps them to control, transform, and interpret their art as a system of significance, which helps them to defend it.

For instance, potters in Turkey have a language to discuss life borrowed from Sufi poetry, which is not part of orthodox Islam, but these sets of poems allow people to have a practical and different language of their own. When their art of potters is threatened, and the majority of the potters of Bangladesh or Turkey decide to discontinue the tradition, many potters disappear, but their beautiful language offers a defence which a minority avail of, finding in it inspiration and ways to overcome. This creativity is not economically or politically ground. They avail a means of their own to protect their art: it is a transcendent force that makes some of them continue their art practices. The person engages himself in creating something not only for him but also in the name of oneness with a supreme power or to please that power. The same is the case with weavers and their weaving. The idiom is taken from Islam and not from economics. A transcendent ideology prevents their art from disappearing, a result that a simple economic or utilitarian argument would not be able to perform. Folk forms are symbolic forms. This explains their survival in the midst of adverse economic constraints.

This theory of emergence of folklore was unfortunately not discussed. It appears amazingly identical to theories of popular culture as counter culture which flourished in the West some decades ago, for which the people, namely, small insurgent groups are the source of innovation; they are moreover understood as individuals from low status community, or repressed minorities. It sounds as if the term folklore is just brought in to replace the term popular. This subjects
the construction of Folklore as transcendent source of human survival to those objections made to the popular construed as alternative front of counter-culture. This is not to deny the necessity of ideological sources of inspiration for social actors exploited by dominant interests to fight against unjust socio-economic systems, but the question is not of accounting for the emergence of action-groups.

The concept of individual, which appears here, may not prove appropriate to conceive of the relation of the creative individual performer to its community in a traditional way. Creative processes within oral folk traditions characteristically appear to be communicative phenomena, rather than artist's courageous upsurge, and their mechanisms would have been better discussed with reference to the many Indian folk realities familiar to the participants, starting with the various folk practices encountered during the field work visits in and around Jaisalmer. A second question is that a huge mass of folk traditions as much in India as elsewhere are not essentially religious, and their emergence as a response to a transcendent call may simply be not tenable as a general theory.

A third observation is that the function of a number of folk traditions consists in maintaining the status quo if not even repressing dissent, or in emulating higher up models if not seeking acceptance and recognition by dominant communities. The Indian narrative traditions constitute the wealth of each community (for instance the practice of genealogies and the sets of myths specific to subaltern castes, to mention only two examples) seem hardly capable of breaking altogether the over-all hierarchical and patriarchal patterns.

**Performance theory: Henry Glassie**

Several lessons can be drawn from Glassie's lecture. The first lesson is that a text as a thing in the world, an archaeological monument, is to be distinguished from the inner view of the human agent. The latter's insight is a meaning to be ascertained from within once we have documented the processes of production of a form. The ethnographic stage is necessary but not sufficient. The second lesson is that the meaning can be documented only after a prolonged interaction with people. Truth is any way out of reach, as it exists only on the inaccessible horizon, which the interpretations of the folklorist in dialogue with those of his performers point to; all of them remain only approximations. (See Henry Glassie's article in this issue-Editor)

In his two presentations, the one on musical instruments and other one on folk tales, Komal Kothari gave accounts of creation of form with reference to their physical parameters, location, social mapping and correspondent distinctive genres. These accounts were inspiring illustrations of how one could analyse these forms. Kapila Vatsyayan explicitly articulated a first lesson later in a talk: What is the distinction between tangible and intangible culture? This categorisation never occurred to Komal Kothari to distinguish the manufacturing of instruments and the narration of tales. His description immediately clarified crucial points: the production of a given instrument is directly guided by a certain form of music which is specifically if not exclusively performed in particular circumstances: the tune cannot be separated neither from its material vehicle, which itself is symbolic of caste, technical and aesthetic expertise, and therefore instrument of social distinction, nor from the social/symbolic function of the performance. Similarly the import of folk narratives from low status castes cannot be properly assessed unless they are perceived as embedded in the everyday material culture of communities maintained in a state of deprivation. Second lesson: Forms do not emerge from nowhere; they are contextually embedded in the totality of a social structure, which comprises of a number of agencies mutually interdependent and interactive (Kapila Vatsyayan). A form should therefore be analytically examined at various levels. The wealth of information given by Komal Kothari cannot be reported here. A few details only may be remembered to substantiate the previous statements.

Regarding musical instruments, for instance, barring the simple ones, they were played in hereditary castes supported by patrons. If most of them come from kitchenware, the reason is that they were mostly played at folk shrines of the goddesses. Until thirty years ago, rural people were not using metallic utensils because of the difficulty of making alloys. The study of musical instruments has led us to study food practices (there was no fried food), and their use led us towards the shrines of the goddesses. Different instruments (pabu, jantar, jogi and sarangi) were used for different epics with the result that specific epics captured some; as a result they remain used exclusively for that particular epic. Two groups of musicians, langas and manganiyars, are found in western Rajasthan, each of them divided in two sub-groups, which play a different instrument (for instance with strings differently placed on the bridge of their sarangi in the case of manganiyars). The manufacturing of sarangi and kamaicha had to be learnt again, they were not made in India for last one hundred years; two families who could make the Sindhi sarangi were in Karachi and the kamaicha was only repaired but no longer made.

The reactivation of manufacturing expertise and the valorisation of musical practice proved a long march of performative creativity. Our problem was to get good instruments made and repaired. Komalda remarked: Nowadays we struggle with the exact place of the bridge; often we cannot tune, as the exact place has to be found for each of them. At the start, in 1953, a musician runs away when I asked him to allow me to record his song. He said: If I sing, I shall lose my voice. Camps were organised in villages for musicians: some knew how to tune the instruments (some of them tune not with the ear but on the basis of the colour of
the strings). Gifted musicians tried to improve. Children were made to listen and try for themselves in camps organised for them. The manufacturing of instruments requires a complex knowledge of appropriate substances different for each part (teak wood, rose wood, brass, copper, horn, etc.), measurements (with fingers) and location (particularly difficult in the case of flat and vertical bridges). We tried and made experiments: our experience has taught us for instance that for the kamaicha the best skin is that of a six-month old goat. Not a single instrument is exactly of the same size as another. All are unique. The manufacturing skills developed again. The transmission of performing skills to young boys since 1992 is now one of the most exciting experiments. Komalda remarked: Our concern is for musical quality. I boycotted the harmonium. The Portuguese among other many good and bad things such as the small pox brought the harmonium. All folk instruments are traditionally for accompaniment and not meant to play solo. We prompt those who use harmonium to shift to kamaicha and abandon harmonium. We have remade three instruments: sarangi, kamaicha and ravanhatta. We shall now take up other instruments.

As regards Rajasthani folk-tales, a few significant features are worth reminding. First, the variety of genres should be identified. For instance, to start with tales composed or narrated against payment, come the genealogies kept by the caste of Bhats. There are two types of Bhat, those who keep written records of family lineages and those who keep only an oral memory of them. The maintenance of genealogies is a necessary status symbol. Bhats visit once a year families who pay them to keep record of their descent, stay a couple of days, spend evening telling stories. The art requires a highly ornamental rhetoric. Those who keep oral genealogies are also acrobats, and work with poor people. Their stories start with Sun, Moon, and Water and follow a format close to Puranas. (See Komal Kothari’s article in this issue–Editor)

Creation: making and remaking of the world

This title offered a framework for two presentations that tried to illustrate the theory of performance and the process of documentation as two moments of creation with reference to a folk object with the help of photos and through a well-knit biographical narrative. Henry Glassie tried to draw the full life profile and follow a format close to Puranas. (To what extent can folk potters remain free from these norms, even if we assume that they never read them and that sculptors strictly observe these canons? As a result the representation of the ethnographer looking for an in-depth mystical understanding of a tremendously ambitious potter could hardly avoid the serious danger of actually standing as a marvellous piece of orientalist literature.

Reality tended to be turned into the pretext of an aesthetic constitution when the discourse on the beauty of the goddess was making one forget that the colours, the dresses, the jewels, the soft and white skin of the devi’s plump face might have as much to do with the appearances of film actresses in the dream of young female devotees than with the apparition of the devi to the artist in prayer. Similar doubts were raised about the measurements of the statue: to what extent were they not borrowed from canonical texts, resulting from a negotiation between people’s tastes and normative definitions? To what extent can folk potters remain free from these norms, even if we assume that they never read them and that sculptors strictly observe these canons? As a result the representation of the ethnographer looking for an in-depth mystical understanding of a tremendously ambitious potter could hardly avoid the serious danger of actually standing as a marvellous piece of orientalist literature.

The overall documentation of a murti in Bangladesh was meant to stand as a pattern of documentation of two creative processes. As a matter of fact, the presentation was essentially displaying a third creative process, that of the construction of a representation of both the processes by a third agent, the ethnographer, to a particular audience, that of the participants of the workshop. The third process takes place in a context totally alien to the space and time of the first two processes. In this respect, the exercise revealed at least two pitfalls that the process of documentation might find hard to avoid when its logic is one of exemplification of a general idea more than a scientific display structured by analytical concepts. The determinant general idea, that of the mystical dimension of the process of murti making, was stressed to the point that the correspondence of the ethnographer’s discursive object and the concrete actual murti became problematic.

For instance, to start with tales composed or narrated against payment, come the genealogies kept by the caste of Bhats. There are two types of Bhat, those who keep written records of family lineages and those who keep only an oral memory of them. The maintenance of genealogies is a necessary status symbol. Bhats visit once a year families who pay them to keep record of their descent, stay a couple of days, spend evening telling stories. The art requires a highly ornamental rhetoric. Those who keep oral genealogies are also acrobats, and work with poor people. Their stories start with Sun, Moon, and Water and follow a format close to Puranas. (See Komal Kothari’s article in this issue–Editor)

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This leads to the methodological question of the motives, which may, explicitly or implicitly, structure the discourse of the documenting ethnographer. The truth of the latter might not be the same as that of the performer who is documented. Everyone has his truth. Documentation is a process of representation, which may mirror the ethnographer’s truth more than the
performer’s intention or the user’s interest. The latter’s creative process displayed in the performance may differ from the ethnographer’s interpretative performance. The ethnographer’s logic ought to be clearly stated. The ethnographer no less than the performer avails of the material at his disposal.

Pravina Shukla presented as a process of creativity the choice of jewels by women in Benares jewellers’ shops to adorn their body. Jewels are matched with the dress, the shoes, the demeanour, the complexion and the image of one’s body. The choice reflects the wealth of the family, a sense of beauty and others’ liking. The result is a performance of sorts: the creation of a self-portrait resulting from a reflection on oneself and one’s appearance often with reference to film actresses whose photos are exhibited as models of beauty on the wall of the shop. In short an elaborate process and a number of moments of creation and gender collaboration with male vendors are prompted by a wish to look fit, a feeling of self-esteem, a sense of power and control over the situation, ultimately an ability to achieve something.

The purely descriptive approach raised a serious methodological question that of a total lack of an analytical framework to structure the observation and document the process of body adornment. A decision was to be made in this regard and need to be stated by the ethnographer. Documentation is more than mere superficial exhibition. The study of everyday life style cannot be a scientific attempt of construction of folk knowledge without deciding upon the concepts of references most appropriate to the object of study. These might have been of a triple nature in the given example: (1) the concepts adequate to a minute observation of practices such as those of taste, smell, beauty, sense of colours and physical forms, etc. with reference to various parameters such as age, position in the family, education, etc., (2) the norms- The determinant point is that the analysis cannot avoid considering the location of the performance in the given cultural, social and political environment: body adornment creates a female social form. In this respect it might prove difficult to construe the possibility of choice offered to high middle-class women as a creative potentiality. It might more appropriately be studied as an aggregate of distinctive class markers. All jewels are provided by the market and designed by some one else, none of them at the initiative of the women performer/customer who looks like a complacent puppet in the control of various external agencies; she selects on the basis of criteria alien to her own decision (the tastes, wishes and reactions of husband, in-laws, relatives and the distinctive aesthetics of her class). The range of initiative opened by the choice to be made is as much limited as conditioned by constraints accepted as the rules of the game. Categories of imitation and social reproduction would give a better account of the process under consideration.

**Creolization: creativity in cultural convergence**

When people of different languages come together, they renegotiate their culture. Lee Haring in the islands of the Indian Ocean studied this process of creativity by convergence: Madagascar, Mauritius, La Reunion, Seychelles and Comoros. The process called creolization can be defined as the mixing of two or more languages in specific situation of social and traditional contact, which often contains power differences. Mauritian creole grew out of the impact of French and slaves in an island populated now by Indians (two thirds), the descendants of former slaves (one fourth) with a Chinese minority of shopkeepers. All had to come to terms with each other, especially out of the necessity of labour relations. (See Lee Haring’s article in this issue-Editor)

**Why folklore?**

Though no debate took place on this central issue, several kinds of considerations were made. On the one hand, Hentry Glassie boldly assigned to the workshop and specifically to Asian scholars the task of rebuilding the discipline of folklore in a way suiting Asian communities, right at the beginning. On the other hand, Kapila Vatsyayan reminded everybody that the word carries in India a historical load. It was imported as an epistemological weapon fitting other systems of the colonisers’ knowledge, science, administration and governance. Folklore is in India is a marker of the colonial moment in the history of the sub-continent. Since then it has applied to phenomena categorised and constructed with reference to Western-European epistemological models of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The theoretical concepts of these models were simply transferred and grafted on an Indian social configuration which was itself structured by alien sociological and anthropological categories (for instance clear cut distinction of hunters, gatherers, tribes, village societies, etc.). Kapila Vatsyayan stressed the fact that these categories have permeated our discourses. The theoretical framework that we have received has inevitably chalked out our perceptions of traditions, our people and ourselves. The prescriptions of the language obviously bear upon our
understanding of the textual documents. What happened to folklore once it is Indianised and grafted to Indian realities? What have we retained? How have we worked it out as to conform to our own perceptions and systems of social relation and symbolic communication? We ought to be clear about the semantics of our discourse of folklore and the various theoretical perspectives that it carries since colonial rule.

In a small group discussion, Henry Glassie made supplementary clarifications. The first ever ethnographer, F. Boas, did not distinguish between disciplinary boundaries as was later done (social anthropology, history, sociology, human geography, art, linguistic, folklore, etc.). The present growing interest in folklore studies in Africa and the USA is due to the discredit attached to anthropology, which was once, a science meant by the colonialist rulers to serve their interests. Folklore is free from the stigma of scientific aggression. In the USA, folklore is seen as the heart of anthropology. As a matter of fact, the distinction of folklore and anthropology is false and of no serious or scientific relevance whatsoever. Folklore is only seen as representing a humanist approach. Folklore would be particularly interested in people’s own creations and focus on the texts themselves (myth, art, music, indigenous knowledge, etc.) of the individual members of a community. Folklore considers the individual as the sole human reality and possible source of creativity, and not as an example of a generality. Anthropology would on the contrary look for structures and regularities. Actually the difference is no more considered as the marker of different disciplinary boundaries. The distinction is only one of approach and accentuation.

In a general lecture, making another attempt to clarify questions, which were constantly raised, Henry Glassie explained how folklore couldn't be defined as such but with reference to tradition, communication, art and creativity. He defined tradition as the creation of the future out of the past, all decision being based on the past. All definition of folklore would therefore entail an idea of tradition and recognise that every tradition is impure. We cannot operate out of memory. For instance, in the USA, we observe a tremendous revival of Indian traditions, the anthropological texts of F. Boas being the basis of this revival. If we record what is dying out, this is because a reconstitution of the dead may later be made. Communication is a creation in the present out of available means and resources.

Art is sincerity and cannot operate out of the frame of traditions. Creativity occurs when a form (tale, song, etc.) is positioned in the world. There is no innovation unless something is relocated in the world, in a new relational context. Newness comes always as a reconsideration of the past. The power of a human being is measured by his potential to assert oneself. This defines his/her creativity. Documenting folklore means to document this creative potential. This creativity signals the emergence of the individual as the moment of a constant negotiation by some one with a collective to which he confusedly belongs, for asserting one’s identity. We are all members of several collectives (gender, class, age, caste, religion, etc.). An individual is the gathering point of a number of collective identities, a point endlessly open for negotiated relations. Documentation of the individual’s creativity bears on the act of fusion of identities at the moment where the power of the individual shapes a new integrative synthetic form. We bother to document the past because we ourselves belong to a tradition of science and knowledge to which we want to contribute through bearing witness to humanity.
**Documentation: ethics, ways and problems**

Documentation is an intrusion in people’s lives. It must be positive, that is to say, leave the community undisturbed. Folklorists may make wounds: they must commit themselves to make good. They cannot be neutral. They cannot be objective. Their intrusion is a political act. Documentation without a purpose is immoral. This differentiates an activist from a pure researcher. But a folk activist must have a profound knowledge of who are the people and identify with them, repairing the damage that his intrusion may cause. Archives are only residual and accidental objectives. The main aim is to act against prejudices. Ultimately information should be shaped so that it may do well and have a definitive beneficial impact on humankind. We cannot enter into people’s lives without proper intellectual understanding. We must be able to recapture the meanings of the process underlying the forms and find out the categories adequate to apprehend from within the significance of the forms. Meanings are there, but usually in a confused state of consciousness. We have to articulate them and help people themselves reaching a higher level of self-consciousness. This only may give legitimacy to our intrusion.

The research on folklore often ends up with a product: a stereotyped form is presented in isolation as if there had been no process of creation and no functional value. The uniqueness and universality of living forms are lost with their standardisation and globalised replication, their desacralisation and social disembodiment (Kapila Vatsyayan). When living forms walk out of their life context, they are presented, as pieces of art, cut off from their role and value in their socio-economic milieu. They are sliced, only a small portion of the form is selected to be brought out, ten minutes of dance are performed, sequences are decontextualised and the value of the form totally altered. Originally folk forms are dealing with essential environmental problems (water, land, air, community relations, fertility, gods). A fair documentation should try to comprehend and represent forms with the totality of their functions and values, in their wholeness, that is to say, with reference to all the structures of the society, which they belong in. Kapila Vatsyayan substantiated this perspective with a vivid example, that of the multiple contexts in which an earthen pot may be used. Similarly, lecturing about the transcription of verbal art, Lee Haring’s advice is that we should discover for ourselves and reveal to others its patterns and contents. Several patterns are bound to emerge: phonetic, linguistic, syntactic, rhythmic, melodic, rhetoric, semantic, acting, etc. The tale might be the same but notations will change with moods and meanings, meanings will change with audiences and circumstances. Appropriate means should be found to transcribe the creativity born from interaction with people during the narrative performance.

Forms cannot be closed categories. We look for authentic texts. But there can be no such thing as an authentic text. We oppose oral or folk to written and classical, and look for fixed and distinctive forms. We similarly oppose agricultural to non-agricultural communities, Adivasis to villagers, literate to illiterate, etc. But we have only variants, and folk and classical forms are in constant relations with one another. Authenticity is in the changes and transformations, which keep forms alive and relevant.

The critical review by Lee Haring of the history of ethno-poetic transcription of folktales in the American scholarship since E. Boas draws our attention towards significant lessons to be remembered. No idea of artistic achievement in the performance. No idea of the complexity of a unique event. This is the perspective that folklore kept in view. E. Sapir (1884-1939) translated narratives as prose. This erased the poetic value of oral narratives and distorted considerably the original material. Poetry is a repetition of words and it enforces the message. Cancelling poetic aspects (refrains, words with no literal meanings, non-sense syllables, etc.) kills
the strength of the narrative and misses what mirrors
the structural patterns of a song as a whole. M. Jacobs
(1902-1971), a linguist, considered folktale performance
like a drama and tried to reconstruct it as a play, not a
on the complexity and uniqueness of each oral
performance.

The concern is how not to distort the poetry, how to
keep old poetry alive and attractive to changing current
tastes. This requires a new translation. But how do we
fit an audience without distorting the original message?
For Dell Hymes narratives can be organised in verses,
scenes, distinct lines and series of acts. A narrative
follows patterns; it is not prose but measured verses.
Unlike the Greek and Latin meters, the rhythm is
essential by compressing time, accentuating words, and
devising rhymes. The paradigms and indicators of
patterns are to be found. Speech patterns are reproduced
as much as possible. Participants were referred to the
paper by Dell Hymes, which was circulated for further
discussion, Discovering Oral Performance and Measured
Verses in American Indian Narrative. Henry Glassie
suggested concrete procedures to (1) honouring one’s
responsibility to accuracy, (2) engaging the readers, and
(3) giving back to people a product in which they may
recognise themselves. A transparent documentation is
a combination of these three achievements. But when
narration is not information but speech, that is to say,
merger of prose and poetry, how to render
accentuations, silences, intonations, rhythms, words
musicality, etc. in prose? Speech and story are not prose.
A direct transcription from tape cannot render the
speech performance. Henry Glassie referred to his paper
on Irish folk history that was circulated to exemplify
ways and means of a faithful and effective ethno-poetic
transcription of oral narratives.

Let us here recall only one significant advice among
many: No quotation! People should talk directly in the
full text; their voice should not come as quotations
external to the central discourse of the ethnographer,
brought in by the latter to illustrate or evidence his
own views about others. The views expressed should
be those of the people, who should be the author of
the central discourse. It is the duty of the historians to
show how the documentary evidence upon which they
found their discourse legitimately introduced the
method of quotation. The same method is objectionable
in ethnographic documentation where living human
beings should be heard constructing their life-world
themselves, documenting themselves, as it were, by
means of a skillful ethnographer’s techniques and tools.
In short, the ethnographer’s function is not to
instrumentalise his informants and their speech with a
view to stage or vindicate a true representation of their
world-view; but to let his expertise be instrumentalised
by an attempt of self-presentation of the peoples’
themselves. Henry remarked that I bury scholars in the
endnotes of the book.

Henry Glassie tried to illustrate this with a presentation
of photographs. A tightly, aesthetically and emotionally
constructed narrative performance of the ethnographer
may convince an audience of the truth of the
ethnographer’s invented story and captions. But this
truth is ethnographer’s view. Photos can speak for
themselves to the extent their selection and sequence
enforces the meaning that we want them to convey
when we display them. Give a set of ten photos to
different people; each of them will assemble them in a
different order as to support and evidence different
narratives and messages, which may even clash with
one another. Photos create their own metaphors but to
suggest various scenarios in the minds of different
people. Similarly, the narrative of the ethnographer is
a fiction, a myth, and an invented scenario, which
represents mainly the truth of the ethnographer.

Two issues may be raised in this
regard. A subjective
one: the
transparency of
purpose, which
Henry Glassie
articulates in clear
terms: You can do
what you want provided
you inform what you are
going to do. An
objective one: a critical
awareness of the
discursive logic of the
narrative representation.
These issues may
substantiate a radical
questioning of the very
claim to be able to actually
represent people as
themselves. The
ethnographer’s wish of a
perfectly transparent
instrumentality seems likely
to be a directive utopia. It should be recognised as such
lest it becomes a mirage and a (needed?) self-
mystification of the anthropologist. Unless we
understand the impasses, pitfalls and confusion of a
representation model we would better discard that
utopia and define another directive model for
documenting popular cultural forms, their import and
relevance. I would suggest that this be accounted as
one of the theoretical results of the workshop.

Challenges

The exchanges did not result in commonly articulated
conclusions. Debates rather raised open-ended
questions. It would be only appropriate to conclude
with summarily stating a few challenges, which bear
upon the future and expected achievements of the
cultural practices undertaken by the participants of the
workshop. Three issues seems to me significant. I would like to identify them as follows: the need of a reflexive conceptual construction, the urge of a systematic critique of tradition, the exigency of an open conflict of value and power. Firstly, folklore is no more a concept at the centre of a distinct scientific constituency in human sciences. What appears under this term is nowadays studied under a variety of terms and with all sorts of analytical tools borrowed from any possible scientific horizon as per the needs of each investigation. Let us not any more ask, what is folklore? But concern ourselves with what do we do with what is labelled as folklore?

The variety of operational and analytical terms used during the workshop allows us to dispense with a word, which remains too much entangled in its history with powerful gestures. The term proves unable to provide reliable and useful guidance when we concern ourselves with giving a future to folk traditions in India. This means that we have to construct our own operational, analytical and theoretical concepts as a result of a reflexive analysis scrutinising our cultural practices in various fields of folk traditions. Secondly, when as cultural actors we ground our initiatives on folk traditions, we cannot fail to realise that our cultural practices cannot claim credibility and dispense with a critique of tradition. This demands, at the theoretical level, a collective work of critical interpretation and reflexively grounded reappropriation of the past. The motives of the cultural activists need to be transparent and their strategies justified. This demands, at the practical level of models and forms of development, calculated attempts of incorporation of basic values of the past in different modern civilisational set-ups. To say the least, none of the tasks, theoretical and practical, can be taken for granted. They face us rather as a serious challenge. A critical revalidation of tradition is a preliminary urgent duty.

Thirdly, this urgent duty of revalidation and reactivating traditions actually amounts to a tough two-fold conflict of value and power for two reasons. One: The advocacy of a valorisation of the creative potential of yesteryears traditions cannot forget that all traditions are bound to disappear with unavoidable civilisational transformations. Our ultimate aim cannot be the survival of the past but the assertion of values received through such traditions as humankind’s heritage. Two: The utopian belief in folklore as the fresh, popular source of salvation and counter-power emerging from a transcendent call to which courageous individuals respond, I am! does not sustain scrutiny. Obviously, traditions are no less effectively revalorised to serve the hegemonic intentions of a few in the name of Identity. We know for sure that documenting and reactivating traditional potentialities may possibly prove an asset for human enlightenment as well. But this cannot avoid sharply conflicting on the answers to such questions as: Which creativity do we decide to save from the past? Or why do we plan to look back as to dig out and save particular values from the past?