ORAL TRADITION

Transmissions and Transitions in Indian Oral Traditions

ORAL TRADITION

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Oral Tradition (http://journal.oraltradition.org) seeks to provide a comparative and interdisciplinary focus for studies in oral tradition and related fields by publishing research and scholarship on the creation, transmission, and interpretation of all forms of oral traditional expression. In addition to essays treating certifiably oral traditions, *OT* presents investigations of the relationships between oral and written traditions, as well as brief accounts of important fieldwork, and occasional transcriptions and translations of oral texts. In addition, issues will include the annual Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lecture on Oral Tradition. Submissions should follow the list-of-reference format (http://journal.oraltradition.org/files/misc/oral_tradition_formatting_guide.pdf) and may be sent via e-mail (journal@oraltradition.org); all quotations of primary materials must be made in the original language(s) with following English translations. If appropriate, please describe any supporting materials that could be used to illustrate the article, such as photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings. *Oral Tradition* publishes such materials online in an eCompanion designed to supplement the texts of articles. Most contributions will be reviewed by at least one specialist reader and one generalist reader before a final decision is reached.

Oral Tradition appears twice per year, in March and October. The current issue and all back issues from 1986 onward are available open-access and free-of-charge at http://journal.oraltradition.org.

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Transmissions and Transitions in Indian Oral Traditions

Kirin Narayan, *Special Editor*

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Editor's Column

Eighteen years ago, *Oral Tradition* 12.1 offered an octet of essays concerned with South Asian women's oral traditions. More recently, I broached the topic of another issue devoted to Indic cultures' verbal arts with several senior scholars; their enthusiasm encouraged me to canvass for a guest editor. Good fortune brought aboard Kirin Narayan, who graciously acceded to my plea for the necessary expertise to assemble this issue. Kirin has patiently and cheerfully steered the enterprise forward until now, when, "the boat has arrived on the other shore."

Kirin's work completing this volume implies acknowledging others whose contributions merit the gratitude of readers of *Oral Tradition*. A signal debt is owed the colleagues who share their expertise and sensibility making referrals and serving as readers. On their advice authors are prompted to elucidate the obscure and invited to consider otherwise unrecognized connections. The readers' judgments and sure guidance regarding submissions smooth the editor's pathway. Generalist and specialist readers are the journal's heroes.

Three of the essays presented here address the effects on ritual verbal traditions wrought by tectonic societal shifts: Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger explores innovations in the worship of the village goddess Gangamma in the village of Triupati, South India; Ann Grodzins Gold analyzes storytelling and women's ritual fasting in Rajasthan, North India; and, finally, Mahesh Sharma studies changes in *Nauala,* a ritual sacrifice offering made to Shiva by the formerly transhumant Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh, North India, and through it charts dislocations and relocations of identity. The remaining essays explore ramifications of written versions of traditional verbal arts: Peter Friedlander characterizes how multiple manuscript and print traditions of the songs of the poet saint Kabīr (ca. 1400-50) reveal contexts in which those songs flourished as oral traditions; Kirin Narayan offers a reflection and meditation how transcribing, and transcriptions of, women's songs in Kangra, North India; constitute cultural and personal transactions as well as talismans of longstanding relationships; and, finally, Leela Prasad presents a comparative inter- and extra-textual study of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Indic filial-love folktales keyed to the concept of "interspace." She concludes that though each strand of the tale type essays a different answer to questions of "self," both affirm that "self" resolves as a symbiotic sovereign.

A housekeeping detail needs mentioning. Though *Oral Tradition* 29.1 bears a March 2014 date it was published online only some six months later. In consultation with this university's serials librarian, in order to synchronize the journal with 2015, volume 29.2 bears a publication date of October 2015, making its arrival a few months premature. Finally, I encourage you to share your research about the world's traditional verbal arts with us. Submissions pass through a double-blind referee process and a decision is generally reported within a trimester of receipt. Published articles are seen by some 20,000 readers in 200 countries and territories.

John Zemke
Editor, *Oral Tradition*

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Transmissions and Transitions in Indian Oral Traditions: An Introduction

Kirin Narayan

To assemble a group is to invite conversation. The essays that come together in this special issue of *Oral Tradition* all arrive bearing insights cultivated through extended engagements with very different settings. Settling into this shared space, the essays speak resonantly to each other. They cluster around shared themes, circulate in paired dialogues, and also stand back to offer the others distinctive perspectives.

Many special issues that this journal has hosted first emerged from a conference where participants met face-to-face and heard each other's ideas. This set of contributors assembles together for the first time with the journal's publication. I imagine that my fellow authors will be just as intrigued as I have been to learn what others have written, and to contemplate these six essays as a sociable group. I use this introductory space to offer notes on conversations that I perceive; a discerning reader will no doubt pick up on others.

But first I need to establish the wider setting of the vast diversity of Indian oral traditions that stretches beyond these contributions, and indeed stretches beyond the boundaries of modern India into the Indian diaspora. The work of these six scholars cannot possibly convey the many regions, languages, religions, and genres of traditional performance that contribute to India's cultural vibrancy. The many planes of differentiation within India offer the dynamic for variation set into motion when oral traditions move between regions. Power differentials also shed light on the standardization that occurs when dominant groups dictate tastes. Such dominance is variously embodied in the authoritative clout of Brahmanical or *puranic* Hindu texts and practices, the prestige of middle class values, and the mesmerizing power and spread of technological mediation. Especially since the liberalization of the Indian economy in 1991 and the growth of a vast middle class, oral traditions have been revalued through a middle-class lens —some traditions embraced with nostalgia, others discarded as outmoded. The push towards greater literacy in formally recognized languages over sometimes unwritten dialects has also meant that non-literate forms of knowledge carried in regional dialects can be seen as quaint and irrelevant. That approximately half of the population of about 1.28 billion is age 26 or younger means that traditions associated with the vanished life worlds of elders can be less captivating than contemporary cultural forms centered around youth's concerns and carried by film, television, and the internet. The hard-won knowledge of lower caste specialists in ritual and oral tradition, as well as the informally communicated oral traditions of the poor, the nonliterate and

the old, can seem detached from the goals of getting ahead amid increasing urbanization, industrialization, and the spread of technology.

In terms of region, these essays mostly present oral traditions from sites in north India, in a big band stretching from Rajasthan towards Bengal--with the exception of Flueckiger's fieldwork location in Andhra Pradesh and Prasad's use of a story from Karnataka. The essays' cultural resonances also extend beyond India with Prasad's counterpoint between Shakespeare and Indian folktales and Friedlander's description of how Kabir song traditions have been recast in the West. With languages, the group tilts towards Hindi and North Indian languages—with Flueckiger, working in Telugu, offering the exception. At the same time, the medium of English used to convey the authors' thoughts about oral traditions and to discuss preexisting translations and scholarly literature is a reminder of the ways that the English language has since colonial times onwards become an aspect of Indian orality. In terms of religion, the contributions offer insights into the practices associated with Hinduism whether in localized variation or in pan-Indian standardization, though Friedlander's account of the diverse audiences for Kabir illustrates how Kabir also belongs to Muslim and Sikh communities and is even appropriated by mystical Christianity. And in terms of folklore genres, the essays offer examples of myths, legends, folktales, songs and proverb.

The essays at first glance fall into two groups: those that highlight oral traditions in the context of ritual life (Flueckiger, Gold, Sharma) and those that focus on the mutual constitution of oral traditions and written texts and the generative space between (Friedlander, Narayan, Prasad). Flueckiger, Gold, and Sharma speak of shifts in ritual practices and a standardization associated with pan-Indian versions shaped by with *puranic* traditions, mass media, and the ascent of middle-class values. Friedlander, Narayan, and Prasad describe moments in the making of texts—whether collections of songs attributed to Kabir, an anthropologist's sheaf of transcriptions, or a new edition of King Lear emerging in interplay with Indian folktales around the same filial-love theme. Yet the songs described by Friedlander and Narayan connect with ritual too, whether for collective worship or to celebrate life-cycle events. That Prasad's essay does not address ritual is an important reminder that though many performances of oral traditions are associated with group rituals in India, oral traditions may also be exchanged as an aspect of face-to-face interactions.

The essays can also be paired as conversational partners, in shifting formations with each juxtaposition bringing particular aspects of Indian oral traditions and their transformations into focus. For example, highlighting deities, these essays describe rituals and stories around goddesses (Flueckiger, Gold); vernacular sung mythologies of Shiva (Narayan, Sharma); and songs as well as stories that acknowledge a formless divinity as the maker of fates (Friedlander, Prasad). Looking towards identity, the essays reflect on radical transformation and dislocation from the very core of self-definition (Flueckiger, Sharma); the importance of kinship relations in sustaining selves (Gold, Prasad); and how the very act of transcribing oral traditions into written collections is tied to community making (Friedlander, Narayan).

Each essay also offers distinctive insights. Since all the assembled abstracts are just a click away, I will not attempt to summarize but rather try to identify the central contribution that I found most illuminating and that might be of value to scholars working outside India as a region. I line these up in alphabetical order. Focusing on the Goddess Gangamma, Flueckiger

shows how ritual and narrative mutually constitute each other, sometimes running parallel, sometimes intersecting, and how with ritual transformed and narrative corpus marginalized, the very identity of a Goddess shifts. Looking to collections of Kabir's songs, Friedlander points to how the diverse collections of oral traditions attributed to the same author carry clues to values of the communities for whom they were first written down. Drawing on over three decades of fieldwork, Gold pairs two ritual fasts that women undertake for their own auspicious married state and a husband's well-being to show how, amid changing hopes for marriage and trends towards standardization, this ritual action continues to create a reassuring sense of continuity. Presenting her work with Kangra women's songs, Narayan argues for the value of reflecting on the practice of transcription and the interactions generated around the material artifacts when moving oral tradition into written form. Prasad, a folklorist, brought her own interest in Indian folktales to conversations with her father, a Shakespeare specialist, as they worked through his new edition of King Lear, and from these exchanges Prasad offers the concept of an interspace that starts with difference, encompassing intertext and intersubjectivity. Focusing on the Nuala performances of the Gaddi shepherds—once a sacred space of trance enhanced by the performances of ritual specialists, now an occasion for drunken revelry with recorded music— Sharma shows how focusing on one ritual through time can provide a prism on folklore, social change, and dislocated selfhood.

I am honored to participate in this lively gathering and to learn so much from my colleagues. I welcome all readers who now join us from across the world, bringing to these essays their own interests and expertise.

The Australian National University

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"Who am I . . . what significance do I have?" Shifting Rituals, Receding Narratives, and Potential Change of the Goddess' Identity in Gangamma Traditions of South India

Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger

I first attended the village goddess Gangamma's *jatara* ("annual festival")[1] in the South Indian pilgrimage town of Tirupati in 1992, knowing little about the *jatara* except press reports that emphasized the custom of male participants taking female guising.[2] Over the intervening years I have attended the *jatara* four times, spent nine months living in Tirupati conducting research about Gangamma traditions, and have returned for numerous shorter visits. Since my first visit, I have observed numerous changes in both Gangamma narratives and rituals that have the potential to change who the goddess is. Gangamma's largest temple, Tatayyagunta, has been radically transformed—ritually, architecturally, and in the personnel serving the goddess. The local narrative repertoire surrounding the goddess seems to be receding from the public imagination, or even being silenced, and is unknown by many in the burgeoning *jatara* crowds (reported to be 500,000 in 2012) drawn from beyond the boundaries of Tirupati that Gangamma traditionally protects.[3]

These narrative and ritual changes raise questions about what each individually creates, their relationship, and what is lost or gained in the changes I have observed. What is created with the addition of Sanskritic rituals to temple service (traditionally offered to *puranic* deities[4] rather than *gramadevatas* ["village deities"] such as Gangamma), when middle-class aesthetics have

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[1] *Jatara* is the Telugu term used for the festivals of *gramadevatas* ("village goddesses") that are celebrated in public spaces; these are distinguished from the (often domestically oriented) festivals celebrated in honor of *puranic* deities, who are worshipped throughout India.

[2] In the contexts of Gangamma *jatara*, the clothing Gangamma wears in the myth and that worn by male ritual specialists and lay participants disguises, reveals, and transforms identities.

[3] Ethnographic data for this essay also appear in "Narratives of Excess and Access" (75-96) and "The Goddess Served and Lost: Tatayyagunta Mudaliars" (180-209) from *When the World Becomes Female: Guises of a South Indian Goddess* (2013). Those chapters are focused, however, primarily on the creation of gender possibilities created through Gangamma traditions. Initial English translations of voice-recorded Telugu and Tamil conversations and Telugu oral narrative performances were made together by the author and her fieldwork associate, Krishna Priya, during our fieldwork itself; the author made further refinements in English upon her return to the United States.

[4] The *puranas* (literally, "old stories") are a classification of narrative texts, composed in Sanskrit and a multitude of regional languages, from which most Hindu mythology is drawn. Many regional-language *puranas* are available only in oral performances and not written texts.

impacted architectural temple changes, and when Gangamma's narratives recede from the public imagination? How is the goddess' identity potentially changing with these narrative and ritual shifts? These questions bring a performative lens to older questions of the relationships between ritual and narrative, which often prioritize one over the other.[5] Ethnographic and performance analyses of Gangamma ritual and narrative traditions show the finely tuned ways in which they are both independent and codependent and the ways in which they both reflect and create—and have the potential to change—the identity of the goddess.

Gangamma *jatara* began as a local, very local, celebration that is typical of a wide range of *jataras* performed for what are known as the Seven Sister *gramadevatas* in Chitoor District of Andhra Pradesh. The purpose of these *jataras* is to invigorate the power of the goddess so that she will protect the *uru* ("local community") during the vulnerable time of the hot season—when she herself is said to expand—when the *uru* is threatened by particular hot season-associated illnesses and drought. The power of these *gramadevatas* must be *ugra* ("excessive" or "heated") in order to accomplish these ends. But then that *ugram*[6] must be cooled or satisfied in order that the goddess not become destructive beyond these ends; this has traditionally been accomplished through the offering of *bali* ("animal sacrifice"). Nevertheless, even in her cooled and more "stable" state, Gangamma is typically identified as too *ugra* to bear or serve at home by most devotees; her needs are simply excessive. However, as will be mentioned below, there are a few ritual families and individuals who can and *do* bear her and enter intimate relationships with her.

Some explanation of what it means for a goddess to be heated or cooled may be helpful here, before proceeding with discussions of Gangamma's shifting narratives and rituals.[7] Heat in Hindu discourse and ritual is associated with expansion, (sometimes excessive) presence of a deity, and both human and divine unsatisfied desire—that is, *ugram*. Coolness, in contrast, is associated with stability, satisfaction, desire fulfilled—*shantam*. Some Indian languages use the phrase literally "to cool" (Hindi: *thanda karna*) when referring to immersion in a body of water of a temporary clay festival image at the end of the end of festivals such as Durga Puja and Ganesha Chathurti, even if that deity or its clay form is not directly identified as *ugra*. Rituals that are offered to a heated, that is, *present*, goddess who is possessing a human body—performed to "send her on her way" (to "de-possess" the person)—may be called, in some contexts, "to cool" the goddess. Gangamma is consistently characterized as *ugra*, but her *ugram* must be ritually consolidated and built up during her *jatara* for her task at hand during the *jatara*. She expands into multiple forms outside her temple, forms that require more and more rituals to keep her satisfied; her hunger, too, expands to such a degree that vegetarian offerings are no longer sufficient to satiate her. Thus, one could characterize the rhythms of Gangamma *jatara* rituals as creating a fine balance of heating and cooling—intensifying and satisfying—the goddess.

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[5] For some of these debates, see Bell (1997), Segal (1999), Strenski (1996).

[6] *Ugra* is the adjectival form and *ugram* the nominal form of words that I have translated as excessive and excess, respectively.

[7] See McGilvray (1998) for resonances of heat and cold in Tamil culture—in food, medicine, and ritual.

Gangamma is considered to be the most powerful of the Seven Sisters who live in Tirupati and its environs. She also stands apart from her other sisters in that she has a fully developed biography and lives in permanent, enclosed temples rather than in open-air shrines. It is difficult to know whether the biography and residences have helped to create Gangamma's unique *shakti* ("power") or if they have developed more fully than that of her sisters because she *has* this *shakti*. But changes in her residences have impacted and been impacted by the wealth that Gangamma's largest temple has begun to generate and accrue primarily through the *jatara*, the new personnel brought in to serve the goddess, and the rituals performed at that temple. Further, because many *jatara* participants no longer know Gangamma's unique biography and it is being overwritten by stories of the *puranic* goddesses with which she is becoming increasingly associated, the rationale for Gangamma's unique rituals is also changing, or at least has the potential to do so. While neither narrative nor ritual is dependent on each other, they mutually reflect and create the unique "character" of Gangamma, and when one shifts, so, too, does the other. Just to be clear: I am not suggesting that Gangamma rituals and narratives were ever fixed or that they have not changed significantly before the 20 years over which I have been visiting Tirupati. In fact, there is evidence that there had been earlier changes, some of which are described below. Rather, this paper describes more recent changes to which I have been witness and some of their potential consequences.

Shifting Temple Personnel and Rituals

The most significant changes in Gangamma ritual traditions were instigated with the change in personnel of those serving the goddess in her Tatayyagunta temple and the widening caste and class identities of *jatara* attendees. Both shifts have resulted in changes in temple and *jatara* rituals, some of which, I argue, have affected the nature of the goddess and/or who she is becoming.

When I first visited Tirupati in 1992, Gangamma in her Tatayyagunta temple was being served by a Mudaliar-caste Tamil woman.[8] Because many *gramadevatas* are traditionally served by women, her presence was not particularly noteworthy. But, when we returned for the *jatara* the next year, this female caretaker's absence in the temple was palpable. The Mudaliar family that had been serving Gangamma at this site since 1914 (according to their own family oral histories) had been replaced by Brahman male *pujaris* (ritual specialists serving the deity in a temple). The Mudaliar patriarch thought that the Andhra Pradesh Department of Temple

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[8] While Tirupati is part of the contemporary state of Andhra Pradesh, it lies on the boundaries of Tamil and Telugu cultures, and many of the women I worked with during my Gangamma fieldwork were Tamil speakers.

Endowments and Tataiahgunta Devasthanam (temple administrative committee)[9] had ejected the family because they were not Brahman; his wife thought she, as primary caretaker of the goddess, had been ejected because she was a woman. The longer story and personal losses of this ejection can be found in my book *When the World Becomes Female* (2013), but what is most significant here are the ritual changes that this shift in personnel instigated.[10]

The Mudaliar family had already initiated some of the architectural and ritual changes that were accelerated after their ejection from the temple. For example, the grandfather who had immigrated to Tirupati from Chennai (then Madras) and had first met the goddess as a stone head laying on the ground under a tree had, with the goddess' permission, built a roof over her head and an inner sanctum to protect her from the elements and had made other perceived improvements to the site.[11] The family decided to stay in Tirupati in order to serve the goddess after she, seemingly miraculously, cured a baby daughter. Female family members became the daily caretakers of Gangamma in what began as a small shrine, but senior male members were the primary decision makers when it came to innovations such as introducing new rituals and festivals. For example, in the 1980s they initiated celebration of the annual pan-Indian festival of Navaratri (Nine Nights of the Goddess, which celebrates the different forms of the goddess) at the temple as a way to honor Gangamma as one of these goddesses and raise her status. Somewhere along the way, they had begun to perform *abhishekam* (a ritual anointing with a series of liquids) to Gangamma, a ritual not traditionally performed for *gramadevatas*.[12] In 1927, the grandfather who first met Gangamma, himself an artisan, had created a silver *kavacam* ("metal covering;" literally, "armor") for the stone image of Gangamma, giving hands and feet to her head-only form.[13] *Kavacams*, too, are not traditionally associated with *gramadevatas*, but rather with *puranic* deities. And so we see that the change of personnel of those serving the

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[9] In its English publications and signs, the Devasthanam transliterates its name as "Tataiahgunta Devasthanam." However, in references to the temple itself, I have followed traditional academic conventions for transliterating Telugu; thus, "Tatayyagunta." The Endowments Department assumes administration of all temples that generate a certain income, presumably to prevent graft and accrual of excessive wealth to any given family. According to the Mudaliar patriarch, Endowments had taken over the Tatayyagunta temple in 1941, but at that time gave permission for the Mudaliar family to continue its service at the temple. The Endowments Department assumes administration of all temples that generate a certain income, presumably to prevent graft and accrual of excessive wealth to any given family. According to the Mudaliar patriarch, Endowments had taken over the Tatayyagunta temple in 1941, but at that time gave permission for the Mudaliar family to continue its service at the temple.

[10] I often think about the serendipitous timing of my first visit to Gangamma's temple and return the next year that enabled me to witness the transition between the Mudaliar family and Brahman priests as primary caretakers/ritual specialists at the temple. Had I first arrived at the temple in 1993, when the Brahman priests were already installed, I may not have heard about the eviction, because I wouldn't have known to ask. This gives an ethnographer pause and a heavy dose of humility.

[11] Many reports circulate about other *gramadevatas* who have not permitted enclosures to be built around them, causing the roofs built over their heads to cave in.

[12] Those who serve *gramadevatas* regularly pour water over their stone images before applying turmeric and vermilion powder to the wet surface, but this is not called *abhishekam*, which implies pouring of more liquids than simply water. Traditionally, *abhishekam* liquids used in *puranic* temples include honey, milk, yogurt, ghee, turmeric water, and thin sandalwood paste.

[13] When they were evicted from the temple, despite the protestations of the Devasthanam, the Mudaliar family took with them this silver *kavacam*.

goddess back in 1914—from lower, non-landholding castes traditionally associated with *gramadevata* service to Mudaliars who are not so associated—also changed some of her rituals; and, like the Brahmans who followed the Mudaliar family, the latter, too, had little to do directly with the *jatara* rituals performed for the goddess, such as *bali*.

When Brahman priests became Gangamma's caretakers, however, the rate and depth of change was of a different degree altogether, and these changes coincided with changes in the class of Gangamma's worshippers. The Devasthanam introduced new daily, weekly, and annual rituals traditionally associated with *puranic* deities—not *gramadevatas*—such as recitation of Sanskrit *slokas* ("verses"), *homam* ("periodic fire rituals"), and rituals such as *laksha kumkum archana,* the recitation of the 1000 names of the goddess while sprinkling her with *kumkum* ("vermilion powder"). The Brahman priests serving at Tatayyagunta temple have been trained at a Veda *pathshala* ("school") supported by the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam that administers the great pilgrimage temple uphill and numerous educational institutions in Tirupati. They are employees of the Endowments Department and told me that they are regularly rotated between temples, sometimes serving at a particular temple for only one festival, or months, and even years at a time. The rituals they perform can be performed for any *puranic* deity; none are specific to Gangamma. When I began interacting with these priests regularly in 1999-2000, many did not know Gangamma's stories or the details of her *jatara;* gradually, however, some priests who continued to serve at the temple for several years at a time have come to know her as distinct from the *puranic* goddesses with which they were initially more familiar, but the Sanskritic rituals they offered did not change. While I did not witness this, one way they may have come to know the stories and characteristics of this unique goddess may have been through conversations with the Pambalas, who are professional drummers and traditional Gangamma narrative performers. The Pambalas have been hired by the Devasthanam as temple employees, whose role is to drum at certain ritually heightened moments throughout the day. They have also come to know her through ritual service, which includes application of turmeric powder as a kind of mask on the fanged face of the goddess—a ritual associated with *gramadevatas* that the Devasthanam *has* retained.[14]

In the mid-1990s only a few years after the Devasthanam began control of daily administration of the Tatayyagunta temple, the courtyard outside the inner sanctum was enclosed to create a *mandapam* ("pavilion") on the rooftop of which cement-cast and brightly painted images of *puranic* deities were built. After some years a maze of metal guard rails was installed inside the *mandapam* for crowd control (particularly during the *jatara*), which forced women who had performed their own individual rituals of lighting lemon *diyas* ("oil lamps") in that space to move out to the outer courtyard, at some distance from the goddess.[15] In 1999 the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam formed a renovation committee to plan and coordinate subsequent changes to the temple. Walls were built around the exterior courtyard, a newly built

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[14] When I returned to find male Brahman priests serving Gangammain in 1993, several female temple groundskeepers complained that these men did not know how to apply the turmeric mask and vermilion lip powder and cheek dots—making the goddess look like a Bollywood movie star.

[15] This ritual is performed to remove *naga dosham* (blemish caused by the position of astrological bodies) that causes problems such as infertility and late marriage.

traditional tall *gopuram* ("temple gate") graced one entrance, and a *vimanam* ("tower") was built over the inner sanctum. From the exterior there is nothing except the name board that indicates that this temple houses a *gramadevata*.

Eventually the external courtyard was paved over by stone slabs that make some rituals such as *angapradakshina* (circumambulation by rolling the body over and over) during the hot season almost unbearable on the heat-absorbing stone surface, and that are unable to absorb the blood of animal sacrifices still performed in that space. The Executive Officer (EO) of the Devasthanam was particularly proud of the ticket system, with accompanying fees, that had been established for individual *archanas* (offerings of coconut, flowers, and fruit) and *harati* ("flame offerings"), and a *hundi* ("cash collection box") now sits directly in front of the goddess, between her and her lion *vahana* ("animal mount")—itself an innovation—associated with the *puranic* goddess Durga.[16] A *makara toranuam* ("brass arch") has been installed behind Gangamma, typical of other *puranic*-deity temples. *Purana pandits* or *panditas* (professional reciters of the *puranas*) have been hired by the Endowments Department, who, like the *pujaris*, cycle between different temples, and their recitations are broadcast beyond the temple courtyard over loudspeakers.

Joanne Waghorne (2004) has written about many of these kinds of architectural and ritual changes in two *gramadevata* temples in Chennai. She identifies the processes as "gentrification." About one of the temples, she writes (155):

> . . . [Mundakakkanni Amman] MA has, to date, retained its non-Brahman priests, but the village-style shrine has been architecturally and ritually "over-written" by a middle-class aesthetics . . . the continuous renovations move toward propriety . . . I read this process as visual gentrification—everything is maintained but put into a comfortable . . . and tidy environment.

Waghorne focuses on the middle-class patrons who have supported and influenced these changes. This growing middle-class has rather dramatically affected the dominant sense of aesthetics in India today, and more and more Gangamma devotees and *jatara* participants who are from lower castes, many from artisan castes, and lower class backgrounds have entered this "new" or aspiring middle class. Their children are finishing high school and even college; and many children whose parents do not speak English are only attending English-medium schools. Most homes in the neighborhood of Tatayyagunta, where many Gangamma devotees and traditional *jatara* participants live, are electrified, although many do not yet have running water. When I asked the temple flower sellers about some of the aesthetic changes that have been made at the temple, they commented that if they make some of these changes such as adding fans and "beautifying" her premises in their own homes, the goddess, too, deserved them. But the change that initiated the flood of architectural and ritual changes—the eviction of the Mudaliar family and introduction of Brahman priests—was one that personally affected the flower sellers and several women who had assisted the Mudaliar matriarch in her service of the goddess—an eviction that they deeply mourned.

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[16] *Gramadevatas* do not traditionally have *vahanas*.

In *When the World Becomes Female* I focus on the personal losses experienced by those evicted/displaced in the process of "gentrification" of Tatayyagunta temple (2013:180-209). Here I want to shift the focus to emphasize the potential for such changes of personnel, architecture, and ritual to transform the identity of the goddess herself.

The patriarch of the Mudaliar family that was evicted from Tatayyagunta complained about some of the architectural innovations/additions to the temple made by the Devasthanam, saying that a "Shudra" temple, which is served by low-caste devotees, such as *gramadevatas*, should not have *gopurams* and *vimanams* that signal a *puranic* deity inside. He did not explain what he meant by "shouldn't" except to imply that these features were not in accordance with correct propriety. I propose, however, that these kinds of aesthetic changes—not any single one, but when they begin to accrue—have the potential to change the perception and even the identity of the deity housed inside. With *puranic* recitation being blared over loudspeakers, images of *puranic* deities gracing the rooftop of the *mandapam*, new festivals celebrated that Gangamma shares with *puranic* goddesses, and Sanskrit *slokas* being recited to her, Gangamma is increasingly being identified both *with* and *as puranic* goddesses.

The goddess herself would seem to agree with this assessment of the transformative potential of the material and ritual changes going on around her. One of Gangamma's primary forms is the *trishul* ("trident"), and on village boundaries this is often her only form. Before the Devasthanam began its renovations, a line of three- to four-foot high, thin iron tridents faced the inner sanctum that houses Gangamma's dark stone form, a head without a body. By order of the Devasthanam, these were removed and placed behind a *neem* tree next to the temple, where they receive little service; they were replaced by a large, much lower, shiny white metal, rather bulky trident that is so non-traditional that it is treated by worshippers as decoration rather than the goddess herself. The Devasthanam EO told me this change had been made for the "safety of the worshippers," but the goddess revealed her anger at her (this) displacement to one of her elderly female devotees, known as Pujaramma.

Pujaramma is one of a select number of ritual families and individuals who, she says, was born with the strength to bear this *ugra* goddess on a daily basis. She has brought Gangamma into her domestic shrine and reports that the goddess regularly communicates with her through dreams, visions, and possession. Through Gangamma's presence in or on her body, Pujaramma has the reputation to be able heal both humans and run-down temples. Others in her community acknowledge Pujaramma's intimate relationship to Gangamma and come to her in order to learn of the goddess' desires and hear her speak. One ritual specialist, who is the chief organizer of Gangamma's *jatara* in a village on the outskirts of Tirupati, told me that he had come to Pujaramma to learn how to invite the goddess to come to him (that is, to possess him), and so I, too, have given Pujaramma's voice authority in the following episode.

Along with the replacement of the iron *trishuls* with a non-traditional white metal one, another ritual innovation raised the stakes in the existential questions of Gangamma's identity. Formerly, at the beginning of every *jatara*, a *neem* tree was cut down, its central trunk smoothed into a pole that was brought to the temple courtyard. Covered with turmeric and vermilion paste and wrapped in saris, the wooden pole was transformed into the goddess and became her first form to receive *jatara* rituals. Shortly after it took over temple administration in 1992, the Devasthanam decided that rather than cutting down a new tree every year—a waste of time and

effort, they told me—it would build a permanent cement pillar as a substitute. Pujaramma, the above-mentioned devotee, reported that the first year in which the cement pillar was to be used, one week before the *jatara* was to begin, Gangamma came, knocked on her door, and told her to follow her to the temple. At the temple, she showed Pujaramma the pillar and said (Flueckiger 2013:208-09):

> Since the beginning of time, they've been using a neem tree. Now it's like an *office job* [using the English phrase]. They brought this [cement pillar] without asking me and placed it here. If they bring this stone, *then what significance do I and my shulams* [iron tridents] *have*? [my emphasis]. . . . If I do anything, they only say "Gangamma has no eyes, no ears; she did like this; she did like that." They revile me.

Gangamma proceeded to ask Pujaramma to gather up all the *shulams* that had been taken outside under the *neem* tree and bring them home to offer *puja* ("ritual offerings") to them. Pujaramma objected that she had no permanent residence in which to house the *shulams*. The goddess admitted this was true—she had not yet given her a home—and she threw the *shulams* away and disappeared.[17] In another reference to this same episode, Pujaramma reported that the goddess subsequently, "pouted and went away from the temple," cursing those who would so easily replace her to be struck with illness.

This dream/vision/visitation is a commentary from within Gangamma's traditional community—or, if you give the goddess agency, then by Gangamma herself—on the limits of change in ritual before the goddess herself is changed. When she asks, "what significance do I and my *shulams* have," she is ultimately asking, "who am I?" If her forms (*shulams* and pillar) can so easily be substituted, then she wonders if her very nature and identity (in her words, her significance) can also be substituted. Ritual not only *reflects* the identity of the goddess, but also helps to *create* it. While the goddess is not so explicit, I suggest that the material and ritual substitutions have the potential to transform Gangamma from a *gramadevata* to a *puranic* goddess, who can more easily be managed/sustained, whose power is not *ugra* or potentially threatening, and thus who may ultimately no longer require the ritual of *bali* to be satisfied.

But so far goat and chicken *bali* is still practiced in the temple courtyard (not in the *mandapam* directly in front of Gangamma's image) both during the year—often as the result of a vow taken by a particular worshipper or his or her family—and during the *jatara*. As the *ugram* of the goddess expands during the *jatara,* her hunger and desires also increase, and several worshippers told me that only *bali*, rather than vegetarian offerings, will satisfy the expanding goddess. Until 1950, when the Andhra Pradesh Animals and Birds Sacrifices Act was passed, buffalo *bali* was offered to Gangamma during her *jatara*, and it still is in some surrounding villages. But in Tirupati buffalo are no longer sacrificed in the temple environs; some *jatara* celebrants, however, insisted that Gangamma still required buffalo *bali*, and the practice still continued somewhere outside the temple but was hidden. During the last days of the *jatara* the Tatayyagunta temple courtyard is filled with individual families offering chicken *bali* and a few goats. This *bali* is unconnected to the rituals inside the temple; the Brahman *pujaris* are aware of

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[17] As mentioned earlier, some *shulams*, however, still remain under the *neem* tree next to the temple.

what is taking place outside, but the Devasthanam has not yet put an end to *bali* by *jatara* participants. It should be noted that the "new" participants do not offer *bali*, nor is it clear how they understand it. The practice of *bali* not only reflects the *ugra* nature of the goddess, but also creates it, particularly in the public imagination; this ritual is a key way through which Gangamma is distinguished from other *puranic* goddesses.

One way that the goddess can be known for who she is—an *ugra gramadevata*—even if rituals around her are changing, is through her unique narratives. Many middle-class worshippers of Gangamma and "new" participants in her *jatara*, however, do not know these narratives. The next section analyzes what these narratives create, what is lost when they fade from the public imagination, and their relationships to shifting rituals offered to Gangamma.

Gangamma's Oral Narratives

Gangamma narratives circulate in oral performance and reported speech, with no written texts except (quite recently) those of anthropologists who have transcribed and/or translated these narratives in their own academic texts (Reddy 1995; Flueckiger 2013).[18] Thus, there has always been rather wide variation, particularly differences in gendered perspectives of storytellers, between variants of individual stories that make up the Gangamma narrative repertoire. The shifts analyzed below are not primarily in content, then, but rather in what happens when the narratives begin to lose their performative frequency and circulation and how this loss may affect both ritual and the goddess herself. I focus below on the two primary narratives performed during Gangamma *jatara*, one embodied and one verbally performed.

Gangamma and the Palegadu

Gangamma's oral biography places her birth and human-form life in *this very place*— Tirupati and the close-by village of Avilala—and in relatively recent historic time. I heard numerous versions of the story, whose tellings were significantly gendered, although they followed a basic narrative grammar that displayed and created the power of this very local goddess.

The following is a summary of the story as related to me on several occasions by a male ritual specialist from Avilala who organizes the *jatara* in that village and arranges for the goddess to move from Avilala to Tirupati for the *jatara* there:

> There were two Reddy-caste men residing in Avilala, the older of whom had no children. One morning when he went out to his cowshed to milk the cows, he saw a little baby laying there, heard her crying. He raised this baby as his own daughter, not knowing she was the goddess.
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> One day, after she had reached puberty, she stood on the rooftop of the Reddy home drying her hair. A local chieftain [*palegadu*], known for taking advantage of the beautiful young

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[18] Peta Srinivasalu Reddy's small book on Gangamma *jatara* (1995), published in Telugu, has become so authoritative that when I asked some ritual specialists about the *jatara*, they referred me to the book. A small pamphlet published one year for distribution at the *jatara* about Gangamma draws directly from Reddy's book.

girls in his kingdom, saw her and desired her. He asked the Reddy to give his daughter to her in marriage. Fearful of what a negative response would create, he assented. But he was worried and returned home and lay on his bed, sick with worry. His daughter asked him what was wrong and he replied, "I've given my word to the Palegadu to give you in marriage. Because of circumstances [of social hierarchy], I couldn't save myself. I had to give my word." His daughter told him not to worry, "I'm here to save you; start the wedding preparations."

As the couple was rounding the wedding fire, the Palegadu turned around to look at his bride and saw her stretching "from earth to sky." He jumped off the wedding platform, saying "She's not the bride; let me go." The bride chased after him; she "chased and chased and chased him." He reached Karnala Street in Tirupati, with the bride chasing after him, and hid in the home of the Kaikala family. She thought to herself, "If I'm in this form [*rupam*], I won't catch him," so she took a series of guises [*veshams*] and went door to door searching him.

After taking the guises of an ascetic, snake charmer, herder, ruffian, merchant, and sweeper, she took the guise of a prince [*dora*]. The Palegadu heard people praising this *dora* and came out of hiding to see who was competing with him. When Gangamma saw him, she beheaded the Palegadu and then showed her true form [*vishvarupam*] as the goddess. In full *ugram* [her fullest power], she wandered the streets holding his bloody head.

During Gangamma's *jatara*, the latter part of this biography—the series of guises Gangamma takes in pursuit of the Palegadu—is not verbally performed but ritually enacted and embodied by men from the Kaikala-caste ritual family who take the *veshams* that Gangamma herself took in her pursuit of the Palegadu (a different *vesham* each day of the week-long *jatara*).[19] Here there is a double guising: males who become the goddess, who herself is guised. After the beheading of the Palegadu (local chieftain) is enacted early morning with only a small audience of men accompanying Gangamma's *dora* ("princely") *vesham*, the goddess shows who she truly is, and the *vesham*-ed Kaikala men who are the goddess thereafter appear in a series of three singly guised forms: men who become, through guising, Gangamma. Both doubly and singly guised *veshams* perambulate through the streets of "old" Tirupati, stopping at particular households to be greeted and worshipped by female householders at the doorways of their homes.

The Gangamma-Palegadu narrative gives rationale to the ritual sequence of Kaikala *veshams*, but more importantly the narrative embodiment is one means through which Gangamma is brought out of her dark temple or shrine forms into the *uru*, making her intimately accessible, as she comes to her worshippers rather than the other way around. Female householders pour water over the feet of human-bodied goddess and anoint them with *pasupu-kumkum* ("vermilion" and "turmeric"); they sometimes bring cool drinks to Gangamma or bring their babies to her for blessings, particularly the more powerful, later *veshams*.

Many of these same female householders seemed to know only the most basic outlines of the Gangamma-Palegadu story; when I asked them to tell me the story, they often referred me to men of the Kaikala family and/or the male Pambala professional musicians who accompany the

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[19] *Vesham* literally means "clothing" or "dress," and it can also mean "disguise" or "guise." I prefer to translate *vesham* as "guise" to reflect the contexts of the Gangamma *jatara* discussed above.

Kaikala *veshams* in their perambulations. Women, it appeared, were more fluent in the intricacies of the *jatara* rituals that they perform both at home and at Gangamma's temples—primarily cooking for the goddess—than they were with her narratives, and they usually answered questions about the *jatara* with a description of the rituals in which they participated, not narrative. But men from the same families usually answered the same questions about the *jatara* narratively, with the Gangamma-Palegadu story.

The reasons for this gendered difference could be varied, although I am not totally satisfied with any of them: lay men perform very few temple rituals and do not perform domestic *jatara* rituals, thus the men focus on the narrative. Women, on the other hand, are responsible for and busy with an array of rituals that both expand and satisfy the goddess, who then protect their families' health; a different question in a different context *outside* of the *jatara* may (and did) elicit more narratives.[20] Or, one could assume that traditional female participants in the *jatara* *know* Gangamma's story without being able (or having the inclination) to report or perform it. Or, as I have suggested (2013:75-96), because the two primary stories are about male transformation (or the lack thereof), men may engage with the narratives more directly in order to be in the presence of the goddess: both of Gangamma's primary narratives are debates about gender relations. Gangamma kills the Palegadu because of his over-aggressive male behavior. In one version, Gangamma brings him back to life and he begs for mercy, but she doubts his ability to change and puts him to death again; thus, he is not capable of transformation. Ritually, many lay men take female guising (saris, breasts, braids, ornaments) on the last two days of the *jatara* —a ritual that suggests men, at least during the *jatara*, must become women to enter the presence of the goddess. Female guising transforms men not into women but into men who embody a different kind of masculinity. Women, on the other hand, need no such transformation; they explicitly identify with the goddess already as sharing her quality of *shakti*.

But whether or not traditional *jatara* participants perform or report Gangamma's narratives with their specific details, they are a part of the narrative imagination of these families and castes.[21] Many members of the growing "new" audiences for the *jatara*, however, who are either not from Tirupati (coming from neighboring districts and states) or from local families who are not traditional celebrants have little knowledge of the Gangamma-Palegadu narrative at all. This was apparent when, in 2005, each of the Kaikala-Gangamma *veshams* was painted and individually identified/labeled in a series on the courtyard wall of Tatayyagunta Gangamma temple, cues traditional celebrants would not need. These new audiences know the goddess only as one of many, not for her (narrative and ritual) uniqueness.

The performance and efficacy of *jatara* rituals to banish illness and of Gangamma's blessings when she comes to domestic doorways do not seem to depend on narrative fluency of *jatara* participants. After all, Gangamma's sisters in nearby villages also have the power to banish illness and share many of the same rituals, such as *bali*, but do not have such elaborate narratives. But when the rituals, specifically *bali*, that are explicitly performed to satisfy *ugram*

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[20] See Flueckiger (2013:97-112).

[21] See Dell Hymes' distinction between narrative performance and reporting (1975) and Laurie Sears and Joyce Flueckiger's distinction between performance traditions and oral traditions that circulate outside of performances *per se* (1991).

change or are not practiced by the new *jatara* participants, without the narratives of Gangamma's *ugra* self, the concept of *ugram* may be lost altogether.

Gangamma as Adi Para Shakti (Primordial Goddess)

In contrast to the Gangamma-Palegadu narrative that is enacted and embodied but not verbally performed, that of Adi Para Shakti is sung by professional performers during the *jatara* itself. The performers are Pambala drummers and singers and its primary audience is the goddess herself. Its performance context and timing suggest that the goddess, as much or more than her worshippers, may need to hear her own stories, and that narratives help to create her identity and power. The performance takes place on the second-to-last day of the *jatara*, as the two *sunnapukundalu* (literally, "limepot") *veshams* are being created in the courtyard of one of Gangamma's temples—the only *veshams* that are created in the temple rather than the Kaikala home. Lime-covered clay pots are painstakingly attached to strands of hair atop the heads of two Kaikala men, and then are covered with strands of jasmine flowers.[22]

The timing of the Adi Para Shakti narrative performance in the week-long *vesham* sequence is significant. Gangamma has already taken a series of guises to chase and find the Palegadu, and has beheaded him; she has subsequently dropped the disguising *veshams* she took to chase the Palegadu and has appeared as her *ugra* self in the form of the Matangi. This powerful self, however, cannot be sustained by Gangamma's human worshippers on a daily basis; she is simply too *ugra*. And so, the next *vesham* (the penultimate one of the *jatara*) is a divided one, the *sunnapukundalus*. The preparation of these *veshams* is lengthy and the temple courtyard fills with women waiting for their completion and presumably the particularly accessible blessing of the now less-*ugra* goddess. The women, however, chat among themselves and seem to pay little attention to the story being sung by the Pambala performers; the narrative performance is explicitly directed towards the goddess as she is being created in an *ugra*-reduced split form.

The story is not of the goddess as Gangamma, but as the primordial goddess Adi Para Shakti, who ultimately divides herself among all the many goddesses of the world, including the Seven Sisters and Gangamma and the consort goddesses of the three male gods whom Adi Para Shakti has created, as narrated below. Although the Pambala singers told me that their performances can last up to 20 hours when they sing it outside of the *jatara* context, in the temple courtyard as the *sunnapukundalus veshams* are being prepared the performance lasts under two hours—the amount of time required to prepare these *veshams*.

The Pambalas begin by describing the goddess Adi Para Shakti all alone in the world. When she reaches puberty, she experiences sexual desire and decides to create a male to fulfill this desire. She first creates the god Brahma, but the first word out of his mouth is "Amma" ("mother"), precluding him as a sexual partner. Next Adi Para Shakti creates Vishnu, and he similarly addresses her as Amma. Finally, she creates Shiva, and the first word he says is

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[22] I never received full explanations for the significance of the limepots; lime is both a heating and cooling substance that would fit the general ritual grammar of the *jatara* that is a calibration of heating and cooling the goddess—eliciting and satisfying her *ugram*.

"*eme*," the Telugu pronoun husbands use to address their wives; he is thus eligible as a sexual partner.

Shiva, however, tries to negotiate with the goddess to give him some of her superior power; only if she gives him her third eye and trident will he satisfy her desire. One Pambala singer explicitly identified the power Shiva sought to be the "power to destroy;" a young male narrator who served Gangamma at a village shrine suggested that without the power of the eye and trident, Shiva would not be able to bear the goddess. A lay female narrator explained that the goddess was willing to give up some of her power in order that the relationship with Shiva might be one of *equals*—just like an oxcart needs two equal wheels to proceed smoothly, she said, so too, a satisfying relationship requires two equal partners.[23] Shiva, however, reneges on his end of the deal—taking the goddess' third eye and trident, but refusing to have sex with her. The infuriated goddess, in one version of the story, sprinkles the three gods with sacred water from the Ganges, ash, and turmeric, transforming them into women. After some time, however, she says to herself, "I myself created them as men. Now, if I change them into women, it's not *dharmic* [according to the correct social order]," and she recited sacred *mantras* and changed them back into men. The temple performance I recorded ended at this point.

Another performance, sung outside of the *jatara* context by a young man serving the goddess at one of her village shrines, begins with the goddess giving Shiva her third eye. And with that eye Shiva gazed at the goddess, and she burst into flames and menstrual blood began to flow out of her body. She asked Shiva what would become of her now, and he answered that no male would be able to fulfill her desire in this form. Rather, she should divide into the many different forms of the goddess and receive *bali* during her annual *jatara*; only in this way would her desire be satisfied.

A *purana pandita* (female *puranic* reciter) emphasizes the destructive potential of an unsatisfied *ugra* goddess in her performance of Adi Para Shakti:

> Not knowing what to do with [the desire of] her youth, that young *gramadevata*—knowing that she had lost the possibility of full satisfaction . . . with all these emotions, went to the ocean, and she made all the seven oceans into one. As soon as they became one, she started wringing the oceans . . . The seven seas became a storm of destruction. There was absolute destruction. Even with that destruction, her emotions did not recede. Her desire was not fulfilled. Her emotions stirred the water. Seeing those seven seas like this, everyone was afraid, thinking that the whole world would be destroyed, the whole world would collapse in that great destruction.
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> The three gods wonder what they can do to make the goddess peaceful; they offer her turmeric water, flowers, and fruits and ask her what they should do. She offers the solution of her annual *jatara*, during which she should be offered *bali*.

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[23] I met this female narrator and one of her friends on a return visit several years after my year-long stay in Tirupati. This serendipitous meeting was the first time I had heard lay women narrate Gangamma's stories in full performance (that is, taking responsibility to an audience for the performance). Their narrations raised questions about my earlier conclusions concerning women's narrative fluency, presented above with several caveats (Flueckiger 2013:97-112).

The Adi Para Shakti narrative performed to the goddess during the preparation of her form as *sunnapukundalus* reminds the now-dividing Gangamma of who she is: not "simply" a local village goddess, ultimate reality that sustains the universe, the primordial goddess. But she is also reminded that ultimate reality is too *ugra* to humans—and even to god (Shiva) himself—who cannot sustain this full power on a daily basis, in intimate relationship. And so, narratively she divides into more sustainable forms—the *gramadevatas*—at the same time that ritually (in the *jatara*), she is splitting into the two *sunnapukundalus*.

A side note: neither the Gangamma-Palegadu or Adi Para Shakti narratives result in marriage, nor are there any images of a male consort in Gangamma temples or shrines. Rather, she is iconographically accompanied by a brother, Potu Raju, who stands facing her images. Interestingly, he does not appear in either of the two main Tirupati Gangamma narratives.[24] Although she has no narrative or iconographic husband, Gangamma wears a *tali* (gold pendant) that is typically identified with marriage. Because Gangamma was wearing a *tali*, the first year I visited Tirupati I asked the Tatayyagunta temple flower sellers who her husband was.[25] Their immediate response was that she had no husband. Several years later, however, when I asked the same question, without hesitation the same women answered "Shiva." Within these few years Gangamma had "acquired" a husband in at least some segment of the public imagination—although he is not narratively or iconographically present. I interpret this "new" presence of a husband to the shifting nature of the goddess herself, as she is becoming more and more identified with *puranic* goddesses—not all of whom are married, however, such as Durga and Kali.

The Interdependence of Narrative and Ritual in Creating Gangamma's Identity

The Gangamma-Palegadu and Adi Para Shakti stories narrate the creativity and destructive potential of the goddess' power. She is left with full *ugram* at the end of the Palegadu narrative, having beheaded the sexually aggressive protagonist—for which there is no narrative resolution—and, in the Adi Para Shakti story, when her desire is not satisfied by the three gods. This *ugram,* which is ritually elicited during the *jatara*, is required in order that the goddess be able to create the world and subsequently to destroy illness and protect the *uru*; but, it is also potentially dangerous if not satisfied. According to the postscript of the Adi Para Shakti story itself, only the *jatara* ritual of *bali* will satisfy this *ugram*.

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[24] See Flueckiger (2013:10-13) for further discussion of Potu Raju.

[25] Only well into my year-long fieldwork in 1999-2000 did I learn of the tradition of *matammas*, women who have been offered to the goddess as young girls and who exchange *talis* with her upon reaching puberty. Thereafter, the women do not traditionally marry males, but may have sexual relationships with them and bear children. This tradition raised for me new questions about what the *tali* signifies, if not marriage. See Flueckiger (2013:210-41) for a discussion of *matammas* and *talis*; my argument there is that *talis* signify and help to create women's auspiciousness. Traditionally, women have needed to be married to fully enact that auspiciousness (in particular, to have children), but *matammas* were exempt from this requirement since they had entered a *tali*-relationship with the goddess.

While the narratives depend ultimately on ritual resolution, the rituals do not depend on the narratives in the same way. So, what is lost when more and more non-locals and local non-traditionally associated families and castes attend the *jatara*? And what is lost when, with increased education, many younger people in families that traditionally participate in the *jatara* no longer know Gangamma's orally transmitted stories—when the narratives are lost or are receding from the public imagination? Without narratives that describe and, in part, create her unique *ugram*, Gangamma becomes just another powerful goddess. Without *ugram* there is no fear of its potential consequences if not appropriately satisfied through ritual, and ritual changes are more acceptable.

It is significant that Gangamma's two unique narratives are receding at the same time that the rituals in the Tatayyagunta temple are brahmanizing and ritually identifying Gangamma with *puranic* goddesses. At the same time, more and more of Gangamma's worshippers are entering the "new" middle class. Just as narrative and ritual are interrelated in complex ways, so too is the relationship between the castes and classes of Gangamma's worshippers and her own identity, rituals, and narratives.

Gangamma has traditionally been served by members of artisan (lower) castes, whose women have traditionally been freer to move in public spheres and relatively more independent than women of land-owning (upper) castes. Gangamma narratives and rituals such as the exchange of *talis* between the goddess and *matammas* (see note 25 *supra*) contribute to these possibilities of female independence and agency. Gangamma does not need male protection from the Palegadu; she assures her father she can take care of herself, and proceeds to chase down and behead the aggressive chieftain. Adi Para Shakti is clearly superior to the male gods she has created, but willingly gives up some of her power to enter a relationship with one of them. Ultimately she does not marry and is divided among the *gramadevatas* who are known for their *ugram*, independence, and proclivity to wander, thus often refusing roofs over, and walls around, their shrines.

As members and families of the artisan and other non-land-owning castes who have traditionally served Gangamma become more educated and are raising their class status, they are beginning to appropriate upper-caste and middle-class aesthetics, values, and gender roles. I have suggested above that these shifts coincide with and are in complex relationships with changes in Gangamma temple aesthetics and rituals. The potential exists for the goddess to lose the unique characteristics (many of which we know primarily narratively) that identified her with the artisan and herder castes, even as these castes are losing *their* unique characteristics.

Gangamma, witnessing ritual changes implemented without her permission, as if she didn't exist, asked, "Who am I . . . what significance do I have?" My analyses of ritual and narrative changes over the last 20 years indicate the answer is (or soon may be): "You are not (fully) yourself anymore."

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Kabīr: Oral to Manuscript Transitions

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Introduction: Oral and Textual Traditions and Kabīr

The continuous interplay between the oral and written traditions have been identified as a vital aspect of the transmission of the literatures of South Asia (Blackburn and Ramanujan 1986). Contemporary scholarship has drawn attention to the complex interplay between the oral and textual traditions of Kabīr songs. Henry (1995), Lorenzen (1996), and Singh (2002) demonstrated that contemporary oral traditions of Kabīr songs were completely different from those found in manuscript traditions. Linda Hess (2009:51-53) has also studied oral traditions of Kabīr songs in Madhya Pradesh and found a complex interplay between different contemporary oral traditions of Kabīr songs and printed texts of the songs. Indian oral and manuscript traditions show great resilience in their transmission of compositions, in terms of preserving the overall forms of texts through successive recopyings over time, but also normally contain characteristic variations that typify their method of transmission. Compositions transmitted within handwritten textual traditions show characteristic scribal copying errors, such as mistaking one letter for another or missing out or repeating lines. However, compositions transmitted in oral traditions show quite distinct forms of singer's variations, such as inversion of half lines within a verse and the recasting of the dialect of a verse into a new form. The existence of these variations in how oral and manuscript textual traditions transmit their contents raises the possibility of investigating the relationship between oral and textual transmission of texts within traditions of Kabīr's songs.

In this essay, rather than focusing directly on what contemporary oral traditions can tell us about Kabīr songs I will explore how different manuscript traditions from the last five centuries can inform our understandings of how oral traditions of the songs changed over time.

Encountering Kabīr in Varanasi in the 1980s

I first became aware of Kabīr while learning Hindi in the early 1980s in Varanasi. I often heard people quoting sayings of Kabīr when talking about religious matters. I would hear Kabīr songs performed in different contexts ranging from religious gatherings, radio performances, and by wandering singers in the street. You could tell they were by Kabīr as North Indian songs often contain a phrase telling you the author of the song, a kind of signature, such as "Kabīr says" in

their last line, like English sayings such as "as one door closes another opens." Kabīr's couplets, short rhymed verses of two lines, called (*dohā*) or witness (*sākhī*) form, part of a body of traditional sayings for Hindi speakers.

For instance, one day I was sitting with a group of people who included a school teacher, a shop keeper, and a retired businessman in a shelter on the shore of the Ganges. We were having a lively discussion about politics. To bring home the point that it would be a mistake to neglect even minor issues, somebody said: "Don't ever just ignore even a tiny blade of grass, Kabīr says, if it gets into your eye, then the pain is great."

Another time I was at a poetry function in a school hall, where people were reciting verses ranging from sections of medieval classics such as the sixteenth-century Hindi life of Rām, called the *Rāmcāritmānas*, through to verses of contemporary political satire. When called upon to speak I recited this Kabīr verse which was on the need to look for the divine within oneself: "Everyone knows there are drops in the ocean, but Kabīr says, few are they who realise that there are oceans in every drop." The instant I started reciting I could sense that the entire audience, civil servants, business people, merchants, students, and teachers all knew the verse and they responded to it as an affirmation of something they all shared in common.

One of the most popular Kabīr songs I heard being performed in numerous contexts was about how the body is a cloth which has been woven finely and needs to be carefully looked after if its true value is to be realized. This song is typical of a longer genre of Kabīr songs called *pada* or *sabda*, which are sung to a range of melodies (*rāg*) set to various metres and typically contain three to six stanzas with an initial verse called the *ṭek*, which becomes the refrain and a final signature verse called the *bhaṇitā*.

This song also shows how the story of Kabīr's life as a poor Muslim weaver of Varanasi, forms part of Kabīr's oral tradition as this verse is made more poignant in performance by the notion that a weaver has taken a part of their daily life practice and used a weaving allegory to create a song about the role of the divine in life. There is a fine version on YouTube by Pandit Jasraj in *rāg ahir bhairav* (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0GD5bVBH83o):

> Finely, finely has the cloak been woven
> What is the warp? What is the weft?
>> With what thread is the cloak woven?
> The iṅglā and piṅgalā veins are the warp and weft,
>> the suṣumṇā vein is the thread to weave the cloak.
> The eight lotuses are the spinning wheel,
>> for the five elements and three qualities of the cloak.
> Ten months it took to stitch,
>> the shuttlecock flying back and forth and weaving the cloak.
> That cloak is worn by gods, men and sages,
>> all have stained that cloak as they wore it.
> The servant Kabīr has worn it with care,
>> and returns the cloak just as it was given.

Songs like this also point to the ways in which Kabīr songs are not expressions of what are now seen as typical of Islamic teachings but rather a distinctive kind of spiritual tradition in which aspects of everyday experience, like weaving, are mixed with a kind of mystical symbolism. In the Hindi for the song the threads on which the cloth are woven are related to three subtle veins in the body, the *iṛā, piṅgalā*, and the suṣumnā, which are part of a kind of yogic symbolism for how the life breath circulates around *cakra,* subtle centres visualized as lying at locations such as the heart within the body.

Seeking to understand Kabīr more I found that it was very easy to buy pamphlet publications of Kabīr songs in the bazaar and I bought various small collections of couplets. It was clear that a major focus of Kabīr songs was a criticism of external religion combined with the idea of the importance of searching for the divine within our selves. One couplet in particular criticized belief in external pilgrimage and used pilgrimage as a metaphor for spiritual enquiry within the body. It was also notable for the way it included an allusion to the yogic symbolism of the tenth door of the body, which is imagined as a subtle opening of the body at the crown of the head (Siṁh and Siṁh 2004:262):

> The mind is Mathura, the heart is Dwaraka, the body is Varanasi,
> The tenth door is the temple, its there you must recognise the light.

When I then asked people to explain such symbolism to me they sent me to visit the Kabīr Chaurā monastery in Varanasi, which was a center for a community of Kabīr's followers to learn more about Kabīr and his teachings. There are some people who are so deeply moved by Kabīr's teachings that they become renunciate followers of Kabīr who form a kind of monastic order and dwell together at different monasteries (*math*) around Northern India. In the 1980s when I first visited Kabīr Chaurā, a notable part of daily life was recitation of a sacred text attributed to Kabīr called the *Bījak*. This word has multiple meanings that derive ultimately from the word *bīj*, which means seed; however, the extended meanings include list, catalog, account book, or even perhaps, I was told, "treasure map." When I stayed at the monastery in the summer of 1984, all the novice monks, and some full monks, would sit together in an open colonnaded hall for about three hours each morning and rapidly independently repeat the *Bījak* in a kind of monotone chant over and over again. The novices had to recite while reading the text of the *Bījak* but the full monks had all learned the complete text by heart. I was told that the novices would spend several years memorizing the entire text of the *Bījak*, and only after they knew it by heart were they regarded as being ready to become full monks in this tradition of the followers of Kabīr. There was also a quite different form of recitation which took place each evening in which sections of the *Bījak* were read out from a text called the Sandhya Paṭh.

Quite who becomes a monastic follower of Kabīr is not easy to determine, as you are not meant to ask an ascetic his former caste or occupation. Indeed, if you ask any Hindi speaker about this issue they may tell you this famous couplet (Kabīr 2001:120):

> Don't ask a sadhu his caste, when judging the value of a sword
> Kabīr says, why ask about the scabbard?

Despite this it was possible to get an impression that while a very small number indeed were from higher caste trader and Brahman communities, the majority of the followers were from lower caste communities and former untouchable or tribal communities.

To my surprise, when I asked the monks at the Kabīr Chaurā monastery about many of the songs and sayings I had heard being sung and spoken about in everyday life they told me that the majority of them were not genuine. Academic enquiry points to a disjuncture between contemporary oral traditions of Kabīr songs and earlier versions of his songs recorded in manuscripts. Many scholars have now investigated the issue of how it might be possible to infer what the original songs of Kabīr were like (Vaudeville 1993). It is now clear that oral traditions of Kabīr songs have been continuously changing for centuries and new songs have been constantly added to the corpus of Kabir songs expressing Kabīr's ideas in new ways for new generations.

What perhaps has received less attention in searching for the original Kabīr songs is what the different manuscript, print, and—more recently—recorded traditions of Kabīr's oral traditions tell us about the audiences who have listened to Kabīr songs from the sixteenth century to today. What I would like to examine now is how these sources help us catch glimpses of the audiences for Kabīr songs over the last five centuries in Northern India.

Early Sikh Audiences for Kabīr (ca. 1570 onwards)

> *Pandit! What madness has seized you?*
> *Wretch! You'll drown along with your family if you don't chant Ram.*
> What do you gain by studying the Vedas and Puranas?
> You're no more than an ass burdened by a load of sandalwood.
> You sacrifice life and say it's for religion, but that's not the practice of religion.
> You sit and call yourself a saint while you say that others are butchers.
> If you don't understand the darkness in your own mind, then how can you teach others?
> For the sake of money you peddle your wisdom and waste your life away.
> As Narad and Vyasa said, when Shukdev went to ask them.
> Kabīr says! Brother, if you don't meditate on Ram you'll drown without liberation.
>
>   (Callewaert 2000:262)

This song comes from perhaps one of the earliest glimpses of the audiences for Kabīr songs as they were being sung and recorded in the Punjab in the second half of the sixteenth century. This song is found in one of a number of texts called the *Mohan di pothī*. These were manuscripts written from around the 1570s onwards by the followers of Guru Nānak (1469-1539), the founder of the Sikh tradition, which formed the basis for the Sikh sacred scripture, the *Guru Granth Sāhib*, which was written down in 1603-04. The Sikhs are a major monotheistic Indian religious tradition that follows the teachings established by Guru Nānak, which emphasized the role of the guru in devotion to the divine. After his death the Sikhs were led by a succession of gurus until Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the tenth Sikh guru, declared in 1699 that henceforth the Sikhs' guru would be the sacred text of the Sikhs, the *Guru Granth*

Sāhib. From these collections it can be seen that Kabīr songs were being sung alongside Guru Nānak's own songs, along with those of other saints who were described as the devotees and whose teachings were seen as compatible with Guru Nānak's teachings and, in a sense, as their precursors of his teachings. Kabīr's role was clearly very significant in these collections as he is situated in them as the foremost of the precursors of Nānak.

From this we get a glimpse of how as Nānak and followers traveled through the Punjab and elsewhere they brought with them a corpus of oral traditions which were shared among the early Sikh community. As is the case today these communities were made of people from all walks of society, from court officials to farmers, from urban elites to rural laborers. Among the devotees there was a diverse range of backgrounds; some from various varieties of Muslim backgrounds, like Kabīr from Varanasi and Shaikh Farīd from the Punjab; some were untouchables from the leather working community, such as Ravidās; and in some recensions of the early Sikh scriptures, such as the Kartarpur recension of the *Guru Granth Sāhib* (Mann 2001:115-17), some were also Brahminical Hindus like Rāmānand and Rajputs like Mīrābāī, the famous woman devotee of Kṛṣṇa from Rajasthan.

Two things are remarkable about this: first, these songs were being recorded in written forms as little perhaps as one or two generations after the death of Kabīr; and second, the way they show that oral traditions of his verses had spread rapidly across Northern India and into many sections of society.

Kṛṣṇa Devotee Audiences for Kabīr (ca. 1582 onwards)

> She alone knows the pain
> 		who is struck by the sharp arrow of Ram's love.
> She searches mind and body
> 		but she never finds the wound.
> She can't find where
> 		to apply a healing balm.
> All women appear alike to her,
> 		who knows who is Rām's beloved?
> Kabīr says, she alone is fated
> 		who knows who will become the bride.
> 				(Callewaert 2000:242)

This song is found in a variety of manuscripts and also in the earliest manuscript from Rajasthan, which contains songs attributed to Kabīr. In this manuscript, written in 1582 from Fatehpur in Rajasthan, we can catch a glimpse of early audiences for oral traditions of Kabīr songs. The manuscript contains mostly songs about Kṛṣṇa composed by Surdās, the most famous Hindi language composer of verses about Kṛṣṇa. However, as in the Sikh collections, in a kind of supporting role here again, Kabīr songs and the songs of other devotees also appear. It can also be argued that within the Fatehpur manuscript there are three different sections, and while the first and last are more clearly focused on devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the middle section, in which Kabīr's

verses appear along with those of Raidās, Nāmdev, and other Sants, tends more towards devotion to the divine without shape or form (Bahura 1982).

That Kabīr's oral tradition was popular across such different audiences is striking. Furthermore, for the Sikh tradition the divine is beyond description, but within audiences for devotional traditions focused on Kṛṣṇa there was a strong emphasis on the description of the divine as manifested in the life of Kṛṣṇa. However, among both audiences Kabīr's oral tradition was so popular that it appeared alongside such divergent viewpoints and was somehow seen as supporting both teachings. In part this was, perhaps, because each tradition knew only Kabīr songs compatible with, or adapted to, teachings. Thus by 1582 we can see that two very distinct types of audiences were listening to songs from oral traditions of Kabīr, songs which shared some core common elements of Kabīr's teachings but also localized his teachings for very different audiences.

Dādūpanthī and Rajasthanī Audiences for Kabīr (ca. 1614 onwards)

O Ram! If you care about your servant, can you resolve one debate for me?
Is Brahma greater, or that from which he arose?
    Are the Vedas greater, or that which produced them?
Is the mind greater, or that on which it is fixed?
    Is Ram greater, or the knowing of Ram?
Kabīr stands in despair,
    is the sacred site greater, or the servant of Hari?

(Callewaert 2000:147)

This song is found in a variety of manuscript traditions from Rajasthan, the *Guru Granth Sāhib* from the Punjab, and in a version in the *Bījak*. The earliest version of it from Rajasthan found so far is in a manuscript from 1614, which is the earliest manuscript yet discovered of a tradition of collections of songs of five teachers including Kabīr and Dādū Dāyal (1544-1603). In the sixteenth century a number of devotional movements arose in Rajasthan and as part of their activities began to create manuscripts of songs associated with their founders. One such movement was founded by Dādū Dāyal, whose teachings emphasized devotion to the divine without shape or form. Such movements became known as Sant paths as the term *Sant* was used to mean a devotee of the divine without attributes. Like the Sikh tradition in the Punjab and among audiences focused on devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the Rajasthani Sant movements shared in a common rejection of Brahminical rituals and the role of priests as intermediaries between the devotee and the divine. They also shared alike in reflecting the popularity of oral traditions of Kabīr songs and respect for his teachings. The main sacred text of the followers of Dādū Dāyal was called the "five teachings" (*pañca-vāṇī*) and contained songs attributed to Dādū Dāyal, Kabīr, Raidās, the Maharashtrian Sant Nāmdev, and a Rajasthani Sant called Hardās. The songs of each author were presented in a sequence of *rāgs* with the most common *rāgs* typically coming first and then the less common *rāgs*.

Other Rajasthani Sant movements such as the Nirañjanī movement also compiled their own sacred texts and a second popular form of text was called a *sarvaṅgī*, an "all chapters" in which instead of songs being grouped by author and *rāg*, songs were grouped by theme or genre, and then in each theme songs by all teachers on that theme were listed.

However, unlike the Guru Granth Sāhib of the Sikhs, the text of the *pañca-vāṇī* and the *sarvaṅgī* manuscripts were never precisely fixed and from the earliest known copy of 1614 onwards every manuscript had slightly different contents. These seem to reflect a continuous interplay between oral and written traditions in which new songs are constantly making the transition from the oral tradition into manuscript tradition and previously popular songs come and go from the written traditions. The written versions of the songs also show clearly how in the oral tradition the songs were constantly being re-arranged with stanzas, lines, and half lines, in verses changing in order and stanzas appearing and disappearing. In all the traditions the manuscripts reveal a constantly shifting transition of songs from oral traditions into textual traditions and variations in the forms of the songs which reveal snapshots of oral traditions in different times and places.

While these constantly shifting and transforming texts may be frustrating if you are searching for what might be the "original" version of a verse, they vividly depict how the oral tradition was alive at different times and places. One possible feature is that in general individual manuscript traditions kept getting longer. While certainly some modern collections of *bhajans* ("devotional songs") are shorter than the traditions they are drawn from, the length of manuscripts in genres such as the five teachings' format gradually grew over time (Callewaert and Friedlander 1992:44). It is possible that this might have reflected changes in scribal attitudes to how comprehensive the manuscripts should be in recording what was current in the oral traditions. However, it is also possible that the continuous inclusion of new songs in the manuscripts reflected the way that new songs were entering the oral traditions and then making the transition to the manuscript traditions.

One mechanism by which such new songs were appearing was clearly that songs were re-attributed to new authors. In the early twentieth century the discovery of manuscripts of Buddhist Siddha songs from the tenth or twelfth century CE revealed that some famous verses associated with Kabīr had close antecedents that dated back centuries before his time (Dasgupta 1976:416-19). These same verses, or rather perhaps it would be better to say these collections of images and themes, are also in some cases found attributed to other Sants, such as Nāmdev, Nānak, and Shaikh Farīd, and seem to reflect the way that the signature verse of a particular teacher could become attached to a verse that was regarded as reflective of that teacher's teachings.

Another feature in the different versions of verses that appears to reflect changing views over time is a gradual shift away from a more strident critical tone and the adoption of a warmer approach to devotion in all its forms and a softening of criticism of Brahminic tradition.

From the oral traditions of Kabīr songs recorded in the manuscripts, we see how they were part of the transmission of ideas about spirituality. In this process sometimes older songs could shift in attribution from one teacher to another and entirely new songs could enter a song repertoire attributed to the teachings of well known teachers. The key issue was that the

teachings in songs were seen by different audiences within their own devotional beliefs as representative of their understandings of a particular teacher's teachings.

Eastern Audiences for Kabīr

> Bees fly up, cranes come to roost,
> > night goes by, days pass away.
> Wretched creatures stand and tremble,
> > not knowing where their beloved is.
> An unbaked pot doesn't hold water,
> > when the swan flies the body withers.
> The crow flies from outspread arms,
> > Kabīr says, this is the end of this story.
> > > (Śāstrī 1982:265)

This song is found in Rajasthani and Sikh sources and also as *sabda* verse 106 from the *Bījak.* This points to a mystery facing those trying to understand Kabīr and the oral traditions of his songs, which is what happened in the East, in Varanasi, in Uttar Pradesh, and in Bihar after the death of Kabīr. The followers of Kabīr, who call themselves Kabīr Panthī, "followers of the way of Kabīr," maintain that an oral tradition that lay behind the *Bījak* was maintained from Kabīr's time till the first recorded manuscripts were written down. However, despite the best efforts of scholars and saints in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, no manuscripts of the *Bījak* older than the eighteenth century have ever been found.

The Eastern oral traditions of Kabīr songs found in the *Bījak* are clearly very different from those found in the Punjab and Rajasthan. The songs show none of the accommodation with devotion to Kṛṣṇa found in the Western, that is Punjabi and Rajasthani, traditions and instead contain much more strident criticism of Brahminical ritual and an emphatic rejection of temple worship and the doctrine of *avatār*s ("salvific incarnations") of Viṣṇu.

The way that the *Bījak* is organized tells us something important about its audiences. The songs are, like the Western Indian collections, arranged into sections. However, in addition to sections devoted to *pad* lyrics, called *sabda* and the couplets, called *sākhī*, there are also several other genres. These include a longer form of lyric called a *ramainī*, a kind of narrative form in which longer verses are created by combining a meter called *caupāī* and *dohā*. Verses in the *ramainī* format are also found in the other Kabīr traditions but it is only in the *Bījak* tradition that it is identified as a distinct genre of Kabīr verses. In addition, a whole range of verse forms are specifically based on different sorts of seasonal folk songs. One way to explain the differences between Western and Eastern Indian traditions is to consider possible differences between Western and Eastern audiences. Is it possible that Western Indian traditions reflect more how Kabīr songs were sung at the monasteries of Sant movements in Rajasthan while the Eastern traditions might reflect how the songs were sung among rural followers of Kabīr gathered together in informal community locations? Among such audiences gathered in villages, under trees in fields and in the compounds of the lower caste communities, perhaps Kabīr songs were

sung alongside the seasonal folk songs that formed part of everyday life away from urban centres.

By around the end of the nineteenth-century collections of non-canonical Kabīr songs called *śabdāvalī* ("song collections") began to appear alongside the *Bījak* from various sources, including the Kabīr Chaurā branch of the Kabīr Panth. These were based in part on manuscripts and in part perhaps directly on oral traditions. The earliest of these *śabdāvalī* from the Kabīr Chaurā branch of the Kabīr Panth was that published by Biśundās (n.d.), a prominent later nineteenth-century ascetic of the Kabīrcaurā tradition of the Kabīr Panth, in perhaps the late nineteenth or early twentieth century (Tivārī 1989:50).

One feature of these *śabdāvalī* collections is that they are the earliest known sources in many cases for the songs that now form the majority of the current oral traditions of Kabīr songs for those outside the Kabīr Panth. In fact in a counterintuitive way they seem to be the origin of many of the popular songs of Kabīr in the oral tradition. This I would suggest is a continuation of the pattern found earlier in manuscript traditions where there is a constant interweaving between oral and written traditions of Kabīr songs.

Dharmdāsī Kabīr Panthī Audiences for Kabīr

There were major changes in Eastern Kabīr Panthī traditions during the eighteenth century that have had enormous impacts on oral traditions of Kabīr songs, introducing whole new genres of songs, and many entirely new songs reflecting completely new ideas previously unconnected to Kabīr. These changes occurred when a teacher called Dharmdās came into prominence in the Kabīr Panth. Exactly when this happened is unclear, but there are arguments that it might have been in the early eighteenth century. Dharmdās was from an affluent merchant community and a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. However, while on a pilgrimage to Mathura he had visions of Kabīr in which Kabīr revealed new teachings to Dharmdās. According to the followers of Dharmdās he was a contemporary of Kabīr, but scholars such as Paraśurām Caturvedi have argued that the accounts of how he saw Kabīr in visions suggest that he lived some time after Kabīr (Friedlander 2011). It is also apparent in verses attributed to Dharmdās that his language seems to be much more modern than that found in early Kabīr songs from the West or in the *Bījak*, and is closer to Hindi from the mid-eighteenth century, as found in the works of Sants such as Caraṇdās (1703-1782).

In order to understand the impact of Dharmdās on oral traditions of Kabīr songs it is also essential to consider some aspects of his teachings. These included several major innovations. Notably that Kabīr was an incarnation of God and the world was constantly locked into a battle between a false god of death called Kāl Nirañjaṇ and the ultimate god, the true being, (*satyapuruṣ*), of whom Kabīr was an *avatār*. In a study of how the teachings of the Kabīr Panth changed over time, Dvivedī (1965:225) argued that perhaps these changes were aspects of internal struggles between different sections of the Kabīr Panth. Dharmdās also taught that Kabīr had revealed that 42 generations of his descendants would form a hereditary lineage of leaders of the Kabīr Panth. His teachings also came with a new form of oral tradition in that they were revealed as dialogues between Kabīr and Dharmdās in a genre of composition called *sāgar*

("ocean") composed as a narrative in the *ramainī* verse form. Accompanying the new teachings was also a whole new form of ritual practices called *caukā*, which David Lorenzen has argued appear to be parallel to forms of Satyanārāyaṇ rituals current among low caste communities in Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar (Friedlander 2010).

From the latter part of the eighteenth century onwards there seem to have been two distinct oral traditions of Kabīr songs circulating in Northern India. One was associated with the followers of the Kabīr Chaurā tradition and the second associated with the new traditions linked to Dharmdās. However, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a continuous interaction between the two oral traditions of Kabīr songs and how to understand Kabīr and his teachings.

Two prominent reformers in the Dharmdās tradition from around the beginning of the twentieth century were also highly influential in transforming the literatures of the Kabīr Panth. One of these was an ascetic from near Gorakhpur in Northern Uttar Pradesh called Yugalānanda Bihārī (ca. 1873-1963) who devoted his life to collecting manuscripts of Kabīr songs. He was also influenced by his elder contemporary Śambhudās, who was an influential Kabīr Panthī Abbot from Indore (Śambhudās 1948). Together they organized a great Kabīr Panthī gathering in 1903, at which several hundred thousand followers of Kabīr met to try to determine, on the basis of manuscripts and oral traditions, what were the authentic teachings of Kabīr (Bihārī 2004:31, 256).

Śambhudās wrote a number of books including a collection of sung Kabīr verses called the *Śrī Kabīr Bhajanamālā*. The original publication date of this collection of Kabīr *bhajan*s ("devotional songs") is unclear, but, from the style of Hindi in the introduction, I would date it as being from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Like other followers of the Dharmdasī branch of the Kabīr Panth, Śambhudās believed that for a song to be a genuine Kabīr song it should be in the form of a dialogue between Kabīr and Dharmdās. His collection of songs starts out as a series of verses addressed by Dharmdās to Kabīr and Kabīr's responses to Dharmdās. He also included prose links in the text between the *bhajans*, like the kind of phrases a *bhajan* singer might say between songs explaining how the songs relate to each other. This shows how such *bhajans* as this were being employed by Kabīr Panthī *bhajan* singers as part of a living tradition of performing Kabīr songs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The collection starts with invocatory verses (*maṅgalācaraṇ*), the second of which is in the form of a *bhajan* sung by Dharmdās. This is then followed by the first prose link which situates the *bhajans* in the context of the life story of Dharmdās and how he sought for a vision of his master, Kabīr (Śambhudās 1948:3):

> After the master gave a vision of himself in Mathura to Dharmdās then when for many days the
> True Guru did not grant his vision to Dharmdās he prayed to him in this manner.

This is followed by five songs in the form of entreaties (*viniti*) calling on Kabīr to grant a vision of himself to Dharmdās. This acts as an introduction to the famous Kabīr song "Where are you searching for me my servant?" (*mo ko kahaṁ ḍūṇḍe bande*) contextualized as a *bhajan* sung by Kabīr in response to a Dharmdās song about how he has searched in vain for Kabīr. The close

relationship between Dharmdās' song and Kabīr's can be seen in this translation (Śambhudās 1948:5):

> *Bhajan*—to the tune of *prabhātī*
>
> Chorus: I searched and searched yet I failed, O true guru! I didn't see your vision.
>
> O World Lord! Rameshwaram, Dwarika, Badrinath, Kedarnath,
>
> Kashi, Mathura and Ayodhya, I searched them all.
>
> North, South, East, West, I wondered the whole world.
>
> I went to all the 84 pilgrimage sites, over and over again for a vision.
>
> I practiced endless chants, austerities, fasts, penances, self restraint and fortitude.
>
> Lord, I could not even meet you in dreams, such was my fate.
>
> I could neither rest by day nor sleep by night, my whole body was wracked with pain. Now grant a vision to Dharmdās and ferry me over the ocean of existence!
>
> In this way when Lord Dharmdās had prayed so hard to Kabīr then the True teacher manifested himself in front of him and showed him his vision and sang this *bhajan*.
>
> *bhajan*—to the tune of *rāg śyāmkalyāṇ*
>
> Chorus: Where do you search for me? Servant, I am near you.
>
> I am not in pilgrimage sites nor in images, nor in dwelling alone.
>
> I am not in temples nor in mosques, not in Kashi nor in Kailash.
>
> I am not in chants nor in austerities, nor in fasts and penances.
>
> I am not in performing rites, nor in yoga or renunciation.
>
> I am not in the life force, nor in the body, nor in space or the sky.
>
> I am not in the cave of the bee [the *trikuṭī*], in the breath in all breaths.
>
> Search for me and you will find me straight away, in an instant of searching.
>
> Kabīr says, listen brother *sādhūs*! It is in faith that I am found.
>
> After gaining a vision of the True Teacher the Lord Dharmdās expressed his welcome in this way.
>
> Today is my supreme fortune, welcome to you please come, having graced me with a vision grant me the good fortune to touch your feet!

The song "Where are you searching for me?" also appeared in Kabīr Chaurā *Śabdāvalī* texts from around the same time and is today one of the most popular of all Kabīr songs. But, in the Kabīr Chaurā understanding of the song, and in most modern peoples' understanding, the song is God addressing Kabīr, while Śambhudās' understanding is that it is Kabīr, who is God, addressing Dharmdās.

Perhaps one thing we can draw from is that within oral traditions of Kabīr songs it is not only the text of the songs that matters, but also the context, as the entire meaning of a song can alter dependent on the perspective of the audience of the song.

There are also interesting variations in the text of the song in its two major versions. The Kabīr Chaurā version has a reference in it to how God is not found in the *kābā* the Islamic sacred site, while the Dharmdāsī tradition has instead *kāśī*, which is another name for Varanasi, a Hindu sacred site. Is it possible that this variation was because the Kabīr Chaurā audience might have included more Muslims, but the Dharmdāsī audience contained fewer Muslims, which might have led to the reference to the *kābā* being dropped as not being of interest to the audience? Or

might it just have reflected the preferences of the singers of the two versions? Likewise, the Kabīr Chaurā version also contains more references to yogic practices and ends by saying that the divine is to be found in the breath, but the Dharmdāsī version says that the divine is not to be found in yogic practices related to the breath and is to be found through faith (*viśvās*). Such differences may be indicative of the ways in which oral traditions contextualized Kabīr songs for the different Kabīr Panthī audiences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

New Indian and Transnational Audiences for Kabīr

At the end of the nineteenth century new audiences started to emerge for Kabīr songs. These included audiences in Hindu reform movements, such as the Radhasoami movement, which was active among the emerging Hindi speaking middle class communities in Uttar Pradesh employed as civil servants and teachers and newly affluent merchant communities. In addition new Bengali audiences emerged among middle and upper class groups who formed part of the cultural renaissance associated with Rabindranath Tagore. These developments have been examined in some detail (Friedlander 2011, 2012).

What is perhaps most striking in relation to the intersection between the oral, manuscript, and new print traditions in the early twentieth century is the ways that they reveal aspects of how audiences for Kabīr songs were diversifying. The Radhasoami movement collections were made based largely on Kabīr Panthī manuscripts. The forms of the songs collected in these early print editions reflected the manner in which they were performed at devotional gatherings. The meters and verse structures were those that would be best suited to memorization among non-literate communities. The Bengali script collections by the influential Bengali scholar, and close associate of Rabindranath Tagore, Kshitmohan Sen (1880-1960) reveal how the songs were performed to quite different audiences. It is possible that the song texts as recorded in the Bengali versions reflect a kind of performance style in which fragments of songs were relocated into new types of discourses more typical of literate higher caste Hindu religious gatherings called *pravacan* ("teachings") and then directly recorded as written notes.

The Bengali script collections then led to the next transformation in audiences for Kabīr songs, this time to the West in the early part of the twentieth century. The central figure in transmitting Kabīr songs to the West was Rabindranath Tagore. He was the first Asian to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, which was awarded to him in 1913 for his English translations of a collection of his own verses called *Gitanjali*. It could be argued that these verses are not a translation but more a form of "transcreation" by Tagore of his original Bengali verses; however, there is no indication that Tagore objected to their description as "prose translations" on the title page of the original edition (Tagore 1913). These verses are reminiscent of Tagore's translations of Kabīr and both formed the centre of attention for audiences listening to him performing his works during his visit to London in 1912-13. Typical of such events were gatherings in Hampstead at the house of the art patron William Rothenstein where Tagore would sing songs in Bengali and W. B. Yeats would read out English translations of the songs (Som 2009:107).

It was also during this period in London that Tagore, in collaboration with the English Christian mystic Evelyn Underhill, translated a collection of one hundred Kabīr songs into

English, such as the following (Tagore 1917:92):

> There is an endless world, O my Brother!
> And there is the Nameless Being, of whom naught can be said.
> Only he knows it who has reached that region:
> It is other than all that is heard and said.
> No form, no body, no length, no breadth is seen there:
> How can I tell you that which it is?
> Kabīr says: "It cannot be told by the words of the mouth, it cannot be written on paper: It is like a dumb person who tastes a sweet thing—how shall it be explained?"

These translations have been continually in print since they were first published in 1913 (Friedlander 2011). A further testament to their influence in the West is that they formed the basis for popular retranslations into contemporary American English by Robert Bly from the 1970s onwards (Bly 2004).

This transition of Kabīr songs from oral and manuscript traditions into written English translations in print meant that they then reached entirely new audiences who would previously have never imagined that they would listen to the songs of a fifteenth-century weaver from Varanasi singing about the nature of the divine.

Conclusion: Kabīr Today

It is a remarkable testimony to Kabīr that his name is so widely known today and his songs are seen to be representative of how India engages with spiritual inquiry.

In the century since Tagore and Underhill's translations to Kabīr's verses drew international attention, his verses have been translated from English into many major languages. Tagore's translations have also been repeatedly translated— it would be better to say recreated— into contemporary forms of English. In a sense, echoes of Kabīr songs have now become part of Western oral traditions of performance poetry.

In India the performance of Kabīr songs has continued to be part of the lived experience of oral traditions. Scholars such as Shabnam Virmani, the director of the Kabīr project, have filmed and documented as many forms of contemporary performance as they could find from Madhya Pradesh to Rajasthan and the Punjab (http://www.kabirproject.org). Academics from the international community, such as Linda Hess, have researched leading contemporary singers of Kabīr songs such as Kumar Gandharva and investigated the ways in which oral traditions of Kabīr songs still flourish in India today.

This essay has shown that the study of Kabīr and his songs allows a glimpse into how oral traditions have kept his teaching relevant and contemporary. An understanding of Kabīr requires an appreciation of the role oral traditions play in the contemporary transmission of Indian cultures.

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Waiting for Moonrise:
Fasting, Storytelling, and Marriage in Provincial Rajasthan

Ann Grodzins Gold

Ethnographic encounters with women's ritual storytelling in North India provide the central substance of this essay and contribute to the study of narrative transformations over time. I highlight two distinct although related themes. First, and most importantly, I consider women's changing expectations of marriage, approaching these through intimate, conversational ethnographic accounts. Second, with an expanded scope stretching across regions as well as over decades, I observe variations as well as processes of standardization: how diverse tales associated with a specific ritual may ultimately be reduced to one standard plot. Such processes are hastened by all forms of media—print, film, and internet. My account here draws on long experience (intermittent visits and revisits between 1980 and 2015) in a single region of Rajasthan, North India. I focus on storytelling and other practices in the context of two women's ritual fasts: *Bari Tij* ("Grand Third") and *Karva Chauth* ("Pitcher Fourth"). The festival names refer to dates in the Hindu lunar calendar. In what follows I normally refer to Bari Tij simply as Tij.

I have worked on and off since 1979 in one region of Rajasthan—the Banas River Basin, spanning Ajmer and Bhilwara districts. Here both Tij and Karva Chauth involve explicitly difficult fasts undertaken by married women to protect the lives of their husbands. For both fasts in both places, participating women go without food or water the entire day and into the night until they are able to see the moon.[1] Some women told me that the ritual required a woman not only to see the moon but also to look at her husband's face before she can break her fast. Women are not merely waiting for something in the sky.

In 1980 as a novice anthropologist engaged in doctoral fieldwork on popular Hinduism while living in Ghatiyali (a large multi-caste village in Ajmer district, Rajasthan), I observed Tij for the first time. In 2010 as a senior anthropologist engaged in fieldwork on place and identity while living in the subdistrict headquarters of Jahazpur (a market town in Bhilwara district,

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[1] These total fasts contrast with the majority of personal vows which forbid only the everyday fare of grains, lentils, and vegetables; but usually allow tea, peanuts, fruits, fried potatoes, and so forth (each fast may have specific prohibitions). Indeed, among some of Jahazpur's middle-class housewives, frequent fast days appear to afford opportunities to vary an otherwise monotonous diet, and to inspire creative cookery (for example sweet potato halva) much as Passover does for kosher-keeping Jews in the US.

Rajasthan), I had another opportunity to see women celebrate Tij.[2] Two months afterwards the same group of neighbors participated in the apparently similar celebration of Karva Chauth. In Ghatiyali I had photographed the Tij ritual and recorded its accompanying story as told in Rajasthani which I eventually translated (Gold 2002:193-94). In Jahazpur at the request of my hosts, I photographed Tij worship but made no attempt to talk with participants about its meanings or to document the story. On the day of Karva Chauth, however, I recorded several conversations with small groups of women about the fast and its chartering narrative. At the actual worship I again played the role of respectful photographer but made no recordings.

This essay proceeds as follows: in the first and largest segment I introduce the festivals, noting the considerable documentation and analysis of both in anthropological and other literatures. Drawing on my own ethnography, I sequentially describe two rituals and their accompanying stories as I saw and learned about them. I begin with Tij in Ghatiyali, 1980, then turn to Karva Chauth in Jahazpur, 2010. The second section draws from selected secondary sources to scan the festivals and their significances within North Indian women's religiosity. My attempt is neither to survey fully nor to chart all variations from place to place, but simply to expand horizons and alert readers to the limits of conclusions based on any individual's ethnographic observations. Such observations will always swim in a vast sea of variation: lunar calendar dates, the direction of gift-giving, the castes that participate, and the worship tales' plots. Fortunately some significant commonalities resonate across contexts. It is also possible through this survey to observe the workings of an inevitably reductive standardization.

Finally, speculatively and briefly, I reflect across my fieldwork experience of 30-plus years spending intermittent time with Rajasthani women in village and town, in order to hazard a few thoughts on the ways that social change, ritual change, and the changing fates of particular devotional narratives may be interconnected if not exactly congruent. My limited observations of continuity and change are shaped by central concerns engaging meanings and motivations embedded in the two strict fasts. What might these rituals dedicated to husbands' well-being, and the stories that validate them, tell us both explicitly and implicitly about love and marriage—ideal and real, imagined and lived? How do participating women experience these meanings and incorporate them into their identities? What desires do women express in narrative performance, devotional traditions, or commentaries that an outsider's questions elicit?

By the time of my most recent fieldwork in the second decade of the twenty-first century, social transformations due to increased education, employment, and mobility were affecting both men and women at all levels of the social hierarchy in provincial Rajasthan. Associated with such changes were changes in gender roles, in the expectations surrounding conjugality and, as we shall see, in practices and ideas connected with vows and fasts. I wonder whether the appeal of fasts and accompanying rituals might lie in part in their ability to sustain an illusion of stability and continuity even while incorporating processes of change. That is, such rituals may offer participants a comforting contrast to upheavals in social realities, while in certain ways

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[2] Most individuals in both Ghatiyali and Jahazpur speak a regional variant of Rajasthani at home; anyone who has been to school also speaks and understands standard Hindi; the ubiquity of television contributes to Hindi competence even among the uneducated. For more about Ghatiyali, see Gold (1988); for more about Jahazpur see Gold (2014).

reflecting them. In titling my concluding section "moonbeams," I mean to evoke the "inconstant moon" and its light, which is proverbially both romantic and unreliable.

Tij and Karva Chauth: Introductory

Many outside observers—anthropologists, religionists, and others—have described, discussed, and collected stories told on the festivals of Tij and Karva Chauth in North India. Such documentation stretches back well over half a century. Perusing these sources reveals considerable variation from locality to locality, as well as over time. Unsurprisingly, different authors writing about festivals highlight different angles. For example, diverse ethnographers of rural or provincial India have been particularly concerned with the relationship between heterogeneous, local ("little") traditions and a more monolithic, "great" tradition rooted in or at least linked with pan-Hindu Sanskrit texts (Marriott 1972:203); with shelter that women hope to receive from male kin (Wadley 1975:160-61); with gift-giving (Raheja 1988:182); with geospatial analysis (Singh 1989); with kinship and also perplexing irregularities of the lunar calendar (Freed and Freed 1998:63-65); with mythologically posited powers of the moon's nectar (Pintchman 2005:57-58). Other authors catalog Indian festivals largely to celebrate the picturesque (Gupta 1990; Patil 1994). In addition, a number of manuals exist in both Hindi and English designed to provide literate women with instructions for how to maintain correct ritual practice (Jain 1988; Sinha n.d.; Verma 1997).

Sometimes Tij and Karva Chauth are described in nearly identical terms: strict fasts whose aim is the long life of one's husband. For example, Patil explicitly likens Tij in Rajasthan to Karva Chauth in other North Indian states, describing it as a day when women "dress in their festive finery and fast all day . . . praying for prosperity and long life of their husbands and children" (1994:93). Marriott's assertion, in 1955, remains essentially true of Karva Chauth everywhere: it is "a celebration of wifely devotion for the sake of the welfare and long life of the husband" (1972:203-04). In his "geospatial" study of festivals in a district of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Singh reports concisely of Tij only (for no Karva Chauth appears on his list) (1989:50):

> [The motive of Tij is] to get long life of the husband his prosperity, health, and wellbeing of whole family; [on this day] In most of the houses, full day fast with fried cookies in the night; celebrated by married women only.

Verma has this to say about Karva Chauth (1997:75):

> Karva Chauth is observed by married ladies . . . in order to ensure prosperity, sound health and longevity of their husbands. Widows and unmarried girls do not practice it. The married women keep a strict fast and do not take even a drop of water.

Elsewhere, and not all that far away, the two festivals may diverge significantly. In their exhaustive treatment of festivals in one village they call Shanti Nagar (just outside of Delhi), anthropologists Stanley Freed and Ruth Freed treat Karva Chauth as a traditional *vrat* (vow)

performed by high caste women and categorize it as a festival of "welfare fertility and protection" (1998:63-76). By contrast they place Tij in a different chapter, considering it to be, like Raksha Bandhan, which highlights the bond between brother and sister, a festival of "interaction" (241-56). Freed and Freed thus depict Tij as focused on the return of daughters to their parents' homes to enjoy the simple pleasures of swinging: it is not about husbands and not about gods. Yet in my experience in both Ghatiyali and Jahazpur swinging and visits from married daughters, and the difficult fast for husbands' long lives, are united in the Tij festival's ambiance.

In Ghatiyali I was told that Tij was a festival celebrated only by those high status castes in which remarriage was forbidden: Brahmins, Rajputs, and Baniyas.[3] More than half of Ghatiyali's population belonged to agricultural communities among whom divorce and widow remarriage were unremarkable and unforbidden. These included Gujars, Malis, Lodas, and others, all of whom ignored Tij. Years later in Jahazpur I found that Karva Chauth at least was celebrated by women across the social spectrum. Some women from agricultural communities stated clearly that their mothers and grandmothers had never kept the fast. They attributed the difference not to any change in marriage rules (for there hasn't been one), but rather to the prohibitive strain placed on women's bodies by agricultural labor. Once living in town and freed of such strenuous labor, women may choose to undertake total fasts.

In Jahazpur as in Ghatiyali women's vows included the telling of ritual stories during worship. In Ghatiyali I never once saw a worship story read

Fig. 1. Women in Jahazpur read the ritual story of Tij from a printed pamphlet; photo by the author, 2010.

from a book, but in Jahazpur at the home where I attended both "Grand Third" and "Pitcher Fourth," stories were read out from Hindi pamphlets. My fieldnotes describe this reading as disappointingly monotonal. The flat style of reading a worship story that I encountered in Jahazpur contrasted strongly with animated, dramatic, interactive storytelling performances by women I had known in Ghatiyali (Raheja and Gold 1994). In 2010, to my chagrin, I learned too late that I had missed, just down the street, another neighbor's oral telling of the Pitcher Fourth story. Months later at another calendrical celebration I was able to hear and record this same

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[3] These categories identify the so-called "twice-born" of Hindu tradition: priests, rulers, and merchants who today of course follow many and diverse professional paths.

Jahazpur woman telling ritual stories without a text. Strangely, it seemed to me, she recited her charming tales without the slightest attempt to bring them to life through voice, gesture, or exchanges with her audience (Gold 2014). In short, although the language she used was Rajasthani, not Hindi, and she raced through her tale at a high speed that readers could never achieve, her oral telling actually replicated book-reading style in its flatness.

If I allow myself a tentative conclusion based on highly limited experience (but affirmed by a few persons I knew who had participated in such rituals in both village and town), I would say that Jahazpur women's rituals lacked that sense of shared delight in narrative imagination that was so characteristic of ritual storytelling events in Ghatiyali village. In our middle-class, small-town neighborhood, ritual storytelling seemed reduced to mere ritual function. In 2010 of course other forms of entertainment, most especially television, were pervasive; young and old were glued to family drama series daily. This downgrading of performative pleasures in ritual storytelling was all the more striking because collectively enacted women's ritual vows in Jahazpur were occasions for more prolonged, relaxed socializing than was the case in Ghatiyali where the daily grind of domestic chores afforded less time off.

New storytelling media in popular culture have had other more direct influences on women's rituals. Karva Chauth in particular has come to epitomize women's ritual action on the silver screen. One movie was repeatedly cited in Jahazpur interviews as influential: *Baghban* ("Gardener").[4] In *Baghban* aging stars Amitabh Bachchan and Hema Malini share their Karva Chauth worship in a way that appears to have altered understandings of the festival's gendered meanings and practices, instilling into Karva Chauth—or perhaps just legitimizing or rendering visible—a mutual tenderness between wife and husband. Such tenderness may spill over into (or out from) everyday couples' lives.

Tij in Ghatiyali, 1980

> The women were saying as they sat around after the ritual that *suhag* [the state of auspicious wifehood] was equal to *bhagvan* [the Lord]. (Gold 2002:191)

Lalas in his monumental Rajasthani-Hindi dictionary—a compendium of cultural knowledge as much as of vocabulary—describes Tij as "a fast celebrated by women whose husbands are alive and a day on which clothes, sweets, and jewelry are sent to married daughters from their fathers' houses" (Lalas 1962; my translation). Lalas' dictionary project was based in Jodhpur, far to the west of the Banas Basin where I have worked, but his regional definition perfectly matches Tij in Ghatiyali including the emphasis on gifts from fathers (not from in-laws as is reported by Minturn [1993] for another Uttar Pradesh location).

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[4] In English, the film title *Baghban* is regularly transliterated with an aspirated gh, although it is written in Devanagari as *bagban*. I have no expertise in media studies; Jahazpur women told me about the Karva Chauth episode in the film *Baghban* and I eventually watched the whole film (which is frequently shown on television) in their company. The fast comprises just one brief episode in the protracted family drama. Based on my Karva Chauth interviews, I had expected it to be far more central to the film than in fact it was. See Nava Bharat Times for a great collection of stills featuring Karva Chauth episodes in multiple Hindi movies; see also Uberoi (1998) and, for mention of Karva Chauth in TV soap operas, Munshi (2010).

In Rajasthan the lore surrounding Tij particularly stresses an emotional pull on husbands that is exerted by women's longings—for respect, attention, and love. This pull is understood to be enhanced by women's devotional practices working in tandem with seasonality. Chauhan, in his 1967 study of a Rajasthan village, describes Tij as "a festival on which a husband must find ways and means for reaching the abode of his wife. It is said that even heavy downpour and running brooks on the way need not deter him" (197). Chauhan's words, perhaps echoing those of his village informants, evoke the rainy season as a time of exquisite pleasure for lovers when they are together (in mythology the image of Radha trysting with Krishna in the dark and rainy woods); or of acute pain if they must remain apart (epitomized by Rama in the cave, pining for Sita).

A Tij song I recorded in Ghatiyali in 1980 commands husbands to hasten back to their yearning spouses who beckon them home irresistibly: "Leave your job at once, husband-lord, for the festival of Tij has come. / Whether your job's in Kishan Garh or Mukan Garh, husband-lord, Having heard [this melody of] Tij, come home!" I concluded (in an article originally published in this journal) that Tij songs insisted on "women's authority deriving from their participation in important festivals involving vows and fasts . . ." (1997:117).

The Brahmin women whose Tij I observed in Ghatiyali constructed a shrine for Tij Mother involving both wall art and branches of the *neem* tree (*Azadirachta indica*). My field notes reflect my own puzzlement at what this form might reveal of the goddess. The markings on the wall were rather nondescript. Before them, however, was set an arrangement of "[nim] branches tied together into the form of a beautiful plant," as my Brahmin male assistant, Vajendra, admiringly recorded in his own separate notes. *Neem* has multiple religious meanings, and multiple ritual and medicinal uses. I had often encountered *neem* at healing shrines where sweeping with leafy *neem* branches purified both ritual spaces and afflicted pilgrims. But I had not known *neem* as a form of divinity. Thirty years later in Jahazpur Tij worship took place before a quite similar wall scene.

Fig. 2. Tij goddess shrine with *neem* leaves in Ghatiyali; photo by the author, 1980.

Fig. 3. Tij goddess shrine with *neem* leaves in Jahazpur; photo by the author, 2010.

Tij worship, in its ritual ingredients and actions, is similar to many other women's rites, but it calls for special attention to the signs of auspicious wifehood, which are also adornments— jewelry and *sindhur* (vermillion), the deep red powder married women use to mark their hair partings. In the course of the ritual, each participant made a series of offerings to the wall painting and *neem* branch seat of the goddess—including lighting lamps, and incense; token

cloth wraps, henna, and sweets. Each then mixed water and milk in her polished platter, and looked five times at the reflection of her jewelry in it. Following this she held a bottle of vermilion to her forehead, requesting Tij Mother to keep her vermilion (auspicious wifehood) immortal forever.

After all the women had finished the ritual, they sang Tij songs and then the hostess told the story of Tij and the requisite two others.[5] Then, all the women touched the feet of women senior to them, and took blessings from them—acts of closure for many domestic rituals. Finally they happily went up to the roof to see the moon; each then returned to her own house to break her fast by eating *satu*—blessed leftovers of the goddess and pivotal to the story. Tij story, as recorded and transcribed in Ghatiyali, 1980 (See Gold 2002:193-94):

> There was once a shopkeeper who had seven sons and seven daughters-in-law. A few days before the holiday of Grand Third, six of the daughters-in-law received fine cakes from their parents' homes, but the seventh son's wife received none. Her family was very poor and they could not afford to send any cakes.
>
> On the morning of Grand Third when all the women of the house were going to the well to fill their waterpots, the six older daughters-in-law were muttering angrily as they walked along: "We can never leave the cooking fire. We never have a holiday rest. *Our* families sent fine cakes for Grand Third but none have come for our husband's younger brother's wife and so we will be forced to work and prepare hers."
>
> They were grumbling in this way when the youngest brother's wife heard them and said, "Leave off, it's my own trouble! Why are you complaining? Let it be, it's no business of yours." So she spoke. She had become very angry.
>
> That night when it was time to perform the worship of Grand Third, the seventh daughter-in-law went angrily to lie down and sleep. All the other women did the worship, and after worshipping together they broke their fasts with the fine cakes sent by their families. But the youngest brother's wife had none, so she just stayed inside in anger.
>
> Then her husband came and asked her, "Have you eaten or not?"
>
> She replied, "Oh leave me alone. I am keeping a complete fast. I will take nothing but bitter leaves tonight and I will eat no food until tomorrow."[6]
>
> Her husband said, "What do you mean? What's the matter?"
>
> She said, "What can I do? Everyone else received fine cakes from their parents' homes and I received none, so what is there for me to eat? I cannot bear to take any of your brothers' wives' cakes so I will eat nothing."
>
> Her husband asked her, "What do you need?"
>
> She answered, "Even if you have to steal them, bring me fine cakes made of chickpea flour. If you don't bring them, then I will keep a total fast and eat nothing but bitter leaves and drink only water and I will not take any food until tomorrow."

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[5] In both Ghatiyali and Jahazpur three worship stories are always told: first: the main story special to the day; next, a story of Ganeshji; last, a story of an ill-omened being—in Ghatiyali called the "Greedy one" (*lobhya*); in Jahazpur "the creep" (*lungya*)—both of them beings whose desire to purloin women's merit must be appeased with one story and a few grains.

[6] These are *neem* leaves; thus the story makes a connection with the physical ritual.

Then her poor husband thought, "Where can I go?" It was the middle of the night. He hurried to the house of a rich merchant, crept into that rich man's house and immediately lit the cooking fire. Then he found chickpeas and ground them in the grinder. After that he took a clay pot full of butter and emptied it into a frying pan. He fried the ground chickpea flour in the butter, then he added a lot of sugar and made the mixture into round fine cakes.

Just as the husband was coming out of the merchant's house carrying the stolen cakes, the village watchman, making his rounds, was passing by. The watchman saw him, shouted "Thief! Thief! Thief!" and grabbed him. He took him straight to the police station and sat him down there. Soon a crowd of people gathered and began to taunt him: "What a place you picked to do your thieving." They mocked him and prodded him with sticks. They said, "Look, the son of a father of unblemished character has taken to thievery."

But then a few wise and gentle persons came and said, "Let us hear his story. Listen to what he has to say."

The husband said: "Look what's going on here. They grabbed me and put me in the police station but meanwhile I don't know if my woman will live or die. She is sitting alone in anger. For this reason I stole, for this reason I committed a crime. I went to that merchant's house and ground chickpeas and lit the fire and took out butter and sugar and made fine cakes. I stole one kilo of chickpeas and a half-kilo of sugar and as much butter as was in the pot, for she is a stubborn woman and she won't eat anything else. For this reason I was hurrying to bring her the cakes when the watchman came and shouted, 'Thief! Thief! Thief! and grabbed me and took me to the police station. Everyone is calling me a thief. And meanwhile I am sitting here and who knows if she will die or live, or if she will eat or won't eat."

Now the merchant whose house he had robbed heard this whole speech and immediately said, "You should take twice as much, right now, as you have already taken. And next year before Grand Third, I will send fine cakes to your wife. Let my home be her parents' home."

So they set the husband free and at once he hurried home and gave his wife the cakes and she ate and he also ate. Both the husband and his wife ate and went to sleep.

[Town gossips repeat the whole event.]

The next year, four days before Grand Third, the rich merchant sent a long skirt, a shawl, cosmetics, bangles and everything— a complete outfit for the seventh daughter-in-law as well as the fine cakes. He also sent a separate outfit for the mother-in-law and for the husband's sister. For the brothers' wives he sent blouses and shawls. So from that very day the younger brother's wife always received fine cakes from her parents' home.

Grand Third Mother, as you made her parents' home, so make the whole world's.

The story of Tij told in Ghatiyali in 1980 was unique among over 40 ritual tales I recorded during my dissertation research there. What made it unique was simply that it reversed gender roles for self sacrifice.

What are we to make of the young wife here who puts her husband in danger for her own seemingly selfish ends? The story might well be read as an ironic commentary on the many tales of self-sacrificing women who suppress their own needs and desires for the sake of their male kin. Why, it seems to ask in all simplicity, should men not sacrifice themselves too, to succor their wives—especially, as in this story, a wife who is suffering in order to ensure her husband's

longevity. But in truth the story does not engage in such calculations. It is not reciprocity but passion and concern that move the husband of the stubborn young wife. She is stubborn in her asceticism as was Parvati, and like Parvati she has the capacity to discipline her body in order to get what her heart desires. The goddess rewards the stubborn woman, via her husband's efforts. In the context of rainy season sexual longings, this tale together with the Tij song—which places the wife's needs for company above the family's for income—hint at a sub-rosa complex of cultural motifs that approve the fulfillment of women's desires in marriage. For, at Tij, as Brahmin women told me, a mystified anthropologist, *suhag* is equal to *bhagvan*.

While I have not seen it in print in English or Hindi, I did find a very similar tale in English on the Internet—with a crucial difference, however: this version replaced the husband with the father as the caring male who responds to the fasting girl's entreaties and risks his honor on her behalf (*Festivals of India* 2014, story no. 3). That of course annuls all the precious marital intimacy that gives Ghatiyali's story its charm. For Ghatiyali's Tij story—without any help from Mumbai script writers—proposed a loving husband: a man with gumption but also a sensitive guy in tune with his wife's malaise in the joint family. But notably this has not been the story that prevailed in popular culture. Instead, Tij has come to celebrate Parvati's stubborn determination to follow her heart and to marry a God. Parvati's character and story are ultimately remote from those of the young wife in Ghatiyali's story, who takes to her bed and alarms her doting husband. Women keeping the Tij fast may have in Parvati a great role model for self determination in marriage, but Parvati obtains a divine rather than human husband. Shiva is hardly the type to cook treats for a sulking wife!

Pitcher Fourth in Jahazpur, 2010

"We put henna on our feet. It is *suhag*; God should protect it. That is the main meaning of Karva Chauth." [a young wife, interview]

Down stairs at the Pathaks they are making *alu paratha* [potato-stuffed flat bread] with plenty of *mirch* [pepper] and *churma prasad* [a sweet prepared to offer to deities, made with clarified butter, sugar and wheat flour] and *alu ki sabz*i [potato vegetable] and more things, none of which they will eat until after they see the moon. [A.G. Gold, fieldnotes]

In Jahazpur in 2010 Tij came on August 27 and Karva Chauth fell on October 26. In August I had been in Jahazpur less than a month, and having newly embarked on my urban research project, I felt reluctant to do the same things I had done in the village. Studying women's rituals was my old scholarship and not my Jahazpur program. By the time Pitcher Fourth came around two months later I had realized that the ad hoc community of neighborhood women that sometimes formed around festival events was a significant part of just those active place-making processes in small town life that I wanted to understand (Gold 2014). Moreover, I was truly curious about Karva Chauth because, although I had never heard of this fast while

working in Ghatiyali, my Indian-American students in Syracuse seemed to know all about it.[7] I decided to interviews some of my female neighbors. On the day of Karva Chauth, I recorded four conversations with small groups of women, as well as casually questioning others I ran into on that day and a few days immediately following the festival.

Madhu Gujar, the daughter of my research collaborator, Bhoju Ram, was in her early twenties and sometimes assisted me in interviewing women. Together we visited various homes in our neighborhood. The story of Karva Chauth is well known and often recounted. I will provide it here, in two tellings by Jahazpur women recorded during informal interviews on the day of the festival, but before the worship (so presumably they hadn't heard the story since the previous year). In Ghatiyali my practice had always been to record stories during rituals. I found that asking women to relate them in interview situations yielded insights, helping me to see which elements of the tale were universally salient and which ones different women might emphasize or omit altogether.

The first house we visited was right across the street from Madhu's own. We spoke there with a middle-aged matron, Saraswati, whose daughter-in-law and small grandson had come to spend the Karva Chauth festival with her, although her son remained in the city where he worked. The younger woman had elegantly hennaed her hands in a delicate pattern that was drying at the time of our interview. She was fasting for the welfare of her husband, Saraswati's son. Saraswati agreed, with only the slightest urging, to tell me the story as she recollected it:

> There was a sister who had seven brothers. So she was keeping the vow of Pitcher Fourth while visiting her natal home. Her brothers they loved her a lot, and because they loved her, they said to her: "You eat food."
>
> She replied, "No, today is Pitcher Fourth and I can't eat!"
>
> The brothers said, "No, please eat before the moon comes out." But their sister refused.
>
> Then the brothers took a steel plate (*thali*), and a wick, and went up on the hill. They showed it to her and said it was the moon. They *deceived* her! She believed it was the moon and so she did her worship and broke her fast.
>
> Then she got the news that her husband was dead. She began to weep. One of her brother's wives was a little intelligent. This *bhabhi* said to her, as she was leaving to return to her in-laws' home, "Whoever you meet on the road touch their feet" and they will give you a blessing."
>
> On the road she met Fourth Mother (Chauth Mata), and she asked for forgiveness, and took the goddess' blessing. Her husband came back to life! So now women pray, "the way that you protected her husband, you should protect my husband."

Having concluded this stripped-down but fully accurate synopsis of the story's core plot, Saraswati continued speaking about the fast. She emphasized its difficult nature: "If there are clouds and no moon, then you don't eat! Some might not eat until midnight, and suppose they don't see the moon at all, not until the next day."

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[7] While writing this essay I asked my research collaborator, Bhoju Ram Gujar, by email, to ask his daughters and wife about whether or not Karva Chauth existed in Ghatiyali. The answer was, "Yes, many women do it, mostly Rajput, Brahmin and Jain"; but as to whether it was done in Ghatiyali in 1980 I have no information; that it was absent from my fieldwork experience of course does not mean that it was not practiced.

She added, "I did the Tij *vrat* [two months previously] and the moon did not appear until 1:30 a.m. It is Indian culture! You can't drink. You can be terribly thirsty, especially if it is hot."

Her daughter-in-law, who lived in the larger city of Kota, added the words I took as the first epigraph for this section: "We put henna on our feet. It is *suhag*; God should protect it. That is the main meaning of Karva Chauth." Thus the beautified, enhanced, wifely body *is* literally the ritual's meaning.

Around the corner on the main road lived a large family of Jats, an agricultural community whose members were not historically residents of Jahazpur town. The patriarch of this family had started a successful business in Jahazpur years ago when he was young and had prospered enormously. Eventually he built four large houses—one for each of his four sons along with their growing extended families—in the suburb called Santosh Nagar where my husband and I were living. The residents of these Jat houses spanned four generations. The grandchildren, mostly young adults, had grown up in town but their parents and grandparents had spent significant portions of their lives in villages; several still moved back and forth. The house we visited was where Madhu's friend Surekha lived. She was the patriarch's only granddaughter—for he had been blessed not only with economic success but with two generations of almost all male progeny. Surekha was not yet married. Tulsi Jat, somewhat older than Surekha and an in-married wife, explained to us that some women might drink water and take some fruit, but that there are others who "don't even drink water until they see the moon."

Surekha immediately announced, speaking of Tulsi in the third person and with pointed admiration: "She will not drink . . . she will eat nothing in the day nor drink a drop, and in the night she will look at the moon, and then look at her husband, and only then will she eat."

I asked Tulsi how many years she had done the *vrat* and she answered nine! She said that women worshipped Ganeshji and Chauth Mata during the ritual. She described for us in fair detail the ingredients used for worship, beginning with the clay pitcher itself, then listing auspicious substances, some placed inside of it and some placed next to it on the worship tray.

Tulsi continued, "You can do the ritual at your own home, but it is more fun to gather with a group of women. It helps to pass the time of the hard fast." I asked her for the story, and she first demurred, advising me to attend the evening's ritual and hear "all the stories" (see note 5), but finally she agreed to narrate the one she knew. This was the same story Saraswati had related, but Tulsi elaborated a few additional elements. As her summary is also brief and her language more evocative, it is not redundant to include her informal telling:

> There were seven brothers and one sister. The sister saw her *bhabhi* [brothers' wives] keep the vow [*vrat*] and said, "I will do it too." Her brothers forbade her: "Don't try to do this! The moon comes out late. You'll get hungry!" But she did not accept their advice. She undertook the fast [*upavas*]. Her face became pinched with hunger, and she appeared to be in great distress. Her brothers couldn't stand to see her so distressed. So they thought they would just show her the moon. One went behind the hill and lit a fire. The others told her, "Look, the moon came out!" Then they all ate together.
>
> God became angry, and even while she was eating, the news came that her husband had died. As she mournfully set out to return to her husband's home, her mother gave her money and advised her, "Whoever you meet on the road, give it to them" [which she did].

[Tulsi now adds to the previous account some additional material omitted by Saraswati but present in most published versions.]

She did not go into the village but stopped at the cremation ground. She said, "I won't let you cremate him." She sat by her husband's corpse. She made a clay pitcher [*karva*] and put water in it. During the year Chauth comes four times.[8] Every Chauth she would grab the feet of Chauth Mata, begging "Bring my husband back to life." Chauth Mata said to her, "You deceived me! You weren't able to keep this vow, so why did you try to do it? It is better just not to do it. If you undertake it, you should not break it."

So each Chauth came and went and she stayed an entire year in the cremation ground. The very fast she had broken came around again, one year later—Chauth Mata told her to have no fear. The young woman joined her hands [in reverence] and begged Chauth Mata to bring her husband back to life.

So he came back to life. And their hut: the Goddess put her foot on it and it became a golden castle.

Tulsi concluded, "Women keep this vow so that their husbands will live a long time!"

There was a divorced woman in the neighborhood whom I knew well. With her parents' help she was raising her two small children. Earlier that day I had expressed my surprise that she would fast for Karva Chauth, along with her brother's wife. She told me nonchalantly that she was doing it for the benefit of her children.[9] I took this opportunity therefore to ask Tulsi if the fast could be done on behalf of one's children. She answered firmly that it could not: "this is *special for your husband."[10]

Fig. 4. Offering tray with clay pitcher for Karva Chauth in Jahazpur; photo by the author, 2010.

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[8] Although there is only one Pitcher Fourth, some women celebrate a fast for Chauth Mother four times a year.

[9] As some readers have suggested, it seems possible that what this woman meant was that her ritual work protected the father of her children, and therefore naturally benefitted them if not her. I am skeptical of this explanation, however, because she had already won in court a sizable monetary settlement for the children's education, and their father was not likely to offer them further support.

[10] An asterisk denotes a word that was English in the original.

Some conversation followed about Karva Chauth being celebrated very elaborately in the city: One of the Jat women said, "In the city there is so much fanfare. Women have to make *bookings with the beauty parlor—*bookings for their make-up." I asked these women, who had been born in villages to families engaged in agriculture, if their mothers did Karva Chauth. Surkeha immediately replied, "My mother did not do it." But apparently Tulsi's paternal grandmother kept the Pitcher Fourth fast, and Tulsi, having learned it from her, was the one who involved the other Jat women who had married into the same Jahazpur family. This was contradicted later by two Brahmin women in two separate interviews, both claiming that none of the Jats knew anything about Karva Chauth until Lakshmi, a Brahmin woman who often took the lead in organizing neighborhood women's rituals, told them about it. When I was able to speak with Lakshmi herself a few days after Karva Chauth, she took full credit for sparking the Jat women's interest in the fast asserting: "I told all of them about it and so they started to do it. I said, 'Do it for your *suhag*. It is for your husband's long life.'"

Just to confirm my understanding, I asked again in a different way, knowing the name of the village from which the patriarch's family had originated: "So in Maganpura the Jats don't do it?" Surekha affirmed, "It is an urban thing. In Maganpura the women don't do it." Tulsi elaborated on why this was generally the case: "Village women, they have to go to the fields, they say that working in the fields is more important than keeping vows. But the women who live in the city, they don't go to the fields, they stay home." She added, matter-of-factly, "village women work all day so they can't survive without water." Tulsi's grandmother, who introduced her to Karva Chauth, presumably came from a city.

As the conversation continued, another member of the extended Jat family mentioned that some women's husbands fast with them.

I was truly surprised and exclaimed: "Husbands do it!"

"Yes, the husband says to his wife, "if you are going to fast, so will I."

"Since when?" I asked.

Tulsi explained, "Men do it from their desire; the ones who have the most love for their wives, they do it. But men do not join in the worship; they fast and after they see the moon they eat with their wives."

Surekha thoughtfully qualified Tulsi's statement: "They all have love, but if they don't have the *capacity* they don't do the fast."[11]

Madhu and I next visited a Brahmin household, where we spoke with an older woman, whose ill health now prevented her from fasting but who had kept the Pitcher Fourth fast regularly during the earlier years of her long marriage; and with her daughter-in-law who was currently keeping the fast.

They both described various aspects of the Karva Chauth fast to me, stressing that it was a *nirjala* or "no water" fast—considered the most difficult of all. When I asked about the day's activities, they first listed dressing well and putting on henna. Next they spoke of readying the worship ingredients: the pitcher and the auspicious substances that went into it for the *puja*. And they talked about preparing sweets to eat after moonrise.

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[11] See Pintchman's lovely account of women's certainty that men lack the capacity for devotional exercises comparable with those achieved by women (2005:187-93).

These two Brahmin women spoke to me particularly of the care with which they adorned both themselves and the goddess. The younger woman said sweetly, "Women get ready and we make the Mother ready as well; we use all the sixteen forms of adornment [*solah sringar*]." This intimacy and sharing with the goddess is characteristic of women's rituals. The goddess may be an arrangement of branches, a geometric design, a clay pitcher, or a pile of pebbles. But she is also fundamentally a woman in that she likes the same things women like; thus they are confident they can please her. I asked about the fruits of the ritual, and the older woman, using more Sanskritized Hindi, told me it was to obtain for the woman's husband a life of long duration: *dirgh ayu*; this phrase others rendered in more everyday speech: *lambi umar*.

It was at this point that I raised the issue of men also fasting, telling them I had just heard something of the sort. Both mother-in-law and daughter-in-law readily affirmed: "That's the truth." The older woman first said, "Men do it; they can do it in place of a woman who can't stay hungry or who is pregnant." But she and her daughter-in-law also agreed that some men do it just to keep their wives company.

My friend and helper, Madhu, still unmarried herself at the time, brought up the influence of the popular film *Baghban* asserting that "the Gents started doing it" after seeing this movie. This led to an enthusiastic conversation about what a great picture *Baghban* was and there was general agreement among those present that it was admiration for the Amitabh Bacchan character that inspired numbers of men to share fasting with their wives.

I asked one neighbor, a young Vaishnav woman, whether people did Karva Chauth before marriage, she laughed a lot, "for what husband would you do it, before marriage?" In other words, what I had proposed was sheer nonsense. Yet Karva Chauth's dominant tale is not about the husband—it is thoroughly the young woman's drama. The husband might be necessary, but in the story he is just a lump of flesh: alive, dead, alive again—nothing but a prop if a necessary prop. That would seem to change if husbands join their wives in fasting. In the night I sat at two different houses watching the ritual. If any men were fasting they made themselves scarce. All the married women—including Sindhi and Jain, whose religions diverged in other ways from their Hindu neighbors—came to participate; everyone was dressed gorgeously and mostly in red. Their collective *arati* to the moon, performed in the middle of a suburban side street, was as pretty a sight as any gracing the picture books about colorful festivals.

Fig. 5. Neighborhood women greet the moon on Karva Chauth in Jahazpur; photo by the author, 2010.

Across Regions

There are multiple Hindu calendars, but the predominant system—used in many almanacs in Rajasthan and much of North India—divides each of twelve lunar months in half, so that dates occur twice monthly and are specified as bright or dark. Months begin immediately after the full moon with the dark half, counting the days of the waning moon up to the dark moon. Then the count restarts for the bright half, leading up to the full moon, the last day of each month. In Ghatiyali the day celebrated as "Grand Third" was the dark third of Sravan in the midst of the romantic rainy season. In Jahazpur about thirty years later and thirty kilometers distant, I observed a similar Tij ritual shortly after my arrival in 2010, but it was the dark third of Bhadva, the month following Shravan, and just three days after the major festival of Raksha Bandhan on Shravan's culminating full moon. Sources for a number of other localities report two distinct thirds in the same two months, but falling in those months' bright halves rather than their dark ones.[12]

Some sources distinguish these two rainy season festive bright Thirds by different names and functions. Verma, for example, reports that *Hariyali Tij* is the third day of the bright half of Shravan, and *Haritalika Tij* is the third day of the bright half of Bhadra.[13] The first is a festival for swinging; the second is a fast to honor Parvati (1997:42, 55). Tiwari describes a *Haritalika Tij* occurring on the third day of the bright half of Sravan ("or Bhadau" he adds casually), noting that it marks the beginning of the swinging season. On this day, according to Tiwari, both married and unmarried women fast and worship Parvati "in order to get (keep for life) a good husband, prosperity, and children" (1991:34). In Wadley's account of the festival cycle in the village of Karimpur, Tij is the bright third of Sravan and equally commemorates Parvati's winning of Shiva (1975:158). All these locations celebrate a bright rather than a dark third—but across every locality the festival or festivals take place in the last two months of the rainy season. Meanings and practices for Tij shift across localities and cannot readily be systematized. Nonetheless, whether dark or bright on the calendar, in most places Tij means festive swinging and a fast on behalf of husbands.

In contrast to the variabilities around Tij, Karva Chauth, extending through a wide swath of geography from western Rajasthan to eastern Uttar Pradesh, consistently takes place on the fourth day of the dark half of Kartik—leading up to the major autumn festival of Divali which is Kartik's midpoint, its dark moon.[14] Meanings are correspondingly consistent in that Karva Chauth is about nothing but keeping your husband alive. This would contrast with Tij which engages additional themes such as cherishing of daughters and—perhaps even more poignantly—romantic attachments of husbands to wives. I could risk generalizing and say that Tij places more stress on gender mutuality and more stress on female initiative; Karva Chauth burdens

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[12] While transliterations of festival names, month names, and deity names frequently vary across sources, I use variant spellings only in direct citations.

[13] *Hariyali* means "greenery" and is perfectly appropriate for a rainy season festival; I find no reliable translation for *Haritalika*.

[14] Falk (2006:131) is an exception; she reports Karva Chauth in New Delhi on a bright fourth.

women with the need to save their husbands' lives but—until Bollywood pitches in as we will see—does not give husbands any part to play.

While the dates and purpose of Karva Chauth are consistent across regions, deities associated with this festival shift fluidly from place to place. Shiva, Krishna, Ganesh, and the goddess are all mentioned in various sources. I surmise that deities are not the point of women's vows on Tij or Karva Chauth (although they may well be at other fasts).

Freed and Freed recount the following episode from their Karva Chauth fieldwork: "At one house, we asked the senior woman what god they worshipped when they worshipped the pots. She replied, 'There is only one God. What shall I say?'" (1998:72). Thus do anthropologists exasperate long-suffering hosts with foolish questions. In my own 2010 interviews on Karva Chauth, when I inquired of one interviewee as to whether it was "Mataji," the generic Mother Goddess, who was the focus of their ritual, I was quickly and bluntly told "No!" The woman who corrected me said that the object of worship was "Chauth Mata" or "Fourth Mother"— whose name clearly possesses different implications. I was embarrassed by my error and did not pursue the topic, but it is easy to think with hindsight of the contrast between the lion-riding weapon-wielding warrior goddess represented in local Mataji temples and the beatific protectress of families worshipped by women at their ephemeral home shrines. This mother may reside in a clay pot, in tree branches, in wall drawings. The offerings she prefers are the same cosmetics and sequined cloth that women themselves covet as gifts, and wear to worship her— all emblems of auspicious wifehood. As recorded in my 1980 notes:

> Tij said to be like Gangaur, all are *rups* [forms] of Parvati. [I was told by women]: The meaning is
> the same as Gangaur, to worship the condition? of the *suhag* [auspiciously married woman] and
> pray for its immortality.[15]

In other words, women are explicitly worshipping the idea of their own auspiciousness as *suhag* —an auspiciousness they embody in their own adorned persons.

In all published sources for Tij except mine (Gold 2002), if any story is supplied it is the tale of Parvati's ascetic practice to win Lord Shiva for her husband. Some ethnographies of women's rituals, such as Pearson's, see this as exemplary of women's quest to control their own lives by whatever means are available to them. Pearson writes, "by observing austerities one gets power not only to achieve one's goals but also to control one's own life, rather than be controlled by others (notably by men)" (1996:160-61). This quest for control, for female agency if you will, finds expression in collective solidarities at ritual events. At times, in some contexts, it even spills over to energize women's political agendas.[16] Ghatiyali's Tij story is unusual in that it features a husband who acts on behalf of his wife, respecting her suffering and risking disgrace to help her.

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[15] Gangaur comes sixteen days after Holi, at the start of the hot season; it explicitly celebrates Parvati's asceticism in winning Lord Shiva for her husband. In some Rajasthan cities Gangaur is the occasion for a major public procession. In Ghatiyali it was, like Tij, a festival observed only by those castes which forbid divorce and widow remarriage.

[16] See Holland and Skinner (1995) for Tij in Nepal as affording women opportunities for critical commentary on gender.

Today one Karva Chauth story has emerged as the prevailing narrative, replicated in oral tellings, ritual pamphlets, films, and on the internet. Collections made between the 1950s and 1980s (Freed and Freed 1998; Marriott 1972; Tiwari 1991) show that the story everyone knows today was earlier just one among a number of coexisting tales associated with the festival. The dominant story has its variants—largely whether or not it includes a secondary plot about a scheming servant girl. This subplot engages a folkloric motif reaching back to ancient Indian literature and with a global spread.[17] While the subplot appears in many Karva Chauth accounts both old and contemporary, I never heard it in Jahazpur. The core of Karva Chauth's now dominant narrative remains highly consistent across contexts. The plot features a good wife deceived with a false moon by loving brothers—who have only the best intentions—into breaking her fast too soon with disastrous results for her husband. This chain of mistakes requires the woman's fortitude and the grace of the goddess to remedy. It is a lesson in the imperative—never break a vow!—as much as it is a lesson in the power of a woman's self-restraint.

Tiwari's extensive collection contains a variety of Karva Chauth stories which he recorded from women in Kanpur district, Uttar Pradesh in the mid-1970s and 1980s; these were mostly women he met through his familial networks. Here we encounter some surprising twists: women tell stories of women who claim to fast but actually eat. They get hungry; they indulge their cravings; their husbands do not die. Rather, the suspicious husband spies on his wife, and finding that she breaks her vow, he recites mocking verses describing her behavior to shame her; he beats her too—which is how both variants conclude (1991:89-90). Tiwari's collection also has a version of the prevailing tale: woman deceived by brothers into eating. It isn't hard to understand why women might prefer ultimately to adopt the tale of a devoted wife deceived by loving brothers into breaking her fast, and discard the tale of a greedy woman caught out by a spying husband and punished for it. While Tiwari collected them both in the same region, the tellers of the "gluttonous wife" tale were older than the teller of the "false moon" tale (1991:91-92).

Marriott's research in Uttar Pradesh in the early 1950s yielded versions of the tale of the deceived sister. He writes, "The story of the younger sister and her devotion to her husband, which provides the manifest rationale of the festival, is unmistakably built up out of the objects and life of the village." He suggests that its "*purana* has yet to be written" (1972:206). The Sanskrit Puranas are vast mythological texts containing many stories of the deities. What Marriott means here is that the Karva Chauth narrative does not appear in Sanskritic texts. How might Marriott have guessed at that time that it would take Bollywood to write the Karva Chauth "*purana*"? For Karva Chauth has shifted radically from the pure "little tradition" that Marriott deemed it to be to the new great tradition, as Bollywood is sometimes thought to have become, because of its pan-Indian reach. Besides spreading through film, television, and YouTube renderings, Karva Chauth is now also frequently linked to Sanskrit epics; Patil's survey of festivals, for example, tells us, as do various web sites, that "Draupadi observed this fast for the safety of Arjuna" (1994:93).

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[17] This is K1911.1.4 "False bride finishes true bride's tasks and supplants her" (Thompson and Balys 1958:335). For a cross-cultural exploration of substitute brides see Doniger (2000:153-86).

Moonbeams

Stories reflect lives and lives incorporate stories; oral traditions and commercially produced dramas participate in generative processes infusing meanings into women's ritual performances. Moonbeams in provincial north India may have a startling brightness. The Karva Chauth fast and tale ascend from scattered and diverse little traditions to a homogeneous "Indian culture," riding a wave of media dissemination and globalization via migration. Young women adapt ritual traditions as they seek balance between comforting stasis and potentially chaotic aspiration in their changing social world. There are radical alterations afoot in marriage including: changing patterns of residency; women's roles in the salaried work force; even a perceptible weakening of that culturally celebrated dogged commitment to one's arranged, or fated, marital plight. For some women, however, ritual solace may seem banal and no longer do the trick.

A dissonant fieldwork postscript: Kanta—young, defiant, hardworking, probably not much over 25—was struggling to raise her small daughter on her own. She told me that her husband was a drinker, and that he had deserted her when she was hospitalized for excessive bleeding following a difficult birth and the loss of their second child, a baby boy. She had been befriended, and recommended to us, by Jahazpur's only female social worker, for whom she did both cooking and housework. Kanta came to our flat and prepared one simple meal in the late morning or early afternoon (we cooked our own supper). On the day of Karva Chauth, not enough of a participant observer to keep the fast myself, I hurried home to eat between interviews, my head filled with the day's stories. Thoughtlessly I asked Kanta if she were keeping the vow. There were some grounds for my tactlessness because, as already related, I had conversed with one divorced female who claimed with enthusiasm to undertake the Karva Chauth fast on behalf of her children, and who clearly valued feeling herself part of a community of fasting married women. Kanta, however, retorted with a venom that startled me: "Who needs long life for a man like that!" (*aise admi ke lie lambi umar kyo chayiye*?)

I was taken aback by Kanta's words and tone. Although I knew well that marriages in provincial Rajasthan could be as fraught with tension as anywhere in the world, over several decades of ethnographic work in this region I had rarely heard spousal anger verbalized so bluntly (the sole exception being a very aged widow [Gold and Gujar 2002:193]). Traditional lore found the highest virtue in a woman who put up with the worst kind of husband. So I was instructed while living in Ghatiyali, where more than once I heard from friends a popular tale about a woman whose husband is in love with a prostitute. The husband contracts a hideous disease, which weakens him so badly that eventually he can't even walk to his mistress' house, but still longs to see the other woman. Although his body is loathsome and contagious, his dutiful wife takes him in her arms and carries him to his paramour. This tale (which I love to tell my American students just to watch their faces) was given to me in Rajasthan as instructive of the ideal behavior of a wife: dedicated to obey her husband-god no matter how low-down his wishes or behavior. The husband has no redeeming features. The point of the story, I came to realize, is that it isn't about the husband! Rather what matters is the ideal of woman as a *pati-vrata* (a

husband-devotee).[18] What would inspire a woman to such forbearance? Remember: *suhag* is equal to *bhagvan*; wifehood is the same as divinity. As Urmilaji explained to Kirin Narayan, "No matter how bad a husband is, no woman would prefer to be a widow" (Narayan 1997:34).

Kanta's outspoken rejection of the entire "worship your husband no matter what" mystique gave me pause, radically departing as it did from the far subtler subversions of domestic hierarchy I had often celebrated in my ethnographic writing. Such blatant critique remains an exception, but during my year in Jahazpur I had plenty of occasions to observe that both the ideals and practices surrounding marriage are in serious and complicated flux (Gold 2014). Ritual traditions may respond to such flux in more ways than one. Two extremes touched on in this essay would be the real, if film-inspired couples, who share their fasts in mutual tenderness; and Kanta's total dismissal of obligations to an undeserving man.

Most women live between extremes, and have considerable stake in their own familial and ritual roles. Many women I met evidently took pride in embodying "Indian culture" through practicing difficult rituals (whatever their marital circumstances). Many of the same women I knew who undertook difficult fasts, were also pursuing other strenuous endeavors far less traditional: getting educated up to graduate degrees; competing for government jobs. They spoke without hesitation of wishing to be financially independent from their husbands' families

It is not insignificant that in both festivals processes of standardization have resulted in two dominant tales stressing the need for women's empowering austerities explicitly dedicated to protecting husbands' long lives. Yet ethnographic encounters reveal variegation, discord, and novelty fringing these austere narratives. Women redefine ritual actions and meanings according to their own emotional needs within changing social and economic circumstances. In Ghatiyali at Tij thirty years ago, women already imagined, with what seemed like almost wistful humor, a different kind of husband as reward for a difficult fast. In present-day Jahazpur, younger women especially reimagine conjugality, absorbing the input of popular film and television dramas. It is important to acknowledge harsh experiences such as Kanta's that certainly disillusion some women. Yet North Indian women's rituals and storytelling performances by and large remain occasions for pleasurable sociability; for claiming self-worth; for celebrating not only a benign female power portrayed in shrines and stories, but participants' own auspicious beauty and potentially boundless capacities.

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[18] Incidentally a version of this story appears on the Festivals web site (2014), listed as Tij story no. 2—and providing a happy ending for the couple including the husband's miraculous cure thanks to his wife's virtues bringing divine intervention; he repudiates the extramarital connection.

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The Social Life of Transcriptions:
Interactions around Women's Songs in Kangra

Kirin Narayan

Moving oral traditions into the domain of the printed word involves a first step of transcription.[1] Anyone who has transcribed recordings from fieldwork will recollect the grinding effort demanded by this task. One listens again and again: striving to catch the meaning and tone of words as they gallop past, struggling to coax a herd of words into orderly lines, straining to remain attentive to other sounds—comments, interjections, interruptions, parallel performances —that are simultaneously shaping a text. Yet when working with a language other than one intended for publication, assembling a transcription can almost immediately give way to the work of refining a translation and the challenge of embedding a text in the analytical frameworks of presentations and published writings. In this essay, though, I pause to consider the practice of transcription, and the material artifacts made when moving oral tradition into written form. Drawing on fieldwork with singers and their songs in Kangra, Northwest India, I ask: what sorts of social interactions and cultural insights are generated around the laborious process and the raw product of transcribing oral texts?

At first glance, transcribing another's words might appear a perfectly mechanical task— one that voice recognition software could seamlessly accomplish if programmed to understand the language and the idiosyncrasies of a particular speaker. Yet our choices for the form of transcription emerge from our own and local biases of what certain genres of texts look like, and decisions on presentation shape how readers read, recognize, and re-imagine oral texts from the page (Fine 1984; Finnegan 1992:194-207; Tedlock 1983). Further, the form of recording that was used also affects the resulting text; for example, as Dennis Tedlock's (1983) groundbreaking work on transcription of Zuni oral narratives has shown, dictation (as with Boasian handwritten texts) radically influences the spoken tempo of performance (38), while recording devices are an altering presence in their own right (298-99). Following Tedlock, many scholars have striven for

greater fidelity to oral performance by adapting the use of different fonts, formats, notes, and asides in producing transcribed texts. Depending on the intended purpose, folk narratives, life stories, oral testimonies, plays, songs, and other performative genres that have been adapted to written form all demand different creative challenges—yet once written up, the decisions made en route may vanish. As Ruth Finnegan writes (1992:199), "oral-derived texts are sometimes presented as authoritative, but without knowing the transcribing strategies it is dangerous to accept this at face value."

From the perspective of anthropologists, the transcription of others' words is part of a larger spectrum of texts generated while "writing culture" (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Fieldnotes too are rife with quotes, even if they do not carry entire stretches of oral texts. In attempting to reproduce others' words with fidelity, written transcriptions of oral traditions remain more openly recognizable as the creation of *others* than fieldnotes (which also may be others' creations, though they are usually retold in the author's voice). Particularly when written down in a script that the performers themselves are able to read—or understand when read aloud —transcriptions can represent mutually recognizable fragments of shared cultural knowledge, and so are invaluable for eliciting oral literary criticism (Dundes 1966; Narayan 1995) and for more generally facilitating interpretive collaborations (cf. Lassiter 2008; Lawless 1993). In a tribute to Julie Cruikshank's *The Social Life of Stories* (1998), I think of these fieldwork interactions as an aspect of the social life of transcriptions.

A few years ago, the Belgian journal *Interval(le)s* published a special issue on "Interdisciplinary Transcriptions" (2008) that brought together writers and scholars from many fields to showcase a wide span of disciplinary engagements with the process and products of transcription. In an essay for that issue, I was inspired to reflect on aspects of transcribing and translating a Hindu holy man's teaching stories (Narayan 2008b) that I had not elaborated on when writing about these stories for my first book (Narayan 1989). That essay made me also think more closely about transcribing women's songs in Kangra in the Northwest Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh, India. Translating stories, I had not lingered over shades of meaning around each word with quite the same intensity as when attempting to translate songs as a form of oral poetry, and so transcriptions in the original language had not played the same central and ongoing role in interactions. My Devanagari transcriptions of Kangra songs—whether as scribbled pages of notebooks, or as more neatly copied pages—have been a site of sociable exchange with women. My fieldnotes remain a private stash, but these song transcriptions represent a space of shared reflection. Co-created and corrected, transcribed songs are often the product of consultation, even as their presence has given form to further conversations. My mentors and their relatives have also occasionally consulted, copied out, and even hugged these transcriptions when meeting a song. My file was once invited to a hospital bedside to while away the time and distract a patient from pain. In many ways, these transcriptions—situated at a porous interface between orality and writing—have become material talismans of continued relationships across time.

I focus here on a researcher's field-generated transcriptions of words, and for this essay will not engage the importance of music and possible musical transcriptions. So, in discussions of transcribed texts, my mentors in Kangra often sang portions aloud, queried me about the melody (*bhākh*), or suggested alternate tunes. The materiality of audio recordings—listened to

together, brought back, replayed, discussed—would require a different though related account.

While each researcher's experience with transcriptions is likely to be shaped by genre, social context, and intended goals, I now offer a few examples from my engagement with Kangra women's songs to consider how both the labor and material product of transcription—so often invisible in finished scholarly products—can be potential sites of illumination. In the pages ahead, I use "transcription" for the process, and "transcriptions" when referring to the generated texts. I set the scene by describing insights on language use that may be smoothed over in translation, but can be gained through considering the process and products of transcription. I then move on to consider the interactions generated around the transcriptions of two songs: a sung myth that evoked further narratives from one performer, and a mysterious, lyrical reflection on transience whose meaning was revealed through conversations with several different women as well another scholar's transcription and commentary on a variant.

The Language of Songs

In Kangra—as in much of village India—gatherings of women have traditionally sung together at any happy celebration, bringing auspiciousness to the event (Jassal 2012; Henry 1988; Raheja and Gold 1994). Such celebrations mark rites of passage in human lives and also in the lives of goddesses and gods through the calendar year. I was first drawn to women's collective singing at ritual events as a city teenager visiting Kangra during a summer vacation. Later, as an apprentice anthropologist and folklorist, I occasionally began to write down these songs. It was only during the summer of 1982, after my first year in graduate school, that I assembled scores of recordings and a large sheaf of transcriptions as part of a project on gendered expectations in wedding songs (*suhāg*) sung for human and divine brides; subsequently, I have returned to Kangra for intensive stretches of field research and many shorter visits, remaining in contact with singers. This span of time has continually relocated any transcriptions I have produced amid wider social changes.

Transcriptions themselves can be thought of in terms of less polished and more polished forms. Through the years, even as my cassette recorder wound forward, I was always trying to keep track of what was being sung in my notebooks. This jotting of texts—a first sketch for transcription—was often on a continuum with the jottings that would be formed into fieldnotes (cf. Emerson et al. 1995:170). Here is a fieldnote adapting a scribble I had made between songs during a Rajput boy's sacred thread (*janeu*) ceremony during the summer of 1991:

> In the cool dark interiors at these events, women sit clustered close on cotton durries. Between singing, a soft burble of conversation, the tinkle of bangles in many registers like swift trickles of icy water in the summer heat. Sharp rising cry of a child now and then. Light filtering in from the door and windows softly illumines the planes and angles of faces. When people cluster by the door on their way in or out, a darkness falls through the room as though we had all entered a tunnel. There is the sweet fragrance of lingering *dhoop*, a starchy scent of new cloth, and from the courtyard freshly cooked rice. Women are wearing shiny fabrics that one would expect to be stinky in the heat, but no. They arrive carrying plastic bags filled with

> pieces of cloth etc. for presentation. When the anthropologist pulls out her notebook dozens of
> eyes converge: what is she up to?

What was I doing? From the perspective of others, perpetual note-taking at such gatherings was surely "a strange, marginalizing activity, marking the writer as an observer rather than as a full, ordinary participant" (Emerson et al. 1995:37). For me, writing notes in English—interspersed with words on quotes in the Devanagari script—and whatever sense I could make of songs as if dictated, was a crucial first step in organizing my recordings, turning songs into written texts, and locating songs within social situations, cultural contexts, and the engagements of particular singers.

Following the training I had received in the classes of Alan Dundes, I had at first transformed these jotted transcriptions into formal texts through several steps. First, I wrote each word out in the Devanagari script.[2] The challenge here was finding appropriate spellings for the dialect, and literate interlocutors sometimes pointed out ways in which I was unconsciously Hindi-izing the sounds of words, for example writing a Hindi-like "*bahanā*" for "sisters" while the word was closer to "*bhainā*" with an aspirated, almost "p" like "b" and a retroflex "ṇ." Despite the imperfections of my spelling, below each Devanagari word, I provided a rough transliteration in English—for non-Devanagari readers to be able to recognize the sounds—as well as a translation of just that word. After this word-by-word version, I attempted a freer line-by-line translation. In my notes I added observations about the context and any commentaries that I was able to gather from singers. While I earnestly labored over each of these steps as a graduate student, in subsequent years I have worked directly from the Devanagari transcriptions of songs to compose translations.

Transforming jottings into such legible sequences of words, I tried as much as possible to confer with singers themselves. During ceremonial occasions when they were busily moving from song to song, I rarely had a chance to divert singers' attention towards help with my transcriptions. During more informal occasions, singers were often happy to guide me immediately after a particular song or sequence of songs. Whenever possible, I tried to follow up with visits with the singers themselves, or else I would turn to help from singers in other households. Writing out words or returning with written words invariably triggered commentary at many levels, as I will soon illustrate through presenting two texts. My showing up again across the years and life stages often yielded deepening dimensions of interpretation.

While I usually transcribed texts myself, when faced with a daunting backlog, I occasionally employed educated local people to help out. Their comments on the process of transcription revealed perspectives on the language of songs as well as the interactions around them. For example, Vidya, who had gained an Hindi "Prabhakar" (B.A. equivalent) degree, said after attempting to transcribe an ancient Brahman woman's repertoire of mythological songs, "the thing with this language is that you can just put any word anywhere, join it together any which way. There's no strict grammar." In songs, she felt, "words are just put in. *Je! Ni! Aji!*

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[2] While other scripts that have also been occasionally adopted for the Pahari dialect of Kangra—the Tankri script previously used by traders, or the Gurmukhi script of Punjabi, I chose Devanagari—associated with Sanskrit and now Hindi—because I had learned that script in school, and also because in contemporary Himachal Pradesh the script is often used for the mountain dialect.

What do these things mean? They're just put in for the right rhythm."[3] Vidya continued, "this language isn't Pahari, it isn't Punjabi, it isn't Hindi, it isn't anything! It's just a big mix of words." Similarly, Anju, who had returned with her family to the mountain area after studying in the plains, was at first charmed by the chance to listen to older women's songs but later confessed that these could give her a headache: "Such strange language! Such old words!" She sympathetically added, "of course you find it hard to write a book." A young man between jobs with non-governmental organizations who helped out with a few tapes was less struck by the language than the chance to overhear women's often bawdy playfulness during song sessions —"Women really joke together. I enjoyed hearing that so much!"—a reminder of the complicated gendered dimensions of transcriptions made by research assistants from Rajasthan that Ann Gold also mentions (Raheja and Gold 1994:xxx).

Songs that were more recognizably in the Pahari dialect, sung to slow melodies and without instrumentation, were usually termed "old women's songs" (*jhabrīyān de gīt*) or just old songs (*purāne gīt*). A woman could present herself as a repository of cultural knowledge by knowing such songs; she could also run the danger of appearing old-fashioned and uneducated by singing *only* such songs in Pahari. Multilingual and literate local people—like the ones who helped me transcribe—often looked over transcriptions to point out how many songs were heavily inflected with other languages, most centrally Punjabi on account of the long historical association with this adjacent plains area (Kangra was considered a hill district of Punjab from 1809 to 1966), but also Hindi and Urdu. Sanskrit words showed up more in the songs of women from Brahman Pandit families, and English words—such as "lipstick," "bus," and "motorcycle"—appeared especially in joking songs. This deep hybridity of languages in Kangra song repertoires, I later learned, had already been described in the late nineteenth century by the colonial folklorist Captain R. C. Temple (1882) who undertook a linguistic analysis of a collection of men's religious songs when Kangra was still part of Punjab: as Temple noted, the songs freely mingled Hindi, Punjabi, and the local dialect. Gathering variants and following repertoires, I came to see how, when women were multilingual, they sometimes shifted words in songs away from Pahari towards languages that gained prestige through a wider spread. Further, women who did not consider themselves *speakers* of Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu, Sanskrit, or English might nonetheless be *singers* of songs that carried words in these languages.

Ironically, this hybridity can be smoothed over in a more self-conscious performance of Pahari songs. Pahari songs are also broadcast on a local radio program, and after the 1980s they became available with instrumentation in a more rollicking Bollywood aesthetic through local cassette versions (cf. Manuel 1993). Since the 1990s, brightly costumed Pahari song and dance sequences have been regularly shown on the local television channels or circulated through VCDs (Video Compact Disc) or CDs. Some of these may even be found on YouTube.[4] For example, a nostalgic song, "*Jeena Kāngre dā*" ("Oh to Live in Kangra") performed by two young smiling men with fashionable haircuts and jeans who wander about the countryside

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[3] While these words were often ways of exhorting listeners to follow, singers also sometimes told me they were there "just to make the step."

[4] As Wagner 2013 has argued, these costumed songs frequently depict "traditional" attire and highlight the Gaddi shepherds. See also Sharma (*infra* 274).

encountering villagers in a range of more traditional outfits had received 44,816 hits as of March 9, 2015.[5]

Women singers whose repertoires have been forged around ritual occasions find the tastes of younger generations increasingly pulled toward this wider technologically mediated circulation of songs, and even at ritual occasions, a DJ (disc-jockey) with loudspeakers often drowns out women's singing. Perhaps this larger context has contributed to many singers' great generosity in granting me their knowledge and time. Taking on my education, singers firmly steered me towards the sorts of songs that they most value: songs that narrate difficulties in the lives of women (*pakhaṛu*) and also devotional songs (*bhajan*) that make sense of difficulties within a religious framework and might retell challenges faced by goddesses, gods and devotees. Such songs could teach you about life's problems, singers explained. But songs involving deities also evoke also evoke a benevolent divine presence and are cherished as a renewing source of inner peacefulness, solace, and blessings. I now turn to two such religious songs to illustrate the social life of transcriptions.

Transcription Triggering Further Narrative

During the summer of 1982, when I was researching wedding songs, my mother (who had settled in a Kangra village) took me to visit Urmila Devi Sood, a woman she had often observed leading others through songs and stories at local ritual events. We had found Urmila Devi, whom I came to know as "Urmilaji,"in the company of two younger married sisters. Learning of my project, the sisters performed three wedding songs of impressive length and beauty as their young children played together in the courtyard. One song was about the birth and marriage of Parvati, Daughter of the Mountains, who in Kangra is also known as Gauran and Gaurja. Her groom, Shiva, the Benevolent One, is also known by such names as Shankar, Senkar, and Bholenath.[6] This song is set to a melody recognizably related to the melody of the song appropriate to the moment of the Vedi rite of marriage when the husband and wife circle the sacred fire.[7]

For the song below, I include a transliteration of the largely Pahari text in which Hindi is also interspersed. My strategies for transliteration are themselves a compromise between words and accents, and should be viewed as more suggestive than authoritative. The final word at the end of each verse was "Ram." Such divine names are often added, almost like a form of punctuation in many religious songs, so accentuating the merit of "taking God's name" and also "to make the step" as singers said. Further, including Ram as an incarnation of Vishnu points to a counterpoint and continuity between Shiva and Vishnu as two major male deities worshipped in the hills:

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[5] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NEcPATE9hvs.

[6] Vividly colorful and comic accounts of this marriage are popular in "vernacular mythology" from different regions of India. See in particular Gold (2002).

[7] The Vedi portion of the marriage follows an earlier portion known as the Lagan, during which the "gift of a daughter" [*kanyā dān*] is made by the girl's father to the groom.

chandra chaṛheyā prakāsh	In the light of the rising moon,
kī bāliyā kanyā	a baby girl
janam līyā hai rām.	took birth, Ram.

jis din kanyā	The day this girl
ne janam līyā hai	was born
bāve man chintā ugameā rām	worries sprouted in her father's mind, Ram.

[*Gaurja's father sends out a Brahman as family priest to find her a good husband*]

hāth par gaḍvā	"With a waterpot in hand,
munḍe par dhotī	a cloth covering your head,
chalo var ḍhunḍan chaliye rām	set out to find the groom, Ram.

ika ban hanḍeyā	Walk through the first forest,
dujā ban hanḍeyā	Walk through the second forest,
kajjalī bane jo jānā rām	then go into the dark Kajjali forest." Ram.

[*The Brahman encounters an ash-smeared yogi, and doesn't recognize that this is Shiva. All the same, he follows instructions to offer gifts for an engagement*]

anga vibhūtī	Body smeared with ash,
sarp janeu	a serpent as his sacred thread,
jogiyā ne dhūnī lagāī rām	the yogi tended a sacred fire, Ram.

sāth supārī	"Seven betel nuts,
dhvaja nī narel	a flag and a coconut
main pahaleḍī bheṇṭ chaḍhāi rām	Here is my first offering." Ram.

[*Shiva demurs, stressing how inappropriate he would be as a match*]

rājeā dī putarī	"Please give this King's daughter
mahārājeā ko dījīe	to an even greater King—
hum dhuḍ malangīe jogī rām	I'm just a vagabond yogi rubbed in ash, Ram.

mahal chavāre	A big palace
uske rahane ko chāhīye	is what she needs to live in—
ham banon mein baiṭhe jogī rām	I'm just a yogi camped in the forest, Ram.

dariye galīche	Mats and carpets
uske baiṭhne ko chāhīye	are what she needs to sit on—
ham ghās mein baiṭhe jogī rām.	I'm just a yogi sitting on grass, Ram.
sāṭh saheliyān	Sixty girlfriends

uske phirne ko chāhīye	are whom she needs to roam with—
ham ban mein akelā jogī rām.	I'm just a yogi alone in the forest, Ram."

[*The Brahman needs payment for this service, and Shiva continues to act playfully disreputable*]

le jā brāhmaṇ	"Here Brahman, take
tu dhuḍī keḍī muṭhiyā	this fistful of ashes—
main yah o dei dakshinā denī rām	This is the sort of gift I can offer." Ram.

kyā ji karān	"What sir, will I do
terī dhuḍī keḍi muṭhiyā	with your fistful of ashes?
ghar kī brāhmaṇī bairāgī ho jāngī	My wife back home will become an ascetic.
main yah o dei dakhsiṇā na lenī rām	I won't accept this sort of gift." Ram.

le jā brāhmaṇ	"Here Brahman, accept
tu bhangā keḍā goṭnā	this pestle for grinding marijuana—
main yah o dei dakhsiṇā denī rām	This is the sort of gift I can offer." Ram.

kyā ji karān	"What Sir, will I do
tere bhangā keḍā goṭnā	with your pestle for drugs?
ghar kī brāhmaṇī pāgal hoi jāndā	My wife back home will go crazy.
main yah o dei dakhsinā na lenī rām	I won't accept this sort of gift." Ram.

le jā brāhman	"Here Brahman, accept
tu vishiyār nāg	this poisonous snake—
main yah o dei dakhsiṇā denī rām	This is the sort of gift I can offer." Ram.

kyā ji karān	"What sir, will I do
tu vishiyār nāg	with your poisonous snake?
ghar kī brāhmaṇī nu toṛ toṛ khāngā	My wife back home will be eaten up
main yah o dei dakhsiṇā na lenī rām	I won't accept this sort of gift." Ram.

le jā brāhman	"Here, Brahman, accept
tū dhan ki muṭhiyā	this handful of cash—
main yah o dei dakhsiṇā denī rām	This is the sort of gift I can offer." Ram.

de de be jajmān	"Give, give, donor,
tū dhan keḍi muṭhiyā	this handful of cash.
main yah o dei dakhsiṇā lenī rām	This is the sort of gift I'll accept." Ram.

[*The Brahman takes off with the money, and realizes Shiva's divine nature only in retrospect*]

age age chaldā	He walked forward
pichche muḍhe dekhe	then turned and looked around:
jhād sonede bād sonede	golden trees, golden bushes,
sadāshiv antaryāmi rām	all knowing eternal Shiva, Ram.

[*Shiva continues playing with forms when he shows up for the wedding*]

jānji sadāshiv	When Eternal Shiva
lagan jo āeā	came for the Lagan part of the wedding,
ang vibhūtī	his body smeared with ash,
sarp janeu	a serpent as his sacred thread,
jogī dā bes banāe rām	he had taken on the guise of a yogi, Ram.

sāṭh saheliyān	Gaurja's sixty girlfriends
pucchnā je lagiyā	began asking,
tain kīyān pāp kamāe rām	"What sort of sin did you earn?" Ram.

gaurjā rānī	Queen Gaurja
tre tre roī	wept bitterly
apane bāve de pās khaḍoī	standing before her father:
main keḍā pāp kamāe rām	"What sort of bad actions did I do?" Ram.

āī sai nāin	The female barber arrived
le main kardī	"Here, I'll fix this.
uṭha mere sadāshiv	Stand up, my Eternal Shiva
gaurjā mardī	Gaurja is dying
srishṭī dā rūp dharāo rām	put on your Creator-form." Ram.

jānji sadāshiv	When Eternal Shiva
vedī jo āeā	came for the Vedi part of the wedding,
srishṭī dā rūp dharāiā rām	He'd taken his Creator form, Ram.

sāṭh saheliyān	The sixty girlfriends
pucchnā je lagiyā	began to ask:
tain kiyān puṇ kamāe rām	"What sort of merit have you earned?" Ram.

gaurjā rānī	Queen Gaurja
khiḍ khiḍ hansdī	bursts into laughter
apane bāve de pās khaḍoī	standing before her father:
mere janam janam sab koī	"Through all my many births
tain kiyān puṇ kamāe rām	What good deeds did I do?" Ram.

I drew on the last verses in which Gauran talks to her girlfriends for my first published article (Narayan 1986:60-62). The rest of the long song remained submerged in my files. Some years later, as I selected materials for a book, I pulled the song out to join other copies of transcriptions and translations of songs with which I hoped to work. Urmilaji had become a dear friend over the years, and we had worked together on a book about all of the folktales she could recall, along with conversations about their meaning (Narayan 1997). In 2004, when I visited Kangra, I found that a difficult pregnancy had brought Urmilaji's daughter Anamika to the hospital and that Urmilaji too was camping out in the women's ward. When I asked how I might help, Urmilaji suggested that I bring my folder of songs. As she said, "songs remind us that we all have difficulties; even the gods."

Back in the hospital the next day, I pulled out the sheaf of handwritten texts in the Devanagari script accompanied by translations into English. "This is the first song I taped from you," I said to Urmilaji, opening to the song of Gaurja's birth and handing my folder across the bed. "Look at this date—1982, when I was a student." To Anamika, I said, "you probably weren't even born yet."

"Of course I was born!" objected Anamika. "I was born in 1976."

"You were really small then," I said, dimly recollecting the children who had played around Urmilaji and her sisters as they sang that long ago monsoon afternoon.

Urmilaji squinted at the Xerox of my old transcription. Eyes narrowed, a finger under each word, she sang the words in a small, high voice.

Both she and Anamika began commenting.

"See, the moment a girl is born you're already worrying about her future," Anamika said about the second verse, when worries sprout in Gaurja's father's mind. "What kind of home will you find for her? What kind of groom?"

I struggled to recollect but couldn't just then come up with a relevant Pahari proverb a man had once recited some years earlier. "Once rice is sown and a son is born—there's no leisure" (*dhān bījān kanne putra jammeyān kadhī sukh nī ondā*). I wanted to make the point that any kind of child rearing could be consuming.

"Life is difficult for a girl," said Anamika.

"Once Gaurja came of age, her father sent a Brahman off to find a groom," Urmilaji explained. "He had to travel a long distance." This long distance was indexed by the Brahman's need to carry along the essentials of travel gear: a water pot for ablutions beside any spring or stream, and also an extra length of cloth to use as a towel or against the heat. From other songs, I was familiar with the convention of naming three forests, with the third one always containing the goal.

The Brahman found someone in the third forest: a solitary yogi meditatively tending a fire, rubbed with the ash of renunciation, his torso encircled with a serpent. Here anyone familiar with images of Shiva could add in other visual details: Shiva's matted locks piled on top of his head, the sickle moon on his forehead, the deer skin on which he sat cross-legged. Though the Brahman mistook Shiva for an ordinary yogi, he mechanically went about the task that the King had commissioned him with.

"The offering is the *sagan* gift," said Anamika.

"For an engagement?" I asked.

"Here it's for an engagement, but we call it *sagan* whenever you give this gift between relatives. For example, when her sons-in-law come to visit, Mother gives them a *sagan*. Usually, a *sagan* includes dried fruit—like a dried coconut—some sweets, some cloth, like even a handkerchief, and some money."

"What about the flag and the betel nuts?" I asked, scribbling along the margins of the text.

"Shiva is a God," said Urmilaji, reminding me that even though mythology might sometimes seem on a continuum with everyday life, it also carried its own logic. "So he gets different offerings. Gods live in temples with flags, right?"

Having received this gift, Shiva at first objected to the Brahman's proposal that he marry the daughter of a King. As Urmilaji explained with a bemused smile, "he said, 'I don't even have a blade of grass of my own, and this princess is used to life in a palace!'"

Finally, Shiva agreed to the engagement, and reached about him to offer the Brahman a gift (*dān*) for his efforts as go-between. The Brahman, though, turned out to be finicky, and rejected all kinds of precious things. Ash from Shiva's own sacred fire! A chance to experience Shiva's own intoxication! He even said no to the protective serpent from around Shiva's own neck. Instead, falling in line with folklore stereotypes of a greedy Brahman, this one wanted money. Transposing earlier historical times with mythological ones, Urmilaji commented, "in those days, the Brahman would have been given gold coins (*mohur*)," with "those days" presumably referring both to the time of earlier singers as well as the ancient mythological past. The Brahman grabbed his gold coins and set off, only later realizing Shiva's identity and that *everything* around Shiva was gold. As Urmilaji said, "only then he understood that this was eternal Shiva, who controls everything from inside (*antaryāmī*)."

Urmilaji expanded on Shiva's original reluctance to marry Gaurja with an affectionate smile: "He said, 'I don't even have a blade of grass of my own, and this princess is used to life in a palace!'" These days, Urmilaji observed, many houses were grand as palaces, but at the time of the song most dwellings were humble. Later, in a cramped nearby apartment, Urmilaji went on to elaborate on a story that wasn't described in this song but was often retold during the Hariyali (or Haritalika) ritual marking Shiva and Parvati's wedding each monsoon season. This story included the background details of just how Gaurja had earned Shiva's attention. As Urmilaji said:

> She went to the forest and did all kinds of *tapasyā*, ascetic practices. She ate only *bilvā* leaves, she
> didn't drink water; she did all kinds of things. Then she made an image of Shiva from sand and
> worshipped him. Shiva came and asked her what boon she wanted. She said that she wanted him
> as her groom. He gave her that boon, promising to marry her.

Parvati was exemplifying cultural models that emphasized *tapasyā*—great austerity and restraint—as generating power and gaining divine attention. Urmilaji also explained more about what happened in the song text after Shiva agreed:

So the Brahman then went to Gaurja's father, the King, and he said that because the groom was so far away, he had not only made an engagement, but he had set a wedding date too. The King said, "Fine." He started preparations for the wedding.

But then, at the time of the wedding, Shiva came with a groom's party of ghosts and ghouls and crazy sprites; all horrific creatures. Everyone was aghast. Then too, Shiva was in the form of a yogi: half-naked, smeared with ash, his hair matted and wild. Snakes and scorpions were dangling from him.

The King was alarmed: "Who is this groom that the Brahman has promised my girl to?"

The Queen began to cry. "How can we give our adored daughter to this kind of groom? Let's call the wedding off!"

But the King said, "No! We gave our word. The wedding has to proceed."

Urmilaji went on to remind me that this song related to the two major steps of a traditional Kangra wedding ceremony: first the Lagan, which included the *kanyā dān*, or gift of a daughter, that is made by the girl's father to the groom, and second, the Vedi, when the husband and wife walk around the sacred fire seven times with their garments tied together. The groom's initial appearance at the Lagan is compared to the form of a mendicant yogi or Shiva. Urmilaji explained, "at this time, the groom strips down and bathes, and everyone from the bride's side has a chance to look at him, to see who he is and that he has no physical defects. They can still call off a wedding at this point." The groom then gets dressed in a simple cotton *dhotī* and wooden sandals, like those of a mendicant.[8]

For the Vedi, or the second part of the marriage, a groom in village Kangra has in recent years dressed up in a suit and shimmering gold tinsel crown. The song alluded to this transformation with the barber's wife urging Shiva to a more conventional look, his "Creator Form." Urmilaji elaborated, "he dressed in good clothes, not in that half-naked yogi form. He looked like a King—a real 'gentleman!'" Shiva took on the "gentleman" householder's creative and generative form as an outcome of the earlier phases of destruction and renunciation for which he is best known (O'Flaherty 1973). As Urmilaji had commented to my younger graduate student self when we were still largely strangers, "because Lord Shiva changed his form, the grooms nowadays do the same."

This was not the only previously transcribed text that Urmilaji shed light on through commentary in the course of those hot summer days of Anamika's confinement. In addition to expanding on songs she had herself first shared with me, she also was delighted to read transcriptions of other singers' versions of familiar songs. For example, she lit up with pleasure on encountering a long song in which Krishna dresses as a woman to impersonate a long-lost sister of the beautiful Chandravali. "It's been so long that I've been wanting to remember this song!" Urmilaji exclaimed, embracing the file. She explained that as she had no one to sing it with, she had forgotten how it began and unfolded (Narayan 2008a:85). Transcriptions of songs, I learned, could not just evoke the companionable presence of fellow singers but also a renewed imaginative connection to the song's characters who became present through singing.

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[8] Urmilaji also pointed out that songs relating to Shiva were also sung at the time of the Yajnopavit, or sacred thread ceremony performed for boys of "twice-born" Brahman, Rajput and merchant castes, during the ritual moments when the initiate is dressed in only a shift with a satchel for alms carried over one shoulder.

Transcription and Hidden Meaning

In October 2013, in the air-conditioned hush of the American Institute of Indian Studies Ethnomusicology Archive library, I came across a book bringing together folksongs of Himachal, transcribed in the Devanagari script and summarized in Hindi. This book, *Himachali Lok Geet* (Thakur et al. 1983), had been published by Language and Culture Division of the State of Himachal Pradesh, with collectors contributing songs from different regions. Settling down at an available library desk, I began eagerly leafing through the pages in search of any songs collected in Kangra. Almost immediately, I encountered a version of a song whose beautiful melody had always captivated me, even as its enigmatic words had left me bewildered and unsure of where to place it in my writings. As I read in that quiet space, women's voices began flowing, turning, cascading, gaining volume inside my ears:

Rāmā chār chaṇaṇa diyā chār chaukiyān . . .

> Rama, four sandalwood trees make four low seats,
> Rama, four sandalwood trees make four low seats.
> cloth is spread over, Rama,
> cloth is spread over.

Actually, the words before me read:

Syāmā chār mahendi diyā ji ḍāliyān . . .

> Syama, four henna branches.
> The leaves wither and fall on the ground, Syama,
> the leaves wither and fall on the ground.

All the same, this was instantly recognizable as a variant of a song that I had first written down and recorded in November 1990 as a group of Brahman women sang in honor of the wedding of the sacred basil goddess, Saili. With practically every return to the singing group's company, I had enjoyed listening to this song amid an always changing sequence of songs that filled each session.

Presenting this song, I bypass transliteration, moving straight to a translation. Attempting to capture the beauty of the song as a poem on the page, I do not repeat each line twice. For the mysterious final lines of the refrain, I use the technique of incremental repetition (Hirsch 2014:304): that is, I vary the wording slightly each time to convey a deepening understanding of the meaning of "Maru Desh."

Rāmā chār chaṇaṇa diyā chār chaukiyān upar bichhde rumāl rāmā . . .

> Rama, four sandalwood trees
> contain four low stools.
>> Cloth is spread over, Rama.

Those who are clever
take and make things their own, Rama.
        Fools regret in their hearts, Rama.

        My Uddho! Town of Mathura!

        What kind of place is that, Rama,
        where those who go can't ever return, Rama,
        where those who go can't turn around
        to come back?

        That is Maru Desh, Rama,
        that is the desolate country.

Rama, four shades of henna
on four branches.
Color withers, scattering across the earth, Rama,

Those who are clever,
take and make things their own, Rama.
        Fools regret in their hearts, Rama.

        My Uddho! Town of Mathura!

        What kind of place is that, Rama,
        where those who go can't ever return, Rama,
        where those who go can't turn around
        to come back?

                That is the desolate country, Rama,
                that is the country of death.

Rama, four limes
on four branches.
        Juice drips, splashing on the earth, Rama.

Those who are clever,
take and make things their own, Rama.
        Fools regret in their hearts, Rama.

        My Uddho! Town of Mathura!

What kind of place is that, Rama,
where those who go can't ever return, Rama,
where those who go can't turn around
to come back?

That is the country of death, Rama.
that is the afterworld.

Hearing small, intense Asha Devi lead others through this song in November 1990, I was bewildered. The transcription in my notebook carries big question marks in the margins. The same group sang this at various other gatherings for boys' birthdays as well, and each time I heard the song, I could not make sense of it. During the course of fieldwork in 2002, Anju, the young college-educated local woman who helped me with transcriptions was intrigued. For most songs, she just wrote out the words, but for this one, she attempted a Hindi summary at the end of the transcription: "A smart person," she wrote, "does every sort of work and a fool just looks on. In this way, a smart person plants lime saplings and henna saplings too. Those who die don't come back."

I now revisit the song adding in commentaries elicited by sharing transcriptions as a slowed-down space of reflection. For the last song about Gaurja's wedding to Shiva, I relied on Urmilaji's virtuosity as storyteller and articulate interpreter of oral traditions. Yet singers were not equally interested in indulging my questions about interpretation. When I showed up after song sessions with transcriptions and questions, the spectrum of responses ranged from brushing aside my questions in order to move on to the delights of sharing further songs to patiently summarizing the story and perhaps even comment on particular lines—or, like Urmilaji, to embark on an open-ended exegesis, reflecting on meanings, elaborating on associated narratives, and even a network related songs. I now present examples from such a spectrum in relation to this song.

Asha Devi clearly preferred singing to talking about songs. She tended to deflect my ponderous questions about texts, always eager to instead get on with the next song that had come to her mind. In 2013, when I asked her again if she could help me understand this song, she briefly answered a few questions, but—in keeping with the theme of four—repeatedly emphasized that she had only studied four classes and was non-literate (*anpaḍh*). "Those who are smart are those who can read and write," she said, "I'm a fool who hasn't studied. Women weren't able to study in my time." Identifying Krishna's friend Uddhav in the song, she immediately launched into singing about another of Krishna's friends, Sudama.

Asha Devi's niece-in-law, Subhashini Dhar, though, was usually willing to go through songs with me. On a hot afternoon in 2002, Subhashini Dhar humored me by discussing this song for which I had brought along a transcription. The song, Subhashini explained, drew on images of what was hidden within appearances and could too easily be wasted. So, sandalwood trees could be carved to make seats, yet these could be concealed by spread cloth. Lime trees would eventually carry ripe limes, yet if these were not used, they would fall, juice dripping on the ground. Henna bushes could give leaves for the orange-red stain of henna dye, and yet left unused, these leaves would wither and scatter.

"What this means," Subhashini patiently explained, "is that you should make something your own, make full use of it, don't just waste it! Some people just toss away old things they come across, some pick up things and clean these up for use—they are the smart ones. It's not that you just waste things; you can squander time, too. A smart person recognizes the hidden worth inside things, takes them, makes them her own. A fool doesn't stop to think about what the worth of something could be. Later, fools might realize and regret that they missed a chance."

The version—another collector's transcription—that I had found in the library includes a commentary in Hindi that closely mirrors Subhashini's. The commentary explains that the song "sheds light on the perishable nature of the this world. Those moments that people don't seize as an opportunity, they later regret" (Thakur et al. 1983:16). This version includes just two verses: one about the henna leaves that can wither, and a second about books that become available in the market—those who are clever buy the four rare books while fools regret losing the opportunity.[9]

Urmilaji was not a singer in the same village as Asha Devi or Subhashini, but working from the transcription, she also shared thoughts on the song's meaning, verse by verse. A wooden seat (*chauki/chaukā*), she noted, would especially be used for ritual occasions: to install images of deities, or else to seat the person undergoing a ritual transformation. She sang portions from a song about a sandalwood stool that might, for example, be sung to a groom. For the next two verses, Urmilaji observed, "a smart woman plucks limes and uses them in chutney, and doesn't just let limes sit on a tree until they fall. A smart woman harvests henna leaves to grind and mash and apply as decoration on her hands; she doesn't just let the leaves fall down." The stools, then, indexed ritual celebrations and transformations; limes indicated delicious sensuous pleasures, and henna stood for a married woman's adorning herself: all forms of a full and conscious embracing of life as it inevitably heads toward the country of no return.

"And what about four?" I pressed. "Why do you think everything come in fours here?" "Four is a good number," Urmilaji said. She began to sing a verse from a song sung when a bride sat to her first feast in a husband's village:

> With four mango and four grapefruit trees,
> my garden is beautiful.
> With four swans and four crows
> my flying flocks are beautiful.

"With four people you have a sense of happy celebration (*raunak*)," Urmilaji said. "With four birds, or four trees, there are enough that these look beautiful." Four indicates balance and completion. Four evokes four directions, four eras of time, four goddess temples watching over the valley, and even the classical Hindu four stages of life. In a further pun, the word I have translated as "clever" (*chatur*) can also indicate "four."

Urmilaji didn't comment on the repeated line, "My Uddho, Town of Mathura." "Udho is like Krishna, you could even say Krishna," Subhashini had said; Mathura, after all, was the kingdom that Krishna triumphantly conquered from his despotic uncle King Kamsa. Other

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[9] The four books possibly reference the four Vedas.

women too asserted that Uddho was the same as Krishna. In the version I found in the library, the refrain runs "My Uddho, Town of Judhya (Ayodhya)," and the commentary explains that the god "Ram is settled in the town of Ayodhya but once a person leaves this world, he cannot return"— affirming "Uddho" as a reference to divinity that remains steady amid shifting human lives. Yet "Uddho" sounds very much like Krishna's friend "Uddhav" from the *Bhagavata Purana* that is replete with Krishna stories (Bryant 2003). Asha Devi favored this identification, identifying Uddho as Krishna's friend. In the familiar story, Udhhav comes as a messenger from Krishna once Krishna has been established as ruler in the town of Mathura, bearing the message from Krishna to his lovers, the *gopīs*, that their missing him so intensely actually keeps him close in their hearts. Without mentioning Krishna directly, then, the song evokes him as a perpetually present absence, just as hidden potentials are present within perceived forms. That Uddhav looks very much like Krishna also adds to the mysterious instability of forms.

And what of Maru Desh—the desolate country? This, explained Subhashini and Asha Devi alike, is where Yama, God of Death lives. As Subhashini said, "once you go there, you can't come back; you have just this life. Krishna went to Mathura and there, he killed Kamsa. He sent Kamsa off to Maru Desh."

"The song doesn't say anything about Kamsa, does it?" I asked, mystified, looking back through the song's words to see any reference to Krishna's uncle.

"Not directly, I'm giving you an example," said Subhashini. "Uddho" then, also evoked an arc of stories in Krishna mythology. Running her finger under the line about limes containing juice, or *ras*, Subhashini also played on the word's meaning to include aesthetic pleasure and she improvised on the structure of the song itself. Smiling bemusedly at me, she said, "This is like the *rasa* within a song: songs should be learned! But a foolish person says, 'this is nothing!'"

Conclusions

As raw materials for scholarly production, written transcriptions of oral texts are likely to largely remain hidden. Like fieldnotes, they form part of a larger archive of writing generated in the field that only selectively sees the light of publication. What Simon Ottenberg has written about fieldnotes holds for transcriptions too. Contrasting the "scratchnotes" that precede fieldnotes and the "headnotes" that organize experiences in memories that might not have been fully fleshed out through fieldnotes, Ottenberg describes changing relations to the fieldnotes through time (1990:159):

> We are on a moving escalator with our fieldnotes. They change during the process of field research as we mature in the field. They are in a changing relationship to the native as well as to our headnotes. As our social milieu alters through our lifetime maturation our relationship to our notes alters. As the political and intellectual climate of our scholarly field changes, our relationships to and uses of our fieldnotes change.

Similarly, transcribed oral traditions are reframed through time, in our own thinking, and in how they are viewed by others. More mutually created than fieldnotes, transcriptions are also more recognizable as cultural knowledge that belongs to a community, and so are more easily shared

for collaboration. Such collaboration is of course only possible if the people involved are willing to grant a researcher their time and patience, which is within the context of sustained, ongoing relationships.

Both the songs I have reproduced in this essay speak to a larger theme of shifting forms and recognitions—a disreputable yogi ascetic seemingly withdrawn from the world may be revealed as a great god who takes on the form of creation; a sandalwood tree can become stools visible or hidden; limes may rot or be eaten; henna leaves may wither or be used as dye. Transcriptions also represent a moment of transition from the oral to the written. Even when settled into writing, transcriptions can move in and out of social interactions. They might remain buried in files, be carried back to performers for reflection, or reach entirely new audiences through translation.

While writing this essay, I found a sheet of paper filled with proverbs among my many files of transcribed oral traditions from Kangra. The sheet is not dated and whatever identification I had once written on the right corner is now too smudged to read. "*Lekhen kauṛi dāne ghoṛā*—in accounts, a cowrie shell; in gifts a horse," declares one of the proverbs. I recognized this as a proverb recited by Sarla Korla when a helpful young man whom she was reimbursing for a purchase had told her not to bother about exact change. She explained that her beloved father, "always full of charm and sayings," had used this proverb to emphasize the importance of keeping meticulous accounts and also being unstintingly generous with gifts. The proverb points back to earlier eras when cowries were a form of small change and horses were prized as a means of transport.

Viewing this transcribed proverb in the context of this essay is a reminder that when transcribing words, a painstaking attention to exact detail is rewarding. Yet when attempting to compose aesthetic translations, this hard-won accounting of transcription disappears into the background so a text might prance into new settings.

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Cordelia's Salt: Interspatial Reading of Indic Filial-Love Stories

Leela Prasad

In 2008 my father, S. Nagarajan (1929-2014), a professor of English, began to consolidate fifteen years of his research toward a new edition of *King Lear*. He had edited *Measure for Measure* for Signet Classics years ago, an edition that remained in print for over forty years, and he had taught Shakespeare for decades. But *King Lear*, for him, remained "Shakespeare's mightiest play." The same passion had resulted in his 1961 Harvard Ph.D. dissertation on the heroines of Shakespeare's problem comedies. As he approached his eightieth year, a former student and colleague urged him to write his autobiography. He had dictated his letter to me and it was one that I had saved. He had responded, "think of the other fate which one risks, of writing an autobiography and remaining a deservedly unknown Indian. No, let the summit of my ambition be to edit *King Lear* for Indian students. One qualification for it I now possess. An old man is always a King Lear, said Goethe."

And, as things turned out, I became involved in this project because I was in India during the academic year of 2008-09. I was a kind of sounding board for him at first and then gradually became his scribe in addition. We sifted though his notebooks. We spread out multiple editions. We looked at digitized versions on my laptop. We watched stage performances of *King Lear* on DVD. We were unlikely teammates—a distinguished senior Shakespeare scholar and a just-tenured cultural anthropologist (though with a background in literary studies). Yet, not least of what we had in common, were our evolving identifications with the play. For him, that identification was perhaps a resonance of Goethe's line, and for me, it was the experience of a daughter working with her father on a play such as *King Lear*. His edition was published in 2012.[1]

Memory and Play: Interspace

This essay attempts an interspatial reading of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Indic filial-love folktales, as I will refer to them in this essay. My reading is located between my father's edition of the play and my return to it after his death in early 2014. The idea of interspace forms the basis for my analysis of thematically connected but distinct narratives in this essay. The

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[1] The edition contains six essays on various aspects of the play, including on sources of the play, problems in interpretation, Shakespeare's use of language, and the play's dramatization on the Indian stage. All quotations of the play will be from this edition.

political philosopher Hannah Arendt explains that the interspace is the world that exists *between* people and things, conscious of individual distinctions, but simultaneously provides the very foundation for constructive dialogue, relations and purposes. So important is the interspace, Arendt argues, that to lose it, is to lose the world itself (1968:13). And "the world" as she means it, "can form only in the interspaces between men in all their variety" (31). Although Arendt imagines the interspace as a political public realm that engages singularities to generate a pluralistic ethic, I re-tune this notion to serve as an interpretive strategy in comparative reading. By interspace, in this essay, I mean the space of dialogue, visualization, everyday rhythms, and materiality that, while not part of a text's strict boundaries, nevertheless profoundly affects the field of engagement with the text. In the literary-cultural realm, translation, for instance, is a quintessentially interspatial act that connects the borders and the spaces of at least two distinct things and creates a hybrid experience or insight.

When I returned to re-reading my father's edition of the play after his death, I read it with the memory of his powerful oral dramatization of the play and our conversations during those early mornings and late afternoons. These recollections helped me find his voice once again within the many voices of the play and its critical commentary. Indeed, what had stayed with me had been the lively orality of my "scribal" experience, an orality that created the interspace for my engagement with the play. As someone who works with oral culture, I had known that the tantalizing persuasion of what we broadly call "oral tradition" is its rambunctious heteroglossia and mediation of sensory experience and variant textuality. However, I now realized that a subjective experience of that phenomenon implied an interlinking of experiences. In my case, these experiences included participatory reading and hearing of a printed text, an embodied performance, and an interiorized remembering.

It is from such an interspace between text and extra-textual memory that I take up in this essay a line of conversation that took place between my father and myself about the oral sources for Shakespeare's play. Here, I will consider Indic filial-love stories at greater length than he and I did in those conversations.[2] I hope to show that while these stories and *King Lear* share some central predicaments and premises, they propose different reconciliations to an important inquiry on selfhood that begins with a question about filial love. Lear begins by vainly asking his daughters "Which of you shall we say doth love us most?" (1.i.45). Lear's question is superseded by other questions when a greater search and struggle begin to shake his life. In later Acts, the storm begins to gust and eddy around Lear's more enduring question, "Who is it that can tell me who I am?" (1.iv.200).[3] Indic filial-love stories, too, begin in a similar vein. Often, however, it is the outcast daughter who moves the story through a different but implicit question, "Who is it

[3] For a detailed and searching analysis of Lear's questions, see Nowottny (1957).

that *makes* me?" These very different questions undoubtedly reveal significant divergences in worldviews that are shaped by the particular social contexts or the personal locations of narrators in the case Indic filial-love stories.

I propose that an interspatial reading—one that speaks between discrepant texts and through all of them, acknowledging their distances from each other and bridging them—makes it possible to appreciate *both* questions as necessary to the constitution of the human self. The self is configured as always approximate to these questions of "being" and "making." Larger-than-self forces challenge the autonomy of the process of selfhood showing that the self in an atomistic sense is hardly sovereign. Intertwined in a web of relations and events and, most importantly, accountable to love, the self can at best be symbiotically sovereign. Lear or Cordelia or exiled princesses and princes are distinct protagonists with their own designs and desires. Yet their self-becoming and self-making are only possible when they find commonality between oppositions, suspend borders, and serve others. As I will show in this essay, this symbiotic sovereignty of the self defines the ethics of the interspace.

Oral and Written: Intertexts

Since this essay identifies various kinds of texts that entail transformations across oral and written media, I offer brief framing remarks. Boundaries between texts of course exist, but interaction between texts generates a new cognition and new intuitions: this activity of the interspace creates a new text, which we may call the intertext. To explain further, the subjectivity and circumstances of each reader make every text possess the potential to be multiple intertexts. For example, as I read King Lear, *my* personal memories and literary perceptions predisposed me to identify *King Lear* as a "connected" text that makes sense to me in a way that may be different for another reader.

Literature and art as interspace—the worlded in-between space—would imply that all texts are inevitably intertexts, as Roland Barthes put it (1977), woven across lifestreams and literary memories. According to Jacques Derrida (1979:84):

> "Text" is not. . . . a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far (not submerging or drowning them in an undifferentiated homogeneity, but rather making them more complex, dividing and multiplying strokes and lines).

A staggering range of significances has come to be associated with intertexuality which, nevertheless, in all manner of speaking, refers to disclosed and undisclosed ambient-texts and agents in intersecting relationships that contribute toward "meaning" or a pool of meanings.[4]

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[4] For succinct critical reviews of the development of this enormously important concept in Western literary theory and cultural studies that sprung into prominence with Julia Kristeva's 1966 reappraisal of Bakhtin's notion of the novel form as polyphonic, see Worton and Still (1990); Allen (2011); and Bauman (2004).

Indeed, in the Indian context, such intersecting relationships have been stunningly true of the centuries-old South Asian Rāma katha [story of Rama]. As an ever-abundant narrative, the story of Rama continues to produce, inter alia, affiliate and oppositional texts. With this occurring across languages, regions, and media, we have a kaleidoscope of intertexts across oral and written surfaces that are differentiated by their aesthetic and ethical arrangements, and we also have a long history of meta-commentary on this phenomenon of intertexts.[5] Today there is little disagreement that intertexuality is made manifest or experienced just as much by the production of a writer/performer's compositional ingenuity as by the reader/hearer/viewer's associative universe.[6]

The particularity of an intertext is in its self-construction (and its self-consciousness): in other words, in its intermediacy, its intervention, and its interlocution. Let us consider one instance from South India before we look at the intertextuality of the various sources from which I take the filial-love stories in upcoming sections. Narayana Rao and David Shulman describe the accomplishment of Śrīnātha, a brilliant Telugu poet of the fourteenth to fifteenth century, whose work resounds across a 1000-year old Telugu literary tradition. One way to understand this staying-and-roving power of the poet is that his intrepid innovations in sound and sense created intertexts that spoke to the different sensibilities and experiences of his audiences. To illustrate, *Śṛṅgāra-naiṣadhamu* is Śrīnātha's Telugu translation of a complex Sanskrit dramatic poem, titled *Naiṣadhīya-carita*, by twelfth-century author Śrīharṣa, who re-created the popular love story of King Nala and Princess Damayanti as recounted in the epic of the Mahabharata. There is a moment in the Sanskrit poem when Damayanti is a shy bride on her first nuptial night with Nala: she feels desire but is tongue-tied and stuck in demureness. In Śrīnātha's Telugu version, Damayanti is utterly conscious of appearing *too* shy, given that she has been previously quite outspoken with Nala; there is no way, she thinks, that she can reconcile her shyness with the boldness she has shown with Nala in the past. Both the Sanskrit and Telugu poems acknowledge the social and literary convention of bridal shyness, but the Telugu poem casts it aside. Thus Śrīnātha's Telugu translation gives us a new Damayanti who insists we refigure the sexual inhibition that characterizes previous Damayantis. "After reading this poem, you can't read the [Sanskrit] Śrīharṣa verse innocently," write Rao and Shulman (2012:72). Indeed, after reading (or hearing) the Sanskrit poem by Śrīharṣa and the Telugu translation by Śrīnātha, the Damayanti of the Mahabharata story is also pluralized. In this way, a translation becomes resonant. Rao and Shulman state (2012:72), "its doubled sonic registers," create "an unprecedented poetic space in the language *into which* one translates. At the same time, it enhances the original by allowing us to see that the translated text preexists in it." Śrīnātha's writing, on the whole, rings of non-literate orality (flowing meter, formulae for referencing other stories, local allusion, for example), but it is so highly-crafted and tightly-packed with "meaning-full" lexemes that the sounds his poetry produces become the very experience of his poetry. The "magically accessible" verses *sound* like a spontaneous Telugu oral epic. In truth what also happens is that they re-energize the Sanskrit one and create a new literary space *between* the Sanskrit and the Telugu

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[5] Richman (1991, 2000, 2008); Ramanujan (1989).

[6] See Rocher (1994) for a discussion of oral and written textuality as mirrored in Sanskrit texts and their contemporary currency.

with a different poetics. One might call this space an interspace—but it remains dormant until a reading that appreciates or visualizes the interaction makes it come alive.

Filial-Love Stories: Discrepant Intertexts

Let us now turn to the oral-written intertextuality of the two principal types of texts in this essay, all of which have their inaugural moment in the test of filial love or gratitude. There is Shakespeare's *King Lear*; Nagarajan's edition of the play is "an eclectic one" that conflates multiple texts of the play (Nagarajan 2012:xi-xiii).[7] There are corresponding Indic stories which have been published either in late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century English-language collections of oral narrative that give us largely disembodied narrations, or in more recent ethnographic work that provides us more full-bodied contexts of narration. These dissimilar texts presuppose orality or performance context in very different ways and raise the question of what kind of interpretive process could be threaded through them. To recall Arendt, I suggest that the recognition of boundaries, limitations, and distinctions is the necessary basis for constructing common ground.

Intertextuality of King Lear

The intertexuality of *King Lear* is a vast subject in Shakespeare scholarship to which I cannot do justice in this essay.[8] Nagarajan reminds us, agreeing with scholars like Kenneth Muir, that *King Lear* was built from the "most heterogeneous materials, amplifying and complicating his original fable, by using incidents, ideas, phrases and even words from a variety of books" (2012:xvi-xv). The fascinating amalgam of sources that are born out of Shakespeare's reading, hearing and seeing other narrations and plays tells us that *King Lear* itself is a highly accomplished intertext that engaged both an immediate as well as an undateable literary memory.[9] Shakespeare transformed many sources that narrate the story of Lear. His principle source is considered to be an older anonymous play called *True Chronicle History of King Leir*

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[7] That is, Nagarajan's version conflates the Quarto text of the play (1608) with the text in the first Folio (1623), in the tradition of a few other editions of the play, on the grounds that the Quarto and Folio versions are recognizably similar to each other. The debates about the variant texts of the play, their relationship to each other, and how to constitute a critical edition of the play are assessed in detail in Nagarajan (2012).

[8] See Nagarajan (2012:xiv-lxii).

[9] According to Andrew Weiner (1991), the term intertextuality is a late-twentieth-century term that does not accommodate well the "interrelations of Renaissance texts" which are historically better understood through the critical vocabulary of the late sixteenth-century (246-247). To understand how Shakespeare may have responded to Philip Sidney's Arcadia (the hybrid version of 1593 that was put together by Sidney's sister, the countess of Pembroke) from which he "borrowed" the Gloucester subplot of *King Lear*, Weiner turns to Sidney's Defense of Poetry (c. 1580) which proposes, not intertextuality or influence, but "mimesis" to describe the process by which a poet creates poetry. In mimesis, the poet harmonizes various sources to create a "golden" world of art that is distinct from the "brazen" world of nature. From this perspective, I would call the play of *King Lear* a golden amalgam.

and his Three Daughters; Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella (1605).[10] Shakespeare was intimately familiar with this play, which had been performed twice in 1594 and published in 1605, after which he began to write his own play which was first performed at court on December 26,,1606. Shakespeare also likely knew the story of King Lear as it appeared for the first time in written form in a popular Latin history of British kings called *Historia Regum Brittanniae* (1135) by the monk Geoffrey of Monmouth. Shakespeare scholars believe that the Bard found the idea of the love-test and Lear's division of the kingdom on the basis of his daughters' answers in Geoffrey of Monmouth,[11] while Geoffrey's history itself absorbed many oral stories that were in circulation.

Another major source for Shakespeare's *King Lear* was Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, a compendium of English history (second edition, 1587). Holinshed's *Chronicles* recount the basic story of Lear's test to his daughters, his estrangement from them, the loss of his kingdom and its final recovery, and Lear's reunion with Cordelia and the deaths of his daughters. Shakespeare may also have consulted Edmund Spenser's poem *The Faerie Queene* (five books between 1590-1596) which, again, contains the kernel story of Lear's test of love, the disinheritance, ill-treatment of Lear, and so on, until Cordelia's suicide in despair. The theme of despair drives the Lear story in *A Mirror for Magistrates* (editions between 1559-1587), which Shakespeare is also likely to have consulted.

What exactly or how Shakespeare drew from which source and in what mode—oral, written, or performed—will remain ultimately imperceptible, perhaps even futile after a point.

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[10] In this older play, Leir says:
Therefore, dear daughters, as ye tender the safety
Of him that was the cause of your first being,
Resolve a doubt which much molests my mind,
Which of you three to me would prove most kind;
Which loves me most, and which at my request
Will soonest yield unto their father's hest.

According to Mabillard (2000), "Although *King Leir* retains the ending found in earlier accounts of the story, in which Cordelia lives and Leir is restored to the throne, the anonymous play incorporates vivid new characters (the most crucial being Perillus) and situations which are not found in any of the previous retellings of the tale, thus expanding the sparse legend into an effective, five-act play." Shakespeare transforms Perillus into Kent. http://www.shakespeare-online.com/plays/kinglear/kingleir.html.

[11] In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia* Leir resolves to divide his kingdom among his daughters after determining who loved him the most. He is flattered by Gonerilla's and Regau's lavish responses but is angered by Cordeilla, who rhetorically says, "Is there any daughter that can love her father more than duty requires?" However, if pressed further, she would have to say, ". . . look how much you have, so much is your value, and so much do I love you" (Geoffrey [1135] 1892:33). Leir disinherits her, marries her to "some foreigner" [the Gaul king, Aganippus], and goes on to rule his half of the kingdom, with the other half being divided between Gonerilla and Regau. Leir's kingdom is overtaken by his conniving sons-in-law, and he becomes gradually beggared by his two older daughters. Aging, he seeks sanctuary with Cordeillia who gives him a home, re-empowering him. Reunited with Cordeilla, and cared for by her and Aganippus, Leir atones, finally understanding Cordeilla's words to him. "How true was your answer, Cordeilla . . ." he says, "While I had any thing to give they valued me, being friends not to me, but to my gifts: they loved me then, but they loved my gifts much more: when my gifts ceased, my friends vanished" (Geoffrey [1135] 1892:36). He regains his lost kingdom with Cordeilla's help and rules till he dies. Geoffrey's account continues after Lear's death—it describes Cordeilla's rulership, the loss of her kingdom to her nephews, and her suicide in prison. Both in Geoffrey and Holinshed, Cordelia points out to Lear the falseness of her sisters' love that is based on the material possessions of her father. While these versions are essentially similar, the endings vary. Holinshed's Cordelia, for example, asks that territories recovered from her cruel sisters must be given to her.

Nagarajan's observation (2012:xix) that Shakespeare "[perceived] the possibilities of his material and [realized] them in his chosen form" connects interestingly to Rao's insights about the fluid textuality of the *Puranas* (ancient Hindu lore about sacred beings, places, and practices) and the adeptness of the *pauranika*, the oral performer. The "recorded" text (in print, palm-leaf) "is often only *part* of the story"; it is the *pauranika* who "imparts fullness to the text in performance" and in this way it is the *pauranika's* knowledge that shapes the "received text" (that audiences finally engage) (Rao 2004:114). But not only is it the *pauranika*, the performer, or Shakespeare, the dramatist, who brings fullness to the text. We, too, as individual readers, impart to Lear's story the weave and the heave of human relationships that make the story "full."

Intertextualities of Indic Filial-Love Stories

Shakespeare may have availed himself of written versions of filial-love stories that possibly had Chinese origins, dated possibly in the ninth century (Young 1975). However, two "types" of oral tales in particular, ATU 510 A & B and ATU 923, which are prevalent worldwide, bear clear motif-resemblance to the Lear/Leir story.[12] In tale types 510A & B, the "Cinderella" cycle of tales, a daughter flees her father's home because of either incest or banishment, lives a hard life as a maid in a palace where there is a prince, and wins his attention through enchanted means. The prince discovers her true identity and they marry happily.[13] A second tale type, ATU 923, is the "Love Like Salt" story, which opens with an infamous test of love: the youngest daughter displeases her father with her ordinary expression of love, comparing it to salt. She is disinherited and banished. She leads a menial life until a prince courts her and they marry. She regains her status and happiness and is eventually reconciled with her father, who recognizes his error of judgment. Some of these experiences differ in variants in which the outcast protagonist is a boy.[14]

As A. K. Ramanujan observes, the "individual telling of a tale often combines motifs and types that occur independently" (1991:323). A quick summary of premises and situations common to *King Lear* and Indic filial-love stories looks like this:

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[12] These numbers refer to the designation assigned to tales that share motifs in an international classificatory scheme known as tale type index that was proposed first by Finnish folklorist Antti Aarne in 1910, revised by American scholar Stith Thompson in 1928 and 1961, and most recently, quite considerably by Hans-Jörg Uther in 2004—thus the "ATU" designation. Despite its critics, notably the Russian formalist Vladamir Propp, the tale type index provides us with one way to see a global network of a story (partial to the extent that it is recorded and published) and is valuable in providing initial data for comparative analysis.

[13] There is considerable variation in scholarship over the identification of the motifs of Cinderella tales, which some number 510A and others 510B (See Young [1975]; Dundes [1983]; and Jorgensen [2012], for example). Some scholars identify 510B as having the motif of incest which triggers the daughter fleeing home, but even that is questioned because incest is a central motif in other tale types like ATU706 and T411 (Jorgensen 2012). For example, the Tulu story "The Princess Whose Father Wanted to Marry Her" is classified as ATU 706 in Ramanujan (1991:186-9). European examples of 510A "The Dress of Gold, of Silver, and Stars", with correspondences to other stories called "Catskin", and "Cap O' Rushes." For an overview and discussion of Indic variants, see Ramanujan (1991) (Kannada tale "Hanchi") and Blackburn (2001) (several contemporary Tamil variants). Rutz (2013) provides a close discussion of various tale types of Lear analogues.

[14] For a succinct and insightful summation of these analogues and their implications for the treatment of justice, see Young (1975).

I.   A father sets up a test of love for his daughters (or sons), which the youngest fails, in the father's eyes, and is exiled.

II. The exiled child eventually marries well, but does so either without the parents' blessings and support or s/he must solicit it.

III. The father repents and asks for forgiveness; his eyes are opened to truth.

IV. Estrangement ends in understanding and reunion, but whatever storms were weathered are the prices the agents pay for estrangement and reunion·

V.   Gratitude and love are finally understood as eluding measurement.

VI. Love is seen as the spice of the everyday.

VII. A greater fate seems to move all local destinies.

In order to establish a kinship between the tellings that resemble each other, let us first consider the differences in the contexts of narrations. Three of the six examples I present in this essay (Shovona Devi, Stokes, and Swynnerton) were published during the late colonial period in India (1880-1915) when it was customary practice in a nascent field of folklore to not unduly worry about tellers' biographies, or emic readings as both were usually seen as unruly. It was routine for collections of folklore to be made under dark hierarchical relations of power between a clear separation of colonizer and colonized.[15] Two examples (Kakar, Narayan, with Sood) come from contemporary contexts that are attuned to narrators as creative, critical, agentive, and embodied individuals. In fact the filial-love stories I extract from these sources are so embedded in the social experiences and repertoires of the tellers that my own analysis of those stories cannot break off "story" from its location in their lives. And one example (Ramanujan), also a contemporary recounting, recognizes narrators and narrative systems as dynamic and culturally situated but emphasizes that we read the tales as primarily aesthetic expressions.

(1) "The Hireling Husband" is the last story in a collection of twenty-eight stories called *The Orient* Pearls published in 1915 by Shovona Devi. The only context we are given for the collection is what Shovona Devi briefly tells us (1915: Prefatory Note):

> The idea of writing these tales occurred to me while reading a volume of short stories by my uncle, Sir Rabindranath Tagore; but as I have none of his inventive genius, I set about collecting folk-tales and putting them into an English garb; and the tales contained in the following pages were told to me by various illiterate village folks, and not a few by a blind man still in my service, with a retentive memory, and a great capacity for telling a story.

The stories are liberally Anglicized in idiom, though their plots and details appear recognizably "Indian," such as the references to Hindu texts, religious and caste communities, and vernacular terms and customs. Even in Shovona Devi's minimalist account, there is a glimmer of the un-mappable process through which "The Hireling Husband," as also her other stories, may have arisen. She would have felt the impact of reading Tagore's Bengali short stories (which he had been prolifically writing by the 1890s) which were deeply embedded in Bengali rural life. She

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[15] See Naithani (2006), Prasad (2003), and Narayan (2002) for close analyses of the paradoxes in relationships between colonial-era collectors and narrators and the circumstances of particular publications.

would probably have felt the tensions of an aspiring writer coping with the aura of influence of a literary giant in family proximity. She makes creative use of the everyday experiences of an upper-class Hindu household in which caretakers in long-term service occupied domestic spaces of varying closeness and distance, spaces that nevertheless would have included storytelling activity. It is very likely that her education and exposure to literary English that would also have given her access to a popular domestic and international publication environment. All of these contribute to the note of commingled reticence and forwardness of Shovona Devi's single prefatory sentence, and we must understand that note as part of the "circumstances" that create the particular intertext that this collection is.

(2) "Adventures of a Disobedient Son," originally recorded by B. T. Patil from a *gondaliga* (Kannada bard) performance in Kittur (North Karnataka), is translated from the Kannada and retold by A. K. Ramanujan in his collection, *Folktales from India* (1991).[16] Without pretending to provide ethnographic contexts, Ramanujan's collection of 110 tales has the intertextuality that one might liken to a vivacious folktale-map of India. The stories in this collection come from twenty-two regions of India, from modern storytellers and from published collections in English and other Indian vernacular languages, from colonial-era sources like the ones cited in this essay, and from Ramanujan's own fieldwork and memory. He writes that he has chosen "only tales from actual tellers, rather than literary texts" (1991:xi). He tells us that the stories are meant to be read for aesthetic pleasure, but they also illustrate conceptual diversity in Indian tales and their place in an international orbit of folktales. Ramanujan says (1991:xi):

> A folktale is a poetic text that carries some of its cultural context within it; it is also a traveling metaphor that finds a new meaning with each new telling. I have arranged the tales in cycles as I would arrange a book of poems so that they are in dialogue with each other and together create a world through point and counter point.

(3) A contemporary filial-love story comes to us embedded in a grim autobiographical narrative that pyschoanalyst Sudhir Kakar tape-recorded in 1989 in a slum neighborhood of Delhi as part of his study of gender relations in North India, *Intimate Relations: Exploring Indian Sexuality* (1990). We do not know the ethnographic circumstances under which Kakar conducted his interviews for this study, but he provides a first-person translation from Hindi. At the time of the interview, Janak, the narrator, was a fifty year old woman.

Janak's life story is placed within Kakar's broader understandings of "tale": "What I seek to uncover and emphasize," says Kakar, "is the *oneiros*—the 'dream'—in the Indian tale of *eros* and especially the dreams of the tale's heroines, the women" (1990:1). But for Kakar, narrative is also a means through which Indians construct personhood. He says, "The stories they hear (or see enacted in dramas and depicted in Indian movies) and the stories they tell are worked and reworked into the stories of their own lives. For stretches of time a person may be living on the intersection of several stories, his own as well as those of heroes and gods" (Kakar 1990:2). North Indian modern fiction, folk stories, popular Bollywood film, clinical case studies, Gandhi's autobiographical reflections, and life stories in first-person by two women from Delhi's slums

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[16] A. K. Ramanujan (1991:274-285, 342). Listed as ATU 923, 413, 465A, and 554.

inform and shape Kakar's own telling of an "Indian tale of eros." Writing as a psychoanalyst who "[collaborates] in the creation of the story of an individual life," Kakar's scholarly story finds its form amidst and between all these (Kakar 1990:4). This is its broad intertextuality.

(4) "The King and his Daughters" is part of Charles Swynnerton's 1892 collection, *Indian Nights' Entertainment: Folktales from the Upper Indus*. Swynnerton, a well-known missionary in colonial circles, tells us that he collected the stories over many years from "the mouths of the simple narrators themselves" who were villagers of Ghazi, (present-day Pakistan). He writes, "As translations from the Panjabi of Upper Indus, they are as literal as idiom and freedom of expression would allow" (1892:xi-xvi). Classic pastoralist tropes persist in Swynnerton's "Introduction" and "Index with Notes." While the stories and illustrations (by "purely native draughtsmen" [xi]) evoke in Swynnerton a romantic affection for a vanished purer imagination of a rather Graeco-Roman humankind, the natural landscapes of the Upper Indus and the deeper inlay of the stories remind him of the many glorious but misty pasts of political rulerships of the region. In addition to this interpretive halo around the collection is another important aspect: linguistic authority. Most of the stories were heard in the company of his good friend Thomas Lambert Barlow, Esq., who was "a master of every variety of local dialect of the region" (Swynnerton 1892:xii). They heard these stories (xii):

> [W]ithin sight and hearing of every majestic river of history and romance. . .quite close to the ancient ferry over which Alexander the Great threw his bridge of boats, in a district [which has] the fabled mountain of Gandghar. . .in the midst of many a ruined temple and fallen fortress. . . [here they] used to sit late into the night, round the leaping log fire in winter, under the dewless sky in summer, and enjoy hearing, as much as the villagers enjoyed telling, the tales which had charmed their forefathers for scores of generations.

Doubtless, here is a very different kind of intertext from Shovona Devi's. Swynnerton's "The King and his Daughters" belongs to a collection that places heard stories between colonial industry and nostalgia on one side, and an oriental view of Indian history and an oriental anthropology of "the primitive" on the other. Barlow also probably played an important role in shaping the translation and interpretation, and thus, the intertextuality of these stories.

(5) "The Princess Who Loved Her Father Like Salt" appears in Maive Stokes' *Indian Fairy Tales* (1880). An unusual collection for its time, *Indian Fairy Tales* familiarizes the storytellers to the reader by providing brief biographical sketches and by occasionally including their comments on the tales. Twenty-five of the thirty stories of this collection were narrated in Hindustani to the young teenaged author of the collection by two Hindu *ayahs*, Dunkni and Muniya, and by Karim, a Muslim orderly, who were all in the service of Whitley Stokes, the colonial administrator's family stationed in Calcutta [Kolkata] and Simla [Shimla]. Muniya, we are told, narrated five of the thirty tales to the author's mother, Mary Stokes. A short preface by Maive Stokes quickly sketches the narrators' profiles and the roles played by the different makers of the collection. Dunkni, the younger woman, was born and raised in Calcutta and heard the stories from her husband, Mochi, also Calcutta-born but raised in Banaras. Muniya, a great-grandmother, was born in Patna and raised in Calcutta where she had lived for most of her childhood and adult life. Karim was from Lucknow, and we learn, unlike Dunkni and Muniya,

remained reticent about narrating the stories to the author's mother—it is not hard to imagine that gender, race, and class norms may well have been part of Karim's shyness. This triad provides the creative impetus for, and main content of, the collection; but there are also elaborate notes by Mary Stokes (the author's mother), an Introduction (by anthropologist W. R. S. Ralston), and an Index and native spellings' gloss by Whitley Stokes (the author's father). Mary Stokes' "Notes" provide performative snapshots that, of course, also suggest grids of social hierarchy: Muniya told her stories with the "solemn, authoritative air of a professor. She sits quite *still on the floor*, and uses no gestures" (Stokes 1880:237; italics mine). Dunkni, on the other hand, paced animatedly across the room, enacting parts of the stories. While I analyze elsewhere how the different motley interests of the collection tug it in different directions, it is clear that negotiated narrations and inter-commentary characterize the collection as an intertext (Prasad 2003). For example, Mary Stokes tells us (1880:238):

> All these stories were read back in Hindustani by my little girl to the tellers at the time of telling, and nearly all a second time by me this winter before printing. I never saw people more anxious to have their stories retold exactly than are Dunkni and Muniya. Not until each tale was pronounced by them to be *thik* (exact) was it sent to the press.

Ralston provides comparative scaffolding for the stories in his "Introduction." He endorses Mary Stokes' erudition and intelligence, and at the same time he ascribes to the Indian narrators an "incredulous" imagination that puts them behind civilized time. Ironically, the Indian narrators insist that the stories they tell are read as *stories* and not as "real events." In this way the collection shows itself to be a text deeply brokered by many authors separated by unequal literacies, imaginations, and access to media.

(6) Anthropologist Kirin Narayan's *Mondays on the Dark Night of the Moon: Himalayan Foothill Folktales* (1997; in collaboration with Urmila Devi Sood) is an ethnographic collection of twenty-one folktales from the Kangra Valley in Himachal Pradesh. It is the fruit of a long-nurtured friendship with local storyteller Urmila Devi Sood. Urmilaji (the suffix –ji indicates respect) has a remarkable repertoire of stories she has heard from childhood through various stages of her life. She is not a professional raconteur; the stories emerge both through Narayan's explicit interest in hearing her stories and through natural conversations between them. Insofar as the literary product of a friendship is inevitably intertextual, shaped by intangible exchange—voice meeting voice to paraphrase Narayan—the collection is indeed intertextual, but there is also the critical, dialogic, translational process that makes it so. Intermediacy marks this process, inspired at its root by "affection" (Narayan, with Sood 1997b:221).

Amid the singularities of these discrepant collections is their imperfect kinship. It arises from the demands of an aesthetic that is interpreted differently, but shared, by the collections. This aesthetic, authorial space of each collection contains many presences that become knowable through their negotiations in the text. Translation and textualization engage rhythms of multiple languages and checkered cultural competence. The transformation of oral-aural experience into written text involves recognizing that it is impossible to fully translate a phenomenological experience into words, and therefore the re-narrated text is necessarily improvised. In everyday terms, this paradox is captured by Urmilaji, who tells Narayan, "The only way children of the

future might come to know these stories if someone like you writes them down. Then they'll read them." Upon reflection, she adds, "But there's a big difference between reading something and hearing it told!" (Narayan, with Sood 1997b:221). The imperfect kinship also comes from consanguinity in the thematic explorations on selfhood, which I elaborate below.

The Insterspace: Inquiries on Selfhood

Indic filial-love stories branch into two kinds of explorations after the father's test question to his daughters or sons. One group of stories explores the enigmas of moral agency while the other set unravels the paradox of "true" filial love. The test question("How much do you love me?" "What are your plans?" "Who feeds you?") knows its answer, of course—as does Lear's question to his daughters—and only seeks from all the children a glowing and univocal affirmation of that answer. The lone untoward answer spirals the "disappointing" daughter or son's life into a swirl of events that eventually conclude happily, and the father's question is amended (triumphantly). Although individual stories tend to emphasize one of the two explorations—the enigma of agency or the paradox of filial love—they all subtext an interplay between individual desire, self-determination, inscrutable networks of moral agents, and reciprocity in human relationships. Collectively, these explorations provide us a complex meditation on self and selfhood: "Who am I?"; "Who are others?"; and "Who makes me?"

Enigmas of Moral Agency

In "The Hireling Husband," from Shovona Devi's 1915 collection of folktales from Bengal, royal power is pitted against the might of fate. A king, who wishes to retire, decides to divide the kingdom between his three sons. He asks each of them: "Who looks after you and feeds you?" (171). The first two sons extravagantly praise the king for his care, but the third declares, "What a queer question to put! Father, who else can feed me but my own good destiny? "What's lotted cannot be blotted" (172). The enraged king banishes his son, saying, "Oh thou ungrateful wretch, if thy good destiny feeds thee, look to it to feed thee in thy exile. Thou art no son of mine" (172). He appoints his other two sons as governors of provinces.[17] The exiled prince wanders into another country where he finds sanctuary in the king's hospitality to him— the text remarks, "Thus did his good destiny befriend him in his darkest hour of trial" (172). The exiled prince becomes a good companion for the king's son who is one-eyed. A neighboring king, meanwhile, has dispatched a matchmaker to find a groom for his daughter; the matchmaker, tired with a luckless search, strikes a bargain with the one-eyed prince's father, who also has had bad luck in getting a bride for his half-blind son. Bribed into silence, the matchmaker returns to his master and hapless princess is promised to the half-blind prince. The king makes the exiled prince stand in as bridegroom for his one-eyed son at the wedding and the "one-eyed prince" is thus married. The trusting princess and the prince—who she believes is the actual son of the king—spend the night "playing" a game of chance. At dawn, the prince inscribes his identity on the hem of her dress and decamps. The one-eyed prince, with his turban

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[17] The division of a kingdom based on a love-test is not a frequent occurrence in Indic filial-love stories.

hiding his blind eye, comes to her pretending to be her husband but he fails both a test of courage and is also clueless about the games they are supposed to have played. The princess discovers the fraud and throws him out. Time passes, and one breezy spring day she discovers the golden scrawl on the hem of her wedding dress. She returns to her country, gathers her father's army, disguises herself as a man, and besieges the kingdom of the exiled prince's old father, demanding his son as hostage (we are left to assume that the exiled prince is found by the king). The king surrenders his son without a battle. Happier reconciliations follow, with the princess throwing off her disguise and the exiled prince emerging to be reunited with his wife. The father realizes that his son had been right about the role of destiny in one's life. He declares, "My dear son, thou did speak the truth. 'What's lotted can't be blotted.' Your bride has won my kingdom for thee, and it no longer mine to give away," (177). The prince and the princess rule the kingdom happily ever after.

The division of a kingdom—not by fair reason but in a fit of temper—a subsequent repudiation (as in Geoffrey of Monmouth's version and Shakespeare's play), and a defeat in war provoke a reflection on the inexorability of fate. Geoffrey's Leir, debased by Gonerilla, cries (Geoffrey 1892:35):

> "O irreversible of the Fates, that never swerve from your course! Why did you ever advance me to an unstable felicity since the punishment of lost happiness is greater than the sense of present misery…Shall I ever again see the day when I may be able to reward those according to their deserts those who have forsaken me in my distress?"

Accepting that what is decreed cannot be erased, the father of the exiled prince also comes to understand that the kingdom is "no longer [his] to give away." We arrive at an insightful moment that shows the self-absorbed king of the disinheritance scene transformed into a wiser king who has learned to look beyond himself. The King did not give when he had a kingdom and he is unable to give without it, but it is taken from him to be given. A king dispossessed of his kingdom is both pathetic and profound because we view him now, as we see Lear stripped of his kingdom and belongings, become as vulnerable as anybody else to the vagaries of human emotion, error, dependency, and frailty. Most importantly, he learns to acknowledge that his expectation of gratitude from his sons is misplaced in light of the "true" dispenser of goods: destiny. Perhaps the most interesting thread in the story—one that weaves through other tales also in my selection—is the difficulty of characterizing human agency in the imperceptible play of destiny. Thus, the exiled prince is lucky to be offered asylum, and the princess must await a springtime breeze before she can assert herself in battle.

In the "Adventures of a Disobedient Son," a Kannada tale translated in Ramanujan's 1991 collection, the son displeases his father who asks his four sons, starting with the first, "Son, you are my eldest, the future king of the country. What are your plans?" Three of them respond in the manner the king wants to hear. The first son replies, "Father, I'll follow in your illustrious footsteps. I'll try to be a great king like you" (274). The next two declare their "plans" are to support their oldest brother, but the last son says, "Father you are the king of kings. Twenty-four kings pay you tribute. I want to do better than you. I'll conquer kingdoms, marry four celestial wives, and build my own city" (274). He is thrown out into the wild jungles. After a frightening

night hidden in the branches of a tree, he prays at the light of dawn to Shiva and to his family deity to protect him. A fascinating series of adventures ensues in which a reclusive old woman with magical powers aids him. Perhaps more than any other story under consideration in this essay, this one explores the psyche of the prince who *must* seek adventure. He disobeys the old woman who has forbidden him for venturing in a northern direction and ends up being turned to stone. But when she rebukes after rescuing him, he says, "Yes, Granny, you did tell me. But I knew somehow that's where my life would be fulfilled. So I couldn't resist it—I went. In fact, I want to go there again" (276). With the old woman's help he gains a celestial nymph as his wife and then takes up a job with a local king. The king, struck by the beauty of the nymph, wants to steal her from the young man. He sends the young man on the extremely dangerous mission of collecting venom from the most poisonous snake in the world, in the hope that the young man would die. But, aided by his celestial wife, the young man not only accomplishes the task, but also gains another celestial wife. As the king gives him more and more difficult tasks, the young man's celestial wives help him accomplish the tasks. With each task the young man gains another celestial wife. At the end, the king dies, and the young man has four celestial wives. In a story of ups and downs, the young man meets his parents who are now destitute and brings them to the lavish palace that his wives have magically created for him, but loses all when the wives decamp to their celestial worlds. A second adventure cycle begins in which he solves difficult tasks with the help of various insects and animals that he has helped before, and regains his wives and wealth. Like the heroines in some of our other stories, he is ultimately reunited with his father and asks him, "Father, did I do what I once said I would do?" The father replies, "Yes, my son you did. If one has sons, one should have sons like you" (Ramanujan 1991: 285). Yet, the strain of self-congratulation is undercut by the fact that prince's self-fulfillment has been possible because he has rendered services, undergone trials, and received immense help from various creatures and indeed from his four celestial wives. Self-fulfillment is clearly not a sovereign accomplishment—as prefigured by his act of prayer on the dawn of his adventures, it relies on forces of luck that cooperate with his self-determination.[18]

Kakar's study of "intimate relations" in North India reproduces Janak's autobiographical account which includes a filial-love story that her father had narrated to her in her childhood years. Abbreviated for this essay, Janak's story begins with her parents relocating to Delhi during the Partition with Janak and her three sisters and two brothers. The family struggles with dire poverty. Janak, the eldest child, having finished high school, takes up the job of a village welfare worker in another town to financially help her unemployed father, but her efforts are constantly challenged by the unwanted sexual attentions of several men. She returns home after falling ill to discover that her siblings have neglected their ailing mother. Janak begins to take care of her mother amidst the complications of Janak's romance with a distant relative who proposes to her. When Janak is seventeen, she marries this man despite her father's strong opposition to the marriage. Her father believes that the prospective son-in-law is evil. Janak disagrees with her

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[18] See Blackburn (2001) for a Tamil folktale called "A Clever Daughter" (923B) which Blackburn collected from Tanjavur in Tamil Nadu. Relevant to this discussion on fate and agency, the story involves a king who becomes furious with his daughter for her disagreement over his judgment of a case. He throws her out, but she re-makes her life and ends up offering hospitality to her father, now poor, visits her house for alms. After all the self-disclosures, the king-beggar says, "I see it now. I'm suffering because I did wrong and caused you to suffer" (190).

father, hotly arguing, "No, it is in my hands to make him good" (Kakar 1989:70). Janak's leave-taking after the wedding ceremonies is shadowed by her father's deliberate absence.[19] She recalls him saying, "she was the one who was my son, but she has now betrayed me" (Kakar 1989:70).

Her father proves to be prescient, as the marriage turns out to be extremely violent. Janak's first baby, a girl, dies at four months from starvation; a son, born a year later, dies when he is barely two, and the third born much later also dies. Janak goes on to have five daughters. Her husband's drunkenness and physical abuse escalates each time a daughter is born to them. Yet, nothing persuades Janak to separate from her husband—she feels bound by her love for him but also by a strong sense of *dharma* (righteous duty). As she concludes her self-account, we see an exhausted and bitter Janak. If it were not for having to protect their 14-year-old daughter from her husband's advances, Janak tells Kakar she would have renounced a householder's life altogether.

In the midst of this recollection, Janak says to Kakar, "You know, when I was a child my father told me many stories. Two of these stories have stayed in my mind" (72). Both stories center on betrayed love. The story that pertains to filial-love goes thus (Kakar 1989:72-73):

> A king asks his five daughters, "Who gives you the food you eat?" Four of them say <u>he</u> does, but the youngest says, "Father, I eat what is given by God, what is given by my *karma."* The enraged father marries her off to a leper and turns her out of the palace in rags. In Janak's words, "While leaving the girl said, "O Father! This is the husband of my *karma*—this husband is my god!" The princess begs for food and serves her husband devotedly, believing that such service was divinely decreed. One day a magical bird advises the afflicted husband to bathe in an enchanted pond nearby whose water would cure him of his leprosy. He follows the instructions and is cured; Janak describes, "He came out clean, like a golden king." When the princess returns, the bird instructs them how to find hidden treasures in the pond and the now-prosperous couple builds a palace and lives in it. In due course, they invite the king for dinner and the princess serves him grandly. When he has finished eating, she re-appears before her father in the rags he had thrown her out in and re-introduces her husband to the king, saying, "These are the clothes you gave me and you have seen the clothes given by my *karma*. You gave me a leper for my husband and this is the man *karma* has given me."

Why does the story stay in Janak's mind? There is little doubt that it is tightly interwoven with her lifestory, yet in significant ways, it engages the general problem of agency, the role of

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[19] Readers familiar with Indian narrative and cultural worlds will probably recall other poignant contexts in which a daughter leaves her natal home for her husband's house. For instance, when Śakuntalā of Kālidāsa's play (~fifth century CE) leaves her father's home in the forest, her departure is felt by her friends, the woods, the animals, and even the creepers. Depriving a daughter of a ritual farewell at her wedding casts a tragic shadow on a critical rite of passage. For women's songs that delineate a wide range of emotional stances and moral perspectives in kin relations in South India, see Prasad (2006); for North Indian contexts, see I. Srivastava (1991); Raheja and Gold (1994); and Narayan (1997a). Describing a 1989 Indian staging of *King Lear* directed by Amal Allana in New Delhi, Balwant Gargi, highlights the dramatic awe of the scene when an anguished and spent Lear appears, carrying dead Cordelia in his arms. Gargi writes, " . . . when the daughter leaves the courtyard of her father's house, the parting scene is like the tearing of one's flesh. Women sing in a chorus commenting on the separation and those in the courtyard break into sobs…When Goneril and Regan turn the old father out of their palace and he wanders under a turbulent sky, it breaks the heart of the Indian audience" (1991:96).

karmic fate in one's life and filial—and familial—relations. And because the story is set in Janak's *particular* life, it ironically illuminates that golden ponds and palaces are paradoxical illusions and dreams.

As in "The Hireling Husband," the banished princess of Janak's tale and Janak herself are subjects who create their experiences through conscious choice or effort and simultaneously the objects of a force that determines their experiences. This agency also applies to the highest temporal power, the king in the story: How much power does a king really wield? By telling her father "I eat what is given by God," the princess re-routes the power to give to divine authority, effectively questioning her father's autonomy within an ethical scheme where the king *cannot* be sovereign; he can only be instrumental. However, there is a transformative potential within karmic operation. Ragged clothes, her husband's affliction, and homelessness are the inheritance she receives from her father. She attributes this suffering to the inheritance. But the restored state of flourishing is because of her past karma, her devotion to her leper-husband, and most certainly the magical bird's compassionate grace.

Janak's observation at the end of the princess story—"Look, no one can erase even one line of what *karma* has written down in your book" (73)—bestows agency on the princess; but applied to her own life, the comment reflects a fatalism that dogs her life.[20] As we follow the events in Janak's life, we see that her path diverges from the path of the princess in her story. Two powerful persuasions prevail on Janak who is unable to leave her hopeless husband. The first is her conviction, instilled by her own father, that fidelity to her husband is dharmically prescribed. This dharmic injunction (Janak likens her plight to that of Sita) is part of a powerful web of relationships that is woven around duty and love—a theme that makes a checkered appearance in all Indic filial-love stories. The second persuasion is spun around hope, but it is weaker than the dharmic conviction. While hope for a similarly restorative pond and magical bird may have kept Janak going despite the violence, the possibility of an enchanted transformation gradually fades away: "My love for him is slowly dying from inside," she bitterly concludes, "It would have better if I had married a blind man. At least I could have served him, been rewarded for performing good deeds" (Kakar 1989:77).

The Paradox of Filial Love

Janak's remark in the preceding section takes us to a paradox of affect through which *King Lear* and Indic filial-love stories feel their way. They evolve from a test of love but unravel the ultimate immeasurability of love. Yet, love commands the final accountability in relations. Blindness, or an incapacity to see love, throws characters into a jungle of contrarian emotions through which they come to a clearing of lucid insight about the nature of love. This understanding matures through the momentum of a tragic mode in *King Lear*—Lear must

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[20] The literature on interpretations of *karma* is vast: see Doniger (1980) for its elucidation in Buddhist and Hindu philosophical texts and medical treatises; within comparative frameworks of rebirth, Obeyesekere (2002); and for *karma* and similar notions in everyday contexts, see Keyes and Daniel (1983). For how *karma* and destiny are explored in oral narrative and performance, see Wadley (2007). Janak's lifestory has the haunting aura of a story titled "Twelve Years of Affliction" in Narayan, with Sood (1997b) where affliction is dogged and inexplicable.

gradually overcome his ego through estrangements, physical hardship and poverty—while the understanding comes in a flash in the "comic" mode of the folktales.

In "The Princess Who Loved Her Father Like Salt" from Maive Stokes' *Indian Fairy Tales* (1880), Muniya tells the story of a king who banishes the youngest of his seven daughters for her simple "love-you-as-much-as-salt" answer. He has her transported in a palanquin and abandoned in the wild jungle. The terrified princess cries herself to sleep and wakes up to find a plate with food and water beside her. "God must have sent me this food and water," she surmises. In the morning, she leaves the palanquin and wanders into an isolated beautiful palace. Here she discovers a dead prince with countless needles stuck in his body. She painstakingly removes needle after needle for a week ("without eating, or drinking, or sleeping"). A man visits the palace and sells her a servant-girl in exchange for her gold bangles. Glad to have a companion at last, the princess continues to pull out the needles while the servant girl does the housekeeping. In the third week, only the needles in the eyes are left but just before she removes the last needles, she decides to bathe, anticipating the prince's eyes falling on her as he opens them. She asks the servant girl to watch over him while she freshens up. The maid, however, removes the needles from the prince's eyes while the princess is bathing. The prince wakes up and sees the servant girl. He asks, "Who has made me well and pulled all the needles out of my body?" The servant girl answers that she has, and the prince thus marries her. The princess is made a servant. When the prince sets out on some travels, he asks both women what they would like for a gift from his travels. The servant girl asks for clothes and jewelry, while the princess asks for a mysterious sun-jewel box. The prince tirelessly serves a fakir who, pleased, fetches the sun-jewel box from a fairy. The fairy instructs, "No one but she who wants this box must open it. . . .She must open it when she is quite alone and at night" (Stokes:168). At night, the princess plays the little flute in the box, and seven fairies appear from the box who set up a tent and chairs and carpets and attend upon the much-neglected princess: "They bathed her, combed and rolled up her hair, put on her grand clothes and lovely slippers" (Stokes:169). She weeps bitterly and narrates her misfortunes to them. They assure her that all will turn out well. On the second night of this ritual, a passing woodcutter secretly sees this occur and brings the prince to witness the scene for himself. The astonished prince discovers her true identity and asks her hand in marriage. Roles reverse: the servant girl who had lied to the prince becomes a servant again, but is treated very well by the princess.

The story then returns to the salt-frame. The princess invites her parents and sisters to her wedding. For a week she feeds them food cooked only in sugar. When they can no longer tolerate it, she gives them a dinner spiced with salt. The king, her father, declares, "I know how much she loved me when she said she loved me like salt (Stokes 1880:171).

The princess' suffering as a consequence of being deprived of a receptive and sympathetic audience is something that is familiar to Cordelia.[21] Initially neither the father nor the prince perceives the princess' "truth." Indeed the magic of the sun-jewel box is precisely in the transformation it effects by manifesting sympathetic audiences for the princess in the fairies

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[21] This theme is very reminiscent of the Telugu folktale "A Story in Search of an Audience" (M 311) in Ramanujan (1991:26-29). As in the tradition of a ritual tale (*vrata katha*), closure of, and satisfaction in, the ritual event come only when the story has been narrated by the performer of the ritual and heard by members of the family.

who come out of it, the passerby-woodcutter, the prince, and finally even the king. Although the prince's eyes literally open with the removal of the needles, they symbolically open only when he *witnesses* the princess' story and believes her. Engaged listening comes, this would argue, only when one is *present* as a person. The lack of an audience stifles personhood. Therefore the care that the fairies bestow on the princess not only enables her cathartic self-expression but also recognizes her humanity and her identity and thus *restores* her.

Salt is another key transformative agent. As an analogue of love, it is paradoxical: salt is earthly, but essential, and suffusing.[22] Love too, from the princess' example, is not extravagant in statement but extravagant in service (the princess suspends her everyday needs to remove the needles). In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, immediately after the love-test scene, the banished courtier, Kent, says (1.i.186-189; Nagarajan 2012:21):

> *[To Cordelia]* The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid
>
> That justly think'st, and hast most rightly said.
>
> *[To Regan and Goneril]* And your large speeches may your deeds approve,
>
> That good effects may spring from words of love.

Just as excess salt makes food unpalatable, excess love makes relationships repelling—a point to which I will return shortly. In right measure, love lasts and sustains, as the story "The King and his Daughters" from Swynnerton's 1892 collection of folktales from the Punjab region demonstrates.

In this story, a king asks his oldest daughter, "How do you love me?" and she answers, "I love you as sugar." The second daughter says, "I love you as honey" and the third proclaims "I love you as sherbet." The youngest however says, "I love you as salt." She insists on not modifying her answer, much to the fury of her father who exiles her to the forest. The forlorn princess upon hearing a horse hides in the hollow of a tree. He fluttering dress gives her away and the prince who discovers her falls in love and marries her. After a few years, the king (her father), who has no idea of these events, pays the prince a visit. The daughter, disguised, treats him to royal hospitality but dish after dish she serves him is sweet until the king, still hungry and longing for "proper" food, is unable to eat. Finally the princess serves him a dish of farmer's spinach seasoned with salt and the king is finally satisfied and happy. The princess removes her veil and says, "O my father, I love you as salt. My love may be homely, but it is true, genuine and lasting, and I entreat your forgiveness" (79). The king realizes his "great mistake", repents, and they are reconciled.

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[22] Among the cluster of meanings associated with salt in Indian folklore, the most widely circulating are loyalty and gratitude. *Uppu tinda manege droha bageyabeḍi* (Don't betray the home in which you have eaten salt) is the Kannada proverb; *namak harām* (violator of salt) in Hindi means a betrayer. Janak says, referring to her husband: "I had eaten his salt and was true to him" (Kakar 1989:76). In the political imaginary of India, salt will of course recall Gandhi's famous Salt Satyagraha, the Dandi March, of 1930. In the philosophical tradition, there is the famous story in the *Chandogya Upanishad* in which the teacher Uddalaka Aruni uses salt to teach his son, Svetaketu, how the universal self pervades everything like salt in water but is invisible. (6.13, *Chandogya Upanishad*, in Olivelle 1996:154-155).

A test ends with a test. The outcast heroines of the filial-love stories, after re-making themselves, are in a position to demonstrate once again the strength of their original commitment by setting up a test of endurance for their fathers (and families) which finally leads to the acknowledgment of the heroine's love for her father. It is only in Swynnerton's variant that the princess asks for forgiveness for this test. After the intense trials she has had to endure, it seems ironic—but to have deliberately kept her father hungry goes against *her* conception of salt-worthy love. In Shakespeare, a moment of pure filial love is signaled when Lear, before their deaths, says to Cordelia (V.iii.10-11; Nagarajan 2012:262):

> When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
> And ask of thee forgiveness.

But the salt-answer invites some censure in Narayan's collection of folktales from the Kangra Valley. Here, the Love Like Salt story is narrated by Urmilaji who has heard it as a child from another woman who lived near the valley's tea gardens where Urmilaji's father worked. The story, which Narayan tells us echoes the material aspirations and values of Kangra social life, is as follows (Narayan, with Sood 1997b:189-90):

> The king asks the proverbial question. The first daughter says, "Lots of love, just as crystallized sugar is sweet, very sweet, that's how much I love you." The second daughter says "like refined sugar stirred into milk" and the last one says, "Just as vegetables need salt, that's how much I love you." She is married off to a very poor woodcutter while the other two daughters are married to powerful kings. The princess makes money by embroidering beautiful wall-hangings which she sells, and the price for wood keeps increases. They soon open a shop, then a factory, and become millionaires with a grand house. The queen feels guilty about their long neglect of their daughter and the king dispatches a servant who brings back news of the daughter's success. The queen is "really moved." The king and the queen visit their daughter who feeds them unsalted and sweet food, even vegetables, until the father, cloyed by the sweetness is unable to eat. It dawns on him how much his daughter loved him.

Returning to the story a year later, Narayan learns something more. Urmilaji elaborates that people [in the story] had remarked on the "arrogance" of the princess in telling the King she loved him like common salt and therefore she deserved to be married poorly. They are not alone in this view. Lear fumes to Kent while disowning Cordelia: "Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her" (1.i.27). He warns her, "How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little, Lest you may mar your fortunes" (1.i.89-90). Depending on whose perspective we see, salt could index love and (or) coldness—both qualities have been attributed to Cordelia by scholars of *King Lear*.

Interestingly, in Urmilaji's telling, filial love is unusually underscored by the silhouette of a figure who is absent entirely in *King Lear* and substantively in most variants of filial-love stories—the Queen, the banished princess' mother. Her yearning for news about their daughter and being moved that she had made it on her own, reflects, as Urmilaji says "a mother's heart after all" (191). The Queen becomes an agent for the reconciliation in the final scene of the Kangra variant. In the jointly constructed interpretation of this story, Narayan and Urmilaji tell us

that salt has remained a constantly available commodity in the Kangra economy while sugar, far more expensive, has become available only recently. Nutritionally speaking, too, Urmilaji places a higher value on salt than on sugar.

Yet, in the stapleness of salt is a resonance of the "bond" that Cordelia alludes to in *King Lear*. After her sisters have flamboyantly described their love for him, Lear invites Cordelia to her turn (I.i.80-81; Nagarajan 2012:11):

> …what can you say to draw
> A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak .

And Cordelia simply says, "Nothing." She does not wish to compete with flattery and has "nothing" to contribute to it. She eventually explains (1.i.86-88; Nagarajan 2012:12 and 1.i. 92-100; Nagarajan 2012:13):

> Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
> My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty
> According to my bond; nor more nor less. .
>
> You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I
> Return those duties back as are right fit,
> Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
> Why have my sisters' husbands, if they say
> They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
> That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
> Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
> Sure I shall never marry like my sisters,
> [To love my father all]

The bond that Cordelia refers to is an ancient and essential one. In Nagarajan's words, "It refers to the mutual duty and love which binds parents and children and upholds the larger world, the macrocosm" (2012:12). Just as food has to be salted "just right" in order for it to be palatable, this bond also asks that Cordelia perform her duty to love Lear in a manner that is the "right fit." It would be an untruth—an excessively sweet untruth—for her to say she would stop performing her duty of loving the man she marries.

Lear, after disinheriting and disowning Cordelia, is tossed into a journey of turbulent self-transformation. For all his initial egotism, he must undergo humiliation, weather a storm in a hovel, and lose all his possessions—including his mind.[23] By the time Lear and Cordelia are reunited, the question of how much Cordelia loves him become irrelevant. It has long been answered. He tells Cordelia (V.iii.9-20; Nagarajan 2012:261-2):

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[23] The king in the folktales that I have summarized in this paper, by contrast, remains a wealthy and powerful king.

. . . .Come, let's away to prison.
We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness, So we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—
And take upon's the mystery of things
As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,
In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones,
That ebb and flow by th' moon.

In closing, there is no doubt that Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Indic filial-love stories stage their problems differently and enact alternative readings on the great problems of life that affect selfhood—duty, moral agency, and filial love. By attending to the differences in their consciousness as texts, I hope to have demonstrated that the practice of an interspatial reading that constructs an intermediate dialogue between and across discrepant intertext—interspace always begins with an understanding of singularity and difference. Intertexuality and intersubjectivity enable us to see crossovers and traces, but it is in the interspace that we can arrive at an "active" and shared ethics of being and belonging. When read together in the provisional space of a subjective engagement, Indic filial-love stories and *King Lear* question the atomistic sovereignty of the self. They suggest that the self, always an intertext, finds itself by being symbiotically sovereign.

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Ritual, Performance, and Transmission:
The Gaddi Shepherds of Himachal Himalayas

Mahesh Sharma

I can still visualize the fierce dance of Dhudu—the appellation of Shiva for the Gaddi shepherds of western Himalayas—that leaves him alone, forsaken by his wives: Gorja (Girija) and Ganga. This dance drama is enacted and ritually sung by the Sippi *chela*-oracles—the low-caste wool-clippers who are also the oracles of Shiva—during an offering of *Nauala* (a sacrificial offering made to Shiva in his local form as Dhudu by the Gaddis). The *Sippnaitus* or Sippi *chela*-oracles dance in trance, possessed by Dhudu, and accompanied by a warlike beat played on *nagara* ("kettledrums") and *narsingha* ("longhorns"). I can still hear the young ones crying, even as numbers of Gaddi men and women lapse into trance, joining the *chelas* in a dance that has slow rhythmic movement yet is fearsome to behold. Recalling the scene, I can still feel the chill traversing through my spine. I reproduce the last stanza of the Nauala song that I first recorded in 1990 (unpublished):[1]

> *Nacch Dhudua Jatan vo khilari ho/ Dhudu naccheya jatan vo khilari ho . . .*
> Dance, O Dhudu, dance!
> Dhudu dances with his matted-locks swaying,
> With his dreadlocks swaying.
>
> Dhudu dances with his matted-locks swaying.
> Dhudu dances and he throws down his crown
> Down falls Ganga, she falls down from his crown
> Ganga falls down on the earth.
> Asks Gorja: who are you, what are you to him?
> Says Ganga: I am his mistress.
> Over this both Ganga and Gorja fight,
> Gorja and Ganga quarrel over Him
> Their garlands of pearls break apart.

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[1]All the songs used in this paper, unless cited, were collected during the course of my first field survey in 1990-91. All translations are mine (Sharma 1991). Also refer to my recent works on Chamba, which form the basic source on Chamba in general (Sharma 2001 and 2009).

They hit each other's legs with sticks,
They hit each other's arms with pestles,
They hit each other's heads with spades.

Gorja is incensed; she goes to her natal home.
Who will help bring Gorja back to you?
The devout Bhagirath takes back Ganga
The Ganga is taken back to earth.[2]
You, O Dhudu, You remain alone
Dhudu is now left alone.
Dhudu puts the entire flora in a box,
Dhudu puts the entire fauna in a box.
The box he puts under his pillow,
For twelve years he goes off to sleep.
For twelve years there is famine on earth.

Dance, O Dhudu, dance!
Dhudu dances with his matted-locks swaying,
With his dreadlocks swaying.

Nauala is a prestige-rite or transformative ceremony held particularly as thanksgiving after the performance of certain rituals of passage, consisting of invocation and propitiation by offering a he-goat as the sacrificial animal. The ritual is performed by Shiva's *chelas*-oracles, the Sippis, who enter into trance; possessed, as it were, by Dhudu. The trance possession is considered auspicious and with it starts the ceremony in which a ram or he-goat is offered. The indication of acceptance of sacrificed is divinized by sprinkling water on the sacrificial animal. If the animal shivers visibly, it is an indication of acceptance and if the animal does not, the sacrifice cannot be made. The sacrificial meat is then served as a part of the feast made over to all the participants/ devotees by the host conducting this ritual. While the Sippi-*chela* is in trance, he makes prognostications about the clan, some general predictions of larger interest, such as one about weather (if there will be drought or much snow, or it will be a normal year). Then he takes specific questions by the host-family, and offers solutions. The devotees also take the opportunity to ask personal questions about the maladies afflicting them, or questions regarding the present and future worries. While the possession dance ends after a while, the devotional invocation of Dhudu—mostly focusing on his marriage to Gorja (Girija, the mountain goddess), or the relationship between Shiva and Gaddis—goes on throughout the night.

    This paper documents the Nauala ritual as a prism for folklore and social change. I have used my fieldnotes and others' documentation to map tangentially the altered perception and articulation of changing self-identity of the Gaddis. In the following sections, I argue that the

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[2] Bhagirath was the mythical king of Ayodhya, the forebear of epic hero Rama, who meditated for years and performed many austerities to win favor with Shiva. The object of his worship was to bring the celestial river Ganga, which provides salvation, to earth. He wanted Shiva to shield the impact of turbulent river Ganga, soaking the water in his dreadlocks, before making it flow across the Indo-Gangetic plains into the Bay of Bengal.

Gaddis shepherds, who were displaced from their ancestral habitat and the ways of nomads, adopted new ways to perform this ritual. As the significance of ritual in their lives changed focus, so did the ways of performance and transmission. The changing transmission of Nauala performance points to the larger process of social change. These changes correspond to long term changes in the ethnographic profile of the shepherds, as narrated in the following section.

Transforming Ethnographic Profile

Dhudu played a distinct social role in the lives of Gaddi shepherds. Shiva was personalized and integrated into the belief and life of these pastoralists like nowhere else in South Asia. Such integration congealed their identity around this deity who influenced their day-to-day life, influenced their rites of passage, and marked major events in a yearly pastoral cycle. The relationship was reciprocal: Shiva was for pastorals as the Gaddis were for Shiva. The existence of each without the other was not conceivable. In their myths, the shepherds facilitated the stay of Shiva on mountain top, just as Shiva ensured bounties for shepherds.

The Gaddi shepherds[3] were distinct in their attire of *chola* and *dora*: a knee length coarse woolen frock coat tied firmly on the waist by an 18-meter long woolen rope (Fig. 1) (CDG 1910:205-06; CDG 1962:186). Their movement was fixed and cyclic, with certain rights over pasturage spread across landscape and altitude. They spent the summers in alpine pastures of Lahul and Spiti, while the winter months were lived in the lower hills of Kangra, Uttrakhand and Panjab. Traversing the altitudes ranging from 4000 meters to 100 meters in a year, the seasonal migration of Gaddis from the alpine pastures (Lahul and Pangi) to Gadherana—their homeland—and to the temperate pastures (Kangra and the lower hills) was not arbitrary, but well worked out in a time framework (Fig. 2). This was woven into their belief system as well, wherein they worked out the migration of Dhudu into summer and winter abodes (Kailasha and Pyalpuri), corresponding to their migratory cycle. The itinerary earlier was also tied to the cycle of village-fairs, providing them trading opportunities with the local society.

Fig. 1: A Gaddi couple in traditional dress, Chunaid village, Gadherana. Photographed by author in 1990.

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[3]The attention of readers is drawn to the following works on Gaddi shepherds, which deal with various aspects of their lives and profession: Barnes (1850); Lyal (1872); PCR (1881); Rose (1883) and (1909); O'Brien and Morris (1900); CDG (1910 and 1962); KDG (1926); Brahmaur (1964); Devi Kothi (1964); Chitrari *(*1964). More recent works include: Bhasin (1987); Newell (1957 and 1967); Saberwal (1999); Shashi (1977); Handa (2005); Sharma, Manorma (1998); Wagner (2013). For a migratory account see Noble (1987); for an anthology, Lal and Kumar (2012). See also Dhir (1972); Negi (1972); C. Singh (1997); Bhattacharya (2003); Sharma (2012a and 2012b).

Fig. 2. The Gaddis moved across altitudinal zones in their quest for pasturage. In this Kangra painting from the Archer collection, stylistically dated to c. 1900 (Archer 1973: II: 234. Pl. 76), the painter depicts one such family on the move with their flock—sheep and goats—that is guarded by the Gaddi shepherd dog. One can see the heavy load that they carried and how they stowed provisions in the loosely tied upper garment. Courtesy Sotheby's.

The routine of herding through different pastures was, however, regulated by the state. For instance, the state controlled their movement by regulating pastures, canceling right-to-way, and controlling access to routes and pastures during migrations (KDG 1926:89). Such changes underpinned the dependence of Gaddis upon the settled agrarian society. The sustained exposure and interaction between the nomads and settled communities led to hierarchical stratification of the shepherding community over time. As a survival strategy, the Gaddis sanskritized/universalized their social organization, and appropriated dominant caste identities in ways tailored to facilitate social correspondence with the plains-people that they were interacting with, and on whom they were dependent for summer's lodgings, pastures, livelihood, as well as to further their economic gains (Sharma 2012a:13-35). Thus, in order to facilitate an interactive trade situation, the pastorals appropriated the caste super-structure, even though they remained external to its social dynamics.[4] In the process, much like other peripatetic communities interacting with settled peasant communities (Markovits et al. 2003:8; Sauli 2003:215-39), the shepherds were relegated to the fringe of the larger social order. Such interactions, mediated and regulated by the state, however exemplify the confrontation of traditional past with the powerful trends of modernization, wherein indigenous arrangements were defined and opposed against externally originating institutions "at variance with local conditions and much less responsive to regional contingencies" (Bhattacharya 1995:54; Chakravarty-Kaul 1996:4).

Significantly, these changes also meant that the entire family did not move to pastures, as they once did. During summers, when the shepherds grazed their flocks in alpine pastures, the women stayed back in their sedentary base in Gadherana, growing summer crops. Their men

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[4] Such external changes, without major change to their internal structures by 1955, resulted in confusion particularly to the ethnographers assuming them to be a part of homogeneous Hindu society. Newell (1955:101-10), for instance, defined the Gaddi marriages as isogamous because of his vantage position of caste as internal to the Gaddi society, just as it was in the Indian mainland. Such is his confusion that he then tries to reconcile this with statements like: "Yet in spite of this isogamous process taking place it is not in conflict with the principle of endogamy for it is the Gaddi which is the name of the caste" (106). If Gaddi is a caste name, then what do stratification and hierarchy within it mean? If it is different, then why call it a monolith? In a way, this is also the problem of colonial anthropologists as well as the nationalists following them, wherein they were obsessed with fixing caste into "people" or "tribes" based on the notions of occupations, corresponding to the concept prevalent in the Indo-Gangetic plains. They refused to understand that it could be the other way around, or a more complex and nuanced process as in the case of changing identity of the Gaddis.

visited them off and on, taking turns (Axelby 2007:35-75). This was the community time, when they fraternized by offering such rituals as Nauala. However, the community spread out during the winters as the flocks moved on to the temperate forests of lower hills—Kangra, Jammu, Sirmaur, and so on. The family, particularly women and children, was forced to stay with the local society, often offering menial help. They were provided lodgings. In return, the Gaddi women performed domestic chores and sustained themselves by working as porters and laborers. This, moreover, brought them into everyday cultural contact with settled agrarian society, and later when they settled in these areas, these cultural contacts facilitated their integration into this society.

Since the 1980s, however, more and more Gaddis have sold off their flocks and settled down in the lower hills. As they were integrated into the larger society, they adopted the lifestyle, dominant beliefs and lore of the society they immigrated into. In the process they also lost base with their own lore and customs, as well as the custodians of rituals like the Sippis. As the process of migration, interaction and seasonal settlement with the peasant society, and finally permanent relocation and settlement in the lower-hills firmed up, it also resulted in change in the Nauala ritual performance.

Nauala Performance

The Nauala was a ceremonial event for which the nine Gaddi *als*, or clans, met in veneration to Dhudu. Unlike other Hindu deities, there was no temple or dedicated ceremony to Dhaudu except the performance of Nauala ritual by the Gaddis. The ritual was offered by the family on transformative occasions and was sanctified by the elders/shamans of the nine clans. The Nauala ritual was a way of reaffirming their allegiance to Dhudu. The participation of clan leaders or members of all clans reaffirmed the bond of community, a feeling that was otherwise hard for people who were nomads and had little contact with each other during the course of year as usually their herding routes and locations were far apart.

When I first participated in the Nauala ritual-performance in Thanetar in 1990, the Gaddi shepherd village in Gadherana, the singing began with the *Reharas*, a caste of professional bards called *bhagats* (literally "singers of devotional music," who also performed animal sacrifice). They sang the rather lengthy myth of cosmogony that established the organic relationship between Dhudu and the shepherds. It is only towards the end of this singing that Dhudu is formally invited to the household where the sacrifice in his honor is offered. The Nauala song has three distinct parts. The creation or *brahmakhara*, which is sung in a very slow rhythm by the *Rehara*-bards, followed by *bharath* ("the middle"), and finally the *var*, or the finale, which is frenzied singing and dancing epitomized by the "dance of Dhudu" song produced above **(**Sharma 1991:248**)**:

> *Mrigasanayen diyan dhupan je paiyan . . .*
> The month of peak-summers,
> When the body perspires effusively,
> With your right hand, my lord,

You extracted a thick layer,
Of perspired-dirt!
With the left hand
You sculpted,
A human form out of it.
In this statue you "blew"
The essence of life.
You called this "life" a "human"!
It stood erect, in awe and devotion.
The "human" who could listen
Your words,
Who stood with hands folded [in supplication],
Were known as Gaddis, the shepherds.
The shepherds pray in your name,
We worship you, in words and deed,
My lord, the great benevolent
Dhudu—he-who-is-ever-smeared-in-ash.

This opening stanza of Nauala singing is known as *brahmakhara* or the word of creation (from Brahma, the creator). It is only towards the end of the creation myth that Dhudu is invited as a guest in whose honor sacrifice is offered. The invitation having been made, in come running the Sippnaitus, the oracles, and as they get possessed, and once the sacrifice is offered, the Nauala ritual starts:

Kuni samiye tera mada ditta . . .
Who is the host (*assami*) that prepare your *manda*
(Who is the swami who prepared your *mandala*)
Who strung together the garland, you wear?
The learned *pandit* wrote my *mandala*
The dexterous gardener made the garland.

Mand is the bread made by four persons of the host family (*sami* or *assami*) and neighbors to be offered to Dhudu. This bread is made of millets and honey. However, these days the word *mand* is substituted by *mandala*, the figurative diagram used in Hindu worship of the nine-planets (*navagraha pujan*). Similarly the word *assami* or *sami* used for host is changed into *swami*, used for the Brahmin-priest. Hence, the host is replaced by the agency of priesthood, which dominates the ritual. Thus by subtle rearrangement of words the change in transmission agency and officials of rituals is effected and legitimated.

The song then continues to invoke the fierce aspect of Dhudu, the protector of shepherds and forests (Sharma 1991:248—new translation):

Aoyan vo samiya sanjhkariya belan . . .
The brown locks dangle on the forehead

The matted-locks adorn the head,
Your neck is covered with the garlands
Made of *rudraksha* beads.
Come my lord, go my lord
At the time when sun sets;
Stay with us, be our guest tonight.
We offer food, we offer water,
All offerings are displayed in front of you,
You take back, the great lord,
Today you take back what you gave us.

At this point the frenzy of Sippnaitus starts. They have come in running, possessed, singing. The air is filled with music: the longhorns, the kettledrums, and high pitched singing. The he-goat or ram is offered and water sprinkled over it by the *chela*. If the sacrificial animal is accepted, soon the blood flows, which is smeared on the foreheads of oracles, and maybe the host. Some oracles also drink ritually the blood dripping from the head of the sacrificed animal. Thereafter, the oracles with blood smeared foreheads start doing the "voices" (talking in tongues in the voice of Dhudu), prognosticating. Many people join this frenzy, dancing in trance. Now Dhudu is invoked in this frenzied dance. Substances, cannabis in particular, are used, legitimated as "herb" by the Nauala singers. The song is set against the backdrop of the seasonal migration of these shepherds, when they move to the higher mountains and alpine pastures in summers. Dhudu too moves to the mountains for the six months, to return to the lower hills in winters. (unpublished):

Niladesan te nata laiaunda . . .
The sky is overcast
There is hint of thunderstorm
Today, my lord, is the ominous night
Dhudu goes today to the mountain-top.
What will you, Dhudu, do on the mountain-top?
I will get the "herb" from the mountain-top.
I will order a dancer from the Niladesa.

Who is the ruler of Pyalpura?
The Naga-serpent is the ruler of Pyalpura.
Who is the king of heaven?
Inder is the one who lords over heaven.
Who is the one who rules over the humankind?
Dhudu is the one who rules over the humankind.
Kamakhya is the goddess of the Kurudesa.
What does Kamakhya bestows to us?
Kamakhya confers the gifts of sons.

What is significant is how various Hindu deities are associated with Dhudu in the body of song. The threefold division between heaven, netherworld and earth is interesting. Indra—the wielder of thunderbolt who controlled rain, the Vedic high-god—is the ruler of the divine sphere. Serpents or *nagas* are the lords of netherworld, called Pyalpura. Dhudu is prominent on earth, among humans. Yet the lower regions, the temperate winter abode of Dhudu and the Gaddis, is also called Pyalpura. But Dhudu embraces it, as he wears snake on his body, thus unifying the two worlds in his person. There are tantric associations in the song as well—intended or not— but, interestingly, of Kamakhya, the prominent deity of the east—called Kurudesa (?), or the country of Kauravas—who bless them with sons. Son preference is built into the body of song, echoing the patriarchal structures similar to the peasant society that these shepherds interacted with (unpublished):

> *Jadi mun lainda dhara para . . .*
> Dhudu goes today to the mountain-top.
> What will you, Dhudu, do on the mountain-top?
> I will get the "herb" from the mountain-top.
>
> The play of the *nata*-dancer is so enchanting!
> All "herbs" come to watch the spectacle
> But the "herb-hypnotic" is not to be seen.
> The herb that kills the loved ones,
> The herb that induces the dancer to dance!
>
> The "herb-hypnotic" was caught hold of,
> It was caught and produced in front of you.
> What shall we do with this herb?
> We shall process the herb.
> What shall we do with the residue?
> Shall make intoxicating-drink from it,
> Which is like eating a "living" lamb [?].[5]
> Dhudu gulps down a tumbler full of the intoxicating-drink,
> He bares his chest,
> His eyes are bloodshot.
> Dance, Dhudu, dance,
> Dance with your elf-locks untangled.
> Dance I shall, but there is no music?
> Break your breasts and make the resonating-bowl of them,
> Pluck your hair and make the stings out of them,
> Break your fingers to make plectra out of them.

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[5]The centrality of sacrifice and the use of intoxicant *bhang*-cannabis, which is generally associated with Shiva, are legitimated in this ritual process. It seems that the processing of *bhang*, the intoxicant, is fused with the blood of sacrifice.

> Dance, O Dhudu, dance!
> Dhudu dances with his matted-locks swaying,
> With his dreadlocks swaying.

This song ends with the verses first reproduced, of dancing Dhudu left alone by Gorja and Ganga. He is angry thereafter, a phase that leads to long period of famine. He thus needs to be placated and the process of life started. The Gaddis placate him by dancing, sacrificing, and worship. Night-long vigil, therefore, is kept in his honor and devotional songs are sung. These ritual songs or devotional songs are called *ainchalis*.

While Shiva as Dhudu is the major focus of the singing, of late the *ainchalis* influenced by their cultural contact with the lower hills and Panjab plains have made an inroad, particularly those singing the exploits of Krishna and Rama, the two predominant Vaishnava devotional themes. As the Gaddis started settling down in the lower hills, the singing of songs other than Shiva were introduced as *ainchalis*, which kept the tempo of night-long vigil to Dhudu going. Later, as we will observe, some of these themes were filtered into the structure of Nauala ritual performance, indicating a nuanced shift in ritual emphasis that moved closer to the society they were migrating into.

The Nauala ritual songs were sung exclusively by the professional ritualists and bards: the Sippis and *Reharas*. During the course of ritual/ceremony, the *Reharas* received customary dues in kind, along with Sippnaitus, who presided over these ceremonies. The Sippis also had a right over the head (*munda*), hooves (*tunda*), and skin (*khaladu*) of the sacrificed animal. The *Reharas*, on the other hand, received fixed customary dues for their singing during the months of *jatras* ("pilgrimages") in summer from predetermined families bound in a mutually reciprocal service relation. Interestingly, the *Reharas*, as well as Sippis, also acted as wool-clippers for these shepherding families. The ritual performance and professional activities were therefore enmeshed into each other, binding the performers and the shepherds. This relationship was at the root of sustaining the clans of transmitters, which has declined in recent times.

Changing Ritual-Performance

As observed earlier, the significance of Nauala for the Gaddi shepherds was such that the members/leaders of the nine clans met in veneration to Dhudu. Later, as the Gaddis started settling down in the lower hills and gave up shepherding, there was a shift in the meaning of the ritual as well. As the clans could not meet in the large disparate areas that the Gaddis settled in, the meaning of Nauala also changed. Hence it came to mean a performance consisting of nine people: the *chela*-oracle, priest, four singers, the host who offered sacrifice of the ram, the slayer of the sacrifice, and the cook. There were changes in the transmission as well as the ministrants of the ritual. As the settlement forced adoption of social categories of the society in which the Gaddis settled—hence classified in caste terms—the need to reaffirm community identity weakened. The oracles, thereupon, gave way to the Brahmin-priests (as noted above in the subtle change made in the opening verses of the ritual), and the ritual became more like the Hindu invocation of gods. Nauala, the gathering of nine clans and later of nine people, thereafter

transformed into *Nava-ala*, or the nine houses, with each house conceived as the seat of a major planet (*navagraha puja*), just like the standard modern Hindu worship. In this altered form of worship, Shiva is invoked along with the goddess and Ganesha. The *dham* ("rice-feast") is now given the next day after the worship, just like the Hindus of Kangra do, though the animal sacrifice still retains centrality in the ritual performance.

As observed above, the Brahmin-priests made small changes in the opening verses of Nauala to accommodate their ritual structure. Concurrently, in the areas around Chamba and the southern slope of the Dhauladhar mountain range where the Gaddis settled in large number over time, the role of Sippis, were systematically edged out by the Brahmins, which is also visible in the shifts in Nauala performance. Even prior to the Brahmins, the Jogis edged out the Sippis as *chelas* of this ritual. The Jogis, a class of Shaivite ascetics/householders who professed tantric and yogic practices, were associated with the state formation of Chamba. Thus they had significant presence and enjoyed prestige in Chamba, Jammu, and Kangra (Sharma 2009). The householder Jogis were also a class of singers known for singing *Jogi-Magh*, a devotional genre sung in the month of *Magh* (February). It seems that in Chamba and in the southern slope of Dhauladhar range, where they had some presence, they replaced the Sippi-*chelas* and became associated with the Nauala ritual. This may be perceived in the Nauala performance in such areas as well, where they emphasize the role of Jogis in bringing Shaivism to the area, a subtle way by which the Sippis were distanced and their own role in worship legitimated. Other deities are mentioned, unlike the opening lines of creation—*brahmakhara*. An alternative cosmogony is thus envisioned, an attempt to sanskritize the Nauala ritual by attributing causation to known Hindu deities. As has been documented also by Manorma Sharma (1998:74), I translate the opening lines of Jogi variant of Nauala song (unpublished):

> *Hoya na thi, sansar ha thiya/ Tarloki Nath bhunta . . .*
> When there was no earth,
> When there was no air, no world,
> Tarlokinath, the lord of three-spheres (Shiva) was there.
> The four goddesses (Indrani), five Pandavas,
> The four Narayan, and seventh the goddess Sheetla
> Eighth, the clan deity, the Nagas (serpent deity), the nine Naths,
> One Arjun, the Mahabharata hero, Siddha Bhairavanath,
> The lakes, the water . . .

While other deities are mentioned in this Jogi variant, Shiva continues to remain central to the Gaddis, albeit in altered form. Shiva is perceived as Trilokinath or the Lord-of-three-worlds, who gives boon of "herding" to the Gaddis as his special messengers.[6] At one level this change in name makes little difference; at another level, we see how the Jogis use this myth to sanskritize, to universalize the local within the larger Hindu perspective, which is welcomed by the Gaddis

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[6]There are other songs to this effect, whereby Gaddi men are professionally endowed as shepherds while women (*Gaddan*) are blessed with beauty (*rupa*) by Shiva. How gendered stereotypes and work divisions are reinforced once the shepherds settle down with peasant communities is an interesting insight gleaned from these songs.

who were already sanskritizing their social structures to integrate with the settled communities they were migrating into. Dhudu, the local thus gives way to Trilokinath, the sanskritic.

This song of alternative creation was then followed by the verse where Shiva is invited, a part where Jogis affirmed their relationship with Chamba in general and Gaddis in particular (Sharma 2009:78):

> *Dacchan desan te Siddh-joggi aye/ tu mere samiya . . .*
> From the southern country
> Siddha Jogis came.
> Come Dhudu, come in the evening
> Come and be our guest tonight.
> Nine men give you the offerings of *Nauala*
> O Dhudu, let me repay your debt.
> Dance O Dhudu, dance with your locks swaying
> Dance O Dhudu, dance . . .

The change in the ritual structure is also mapped. It's a ritual of paying back the debt of Dhudu (*lai jayan samiyan apana udhara*), offered by nine men. Like an innovation in the opening verses of the Nauala, a new ending is also offered to the ritual structure. After a night-long vigil and singing of *ainchalis* or devotional songs, the Nauala ritual ends with the rise of sun, the chirping of birds. All the deities participating in the sacrifice-ritual must go back to their domains; all humans to their chores. All people, metaphoric birds, are exhorted to leave the house after the auspicious night (Sharma, Manorma 1998:74):

> *Utth mereya pankeradua/ Hoyi hain naketan ho . . .*
> Get up and rise, my little bird,
> The new day has begun.
> Get up and rise (go away), my little bird,
> Those on night-vigil are still awake.
> Get up and go away my little bird,
> The lord Ganapat (the elephant-headed deity) is wide awake.
> Get up and rise, my little bird,
> Sheetla, the goddess of pox, is wide awake . . .

The ritual comes to an end with these verses. These days, however, the *dham* is given to the entire village, as is a practice in Kangra valley and other lower hills, on the following day in commemoration of the successful passage of the Nauala ritual. While earlier the community revisited its identity in the sacrificial feast on the night of Nauala performance, these days it is more of a vestige that has little meaning in terms of community binding. The rice-feast in fact is more meaningful as it is given to the entire village, in which the Gaddis and other communities participate, which serves as a process of integrating the Gaddis with the communities they have settled in (for caste and *dham*, Parry 1979:95-101).

The Nauala ritual singing was exclusively a masculine domain, though women participated in the ritual process. There were, however, exclusive masculine ritual activities. For instance, even if women partook of the sacrifice, they were not part of the sacrificial ritual; yet they were equal ritual-partners in the Nauala offerings to Dhudu along with their husbands. In recent times however, the *ainchalis* sung during the night of vigil (*jagra/jagrata*) have slowly been replaced by *jatras*, local pilgrimage to various shrines as part of wish-fulfilling or thanksgiving. The pilgrimage songs, called *bhents* ("to a goddess"), and *bhajans* ("devotional songs"), picked up from the Panjab plains or lower hills, have slowly acquired the spiritual center-stage, if not totally replacing the *ainchalis*. These songs are sung more by women, even if they do not constitute their exclusive domain. Such singing has made a huge impact on the structure of Nauala in Kangra, which is reflected in the Nauala song as well. These changes make significant alterations in the myth and reinvent it to cater to the new found identity of the Gaddis: shepherds physically displaced from their homeland, who do not herd, and live like peasants in the lower hills. The new myth rearticulates their identity as plains-settled caste stratified community who worship various Hindu deities, Shiva being one of them (Sharma, Manorma 1998:76). This may be contextualized in the Nauala variant of dancing Dhudu song from Kangra (unpublished):

> *Shiba mere mahadeba bo/Sikra ma tadi lagayi . . .*
> Shiva, my great lord
> Goes up to the mountain top to meditate,
> Shiva, my great lord.
> Shiva is dancing with his hair lose,
> With his hair dangling, Shiva dances,
> Shiva, my great lord.
>
> The dear Rani Gorja, Rani Gorja,
> Is dying of stomachache, Rani Gorja
> Of stomachache is she dying,
> Shiva, my great lord.
> What shall you bring from dread-locks,
> Shiva, my great lord.
> I shall bring Thakur down from my crown [head]
> Shiva brings Thakur down from his head [the mountain top]
> Shiva, my great lord.

How the cosmologies are inverted is interesting. How iconography is challenged and reworked is a pointer to the way social change enters a subtle way into the mythological plane. In the first song, translated in the beginning, the dance is used to bring about two realities in the persona of Shiva, who is envisioned as a mountain: first, seating forest in the person of goddess, Girija—the daughter of the mountain; second, the rivers flowing from the mountain in the person of the river goddess, Ganga. The two are shown quarreling over their matrimonial right over Shiva, who is left alone as a consequence of his shared sympathies. This myth is, however, inverted in this

song. The goddess, in this song, is in pain and the medication is sought in the Vaishnava symbol: Thakur or Rama. Is Shiva distanced in the lives of shepherds? Obviously this intervention does not represent the centrality of Shiva in the lives of these people. This is, indeed, a culturally nuanced intervention, as Rama is perceived as an inclusive integrative symbol prominent within the larger community of Kangra women singing. The intervention not only distances the Gaddis from their shepherding roots, but also is seen as a tool to integrate them into the peasant society of the lower hills where they are settling.

The change in the ritual structure is indicative of the shifting role of Dhudu in the lives of Gaddis and their attitude towards ritual. Today, the temples of goddess and other deities have appeared even in Gadherana. While Dhudu retains centrality in their lives, various deities are also worshipped and invoked at different times. Nauala is offered every now and then, though the function and meaning of ritual is no more the same. This shift is consistent with the process of change, so evident in the altered economic and social structures of the Gaddis.

Changing Transmission

During my first visit to Gadherana in 1990, my rather rudimentary and cumbersome cassette player proved to be an unimagined asset. After each recording the performer wanted to hear what he had sung. The Gaddis were dumbfounded! I would be forced to play the same song umpteen times to various audiences—amidst amused banter and laughter—before I could undertake the second recording. The fact that they could hear their own voice evoked in them a notion of "immortality," the recording being a reminder of their presence on earth. Many warmed to me and acceded to my request simply because they wanted to leave their mark on the cassette player. The way their oral traditions were being transmitted was already changing and unwittingly I was also an agent of change. While I could document—record and write—they have since started producing their own cassettes, CDs (and of late VCDs), with music playing to the beats of popular Hindi films that cater to the local sensibilities and market. In the process, the traditional transmitters have taken a back seat and are fast vanishing; the earlier songs have been modified; the myths sanskritized. The identity has undergone change.

While I was in Gadherana, I was mostly recording with two traditional performers. A professional bard or *Rehara* from the village Chaleda, named Kathu (Fig. 3), and Bhagal Ram of village Thanetar, a *Bhagat* or ritual performer. Like the Dom musicians of Kangra, *Reharas* sing to the accompaniment of *daf* ("one-headed hand-drum") and *dotara* ("double-stringed instrument"). Bhagal Ram played on *dholak* ("two-headed hand-drum") while singing, usually accompanied by his daughter and his son-in-law (Fig. 4). The function of these performers was twofold: first, transmitting the self-actualizing history of the shepherds and their relationship with the sacred, which was intimate and personal, and second, sensitizing them as well as associating their identity with the pan-Indian sacred ethos. They would, thus, sing the myth of cosmogony, the *ainchalis* of Nauala—of Shiva, Krishna and Rama—and also sing the Nath legends popular in north India (Gold 1993): of Puranbhagat, Gopi Chand, Bhartrihari (Temple 1884). Bhagal Ram would also sing devotional songs that were rather popular in Kangra.
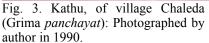
Fig. 3. Kathu, of village Chaleda (Grima *panchayat*): Photographed by author in 1990.

Fig. 4. Bhagal Ram of village Thanetar, Gadherana, along with his daughter and son-in-law. Photographed by author in 1990.

Bhagal Ram, who became a *bhagat*, or singer of devotional music, following his father's footsteps, was one of the first in Thanetar to sell his *dhan* ("flock") and settle down in a Kangra village in the early 1980s. His son was averse to the peripatetic life and became a taxi driver. His grandsons had little use for the Gaddi traditions, except for ritual purposes, as they wanted to be mainstreamed by the dominant, the perceived superior culture. Bhagal Ram's daughter and son-in-law occasionally accompanied him, as also in some of my recordings, but after his death they gave up altogether. Their offspring refused to follow the shepherding profession and have no education in the lore of community. The transmission lineage of Bhagal Ram faded out with him. The same was the fate of Kuthu, the *Rehara* professional singer. His sons too despised his ways of moving from family to family, from fair to fair, singing and earning small amounts or collecting customary dues. Though he did not migrate out of Gadherana, his sons did. After his death, his singing-lineage died with him, too. Today, one occasionally gets to hear the *Reharas* singing in *jatra*-pilgrimage, as in Chhatrari or Bharmaur temple towns in Chamba (Brahmaur 1964*; Chitrari 1964), for instance, but there are very few professional *Reharas*. The sedentization of many Gaddi families, the sale and pooling of flocks, the inroads made by monetized economy and technology, severed their relationship with the shepherds as clippers of wool. The severance of this service relationship affected their customary relationship as performers as well. Rarely do they now visit the far-flung and sparsely populated villages in Gadherana simply to sing and collect their customary dues. It is, in fact, not economically viable.

The transformation of ritual lore, the dying lineages of traditional singers and ritual specialists, and the eventual preservation and transmission of ritual-lore through audio and now video technology underscores the larger dynamics of change and reaction to modernity. The advent of education also played a critical role in this change. The semi-permanent or permanent settlement of families in the plain areas exposed the children to schools (where opportunities were more!), particularly after 1980s. While earlier there was only one school in Bharmaur town, schools were also opened in assorted Gadherana villages. Conceived as the school-on-the-move, these were functional during summers, in continuation to and complementing the school in the

plains (Kangra, and so on.) that catered to the educational aspirations during the winters. The aspirations of this literate generation moved towards settlement away from Gadherana, giving up herding and finding employment for themselves and education for their children in the plains. The educational exposure (in terms of world-view as well as job opportunities) however goes a long way in redefining the Gaddi identity, from transhumant shepherds to plains-settled agriculturists, along with sanskritization of identity over a period of time.

The complex process of sanskritization (a dynamic beginning with marginalization of the ego-identity, demonstrable influence of the dominant ethos, and finally unquestioningly imbibing the ways of the dominant—in this case the region of settlement) presupposes a movement away from herding and herders. Since the ethos of the settled community is much different from that of the herding society, this process helps us in understanding the transformation that took place in the structures of everyday life (for instance, giving up the traditional dress and adopting the western ways of dressing), redefining and reformulating major life events, notably marriage, death, and so on. For example, traditional forms of marriage by exchange (*batta-satta*), or elopement (*jharphuk*), were looked down upon and gave way to the Hinduized ritual, formalized by a Gaddi-Brahmin priest (Phillimore 1982:326-57; 1991:344; for changes in past 150 years, Kapila 2004:397-409). Obviously, there is not a complete severance with the past, though the "native" "traits" are relegated to margins. This resulted in a kind of shifts and transformations as we charted above in the structure of Nauala performance.

In recent times, the self-perception of Gaddis has come full circle. Quota politics for job reservations and other privileges, as in other parts of India, prodded the Gaddis to rearticulate and reassert their "tribal" identity as distinct from the "peasant" identity. After 2002, the Kangra-Gaddis were recognized as a "Scheduled Tribe" (ensuring quotas in jobs and in educational institutions, along with other protective measures within the larger grouping of STs), resulting in reassertion of their distinct identity markers. Thus, traditional dress has made a comeback on ceremonial and ritual occasions. There is a kind of informed "negotiation" as to when to resort to (or assert) traditional identity and when to be fixed in the "modern." Another marker of distinction is the reinvention and transmission of the Gaddi folklore, particularly through the medium of market controlled CDs/DVDs (Wagner 2013). The performance of Nauala, albeit in its altered form, is one such reassertion.

The market however has a way of romanticizing and glamorizing to find base with heterogeneous sensibilities. For example, the cover of CDs/VCDs stereotypes ethnic communities by portraying them in exoticized traditional dress, not the westernized or north Indian clothing that they wear. Recently, Wagner has analyzed how such stereotypes are perpetuated: the CD/VCD cover usually portrays a Gaddi woman in excessive traditional dress and jewelry holding a lamb, while a Gaddi man is invariably shown playing on a flute, surrounded by his flock. The snow capped mountains, goat or sheep flock, and rivers, form the background. Thus the connection of the shepherds to the wilderness in counter distinction to the urban milieu in which these music-discs find place is accentuated (Wagner 2013:25-38). The Nauala ritual lore is also glamorized. The "dance of Dhudu" is removed from its context and presented as one song, with "fusion" music and dancing Gaddis. Only the portion that challenges Dhudu, romanticizes the use of cannabis, is frenetic in rhythm and conducive to dancing is sung and presented in these numerous music-discs. In the process, however, the traditional identity of

Gaddis as exclusive Shaivite shepherding community is rearticulated and their lore preserved and transmitted—even if it is hemmed, processed and modernized (westernized). This makes a perfect market sense, which creates and harnesses the perceptions of tradition and modern.

Conclusion

Recently, I was again invited to the Nauala ritual hosted by a non-shepherd Gaddi settled in Kangra and heard an audio-cassette playing the song "Dance of Dhudu," recorded apparently by a Gaddi settler in Kangra to music influenced by the Bombay film industry. The Sippnaitus were not invited, as now they do not officiate at every Nauala sacrificial offering. The settlement of the pastoral Gaddis over a disparate and widespread area discourages this small community of *chelas* from officiating at the rituals taking place in far-flung areas from their habitations in Gadherana or the land of Gaddis. It makes no economic sense to them. Rather, the local Gaddi-Brahmin priests or else other oracles of dubious denominations, like the Jogis, preside over these and other community rituals as the rights of marginal Sippi *chelas* have been taken over and then innovated upon. In fact, there have also been court cases over the rights of differing communities to officiate over this ceremony in Chamba and other places where the Gaddi now live (Sharma 2009:304-39). In the process, the tenor of ritual—its sanctity, lore, and process—universalized. Even though the change conformed to the dominant tradition of ritual performance prevalent in the area, the distinctive trait of this ritual as a sacrificial performance was however retained. Noticeably, the change is more evident in the performance and reception of the song, which has mutated into an entertaining musical that is divorced from the context of ritual performance. While the sacrifice of the goat retains centrality in the Nauala ritual, the dance of Dhudu, which is liminal and cathartic, has acquired different meaning. It is no longer of sacral significance only. I witnessed how the inebriated youngsters danced as the pre-recorded audio-cassette played on, while the elderly looked on with amusement or frowns. The words were there . . . but there was no atmosphere. The fearsome dance of Dhudu did not invoke fear; nor awe and veneration as I experienced in the first instance; it was rather an entertainment!

The inebriated young modern Gaddi men dancing to the music of pre-recorded rendition of "Dance of Dhudu"—the finale of Nauala ritual-performance—is a reflection of change, about self perception, and the process of changing perceptions and market intervention. The way the context of modernization is perceived and modernizing sensibilities asserted, how aspirations are articulated and fulfilled, and how performance and tradition are reinvented, preserved, transmitted, and asserted may be glimpsed in that brief display. This interpretation, however, motivates us to revisit the process of dislocation and disembodiment of the "self" and ritual performance-text.

As the significance of Nauala ritual-performance in the lives of displaced Gaddis, removed from their ancestral habitat and nomadic ways, changed focus, so did the ways of performance and transmission of ritual-text. The displacement also severed their relationship with traditional transmission lineages of ritual-text, visible in subtle variations in ritual-performance. In the process, however, the tenor of ritual—text, performance, and agency—mutated into an unrelated "modern" musical score, removed both from the context of ritual-

performance as well as its human interface, the identity bearing text. The transformation of ritual text, dying lineages of traditional singers and ritual specialists, new interpretations and transmission agencies, and eventual preservation and transmission of ritual-lore through audio and now video technology, underscores the larger dynamics of change and engagement with modernity. This is the engagement of dislocated "identity" negotiating to reinvent itself through ritual-performance. But as the ritual performance-text becomes fragmented—uprooted and decontextualized—it only mirrors the dislocated disembodied self.

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