

Indian

# *Folklife*

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
FROM NATIONAL FOLKLORE SUPPORT CENTRE

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## Post-field Positionings

**Guest Editor: Susan Seizer**



## NATIONAL FOLKLORE SUPPORT CENTRE

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

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Website: [www.kattaikkuttu.org](http://www.kattaikkuttu.org)

All communications should be addressed to:

The Editor, *Indian Folklife*,  
National Folklore Support Centre,  
#508, V Floor, Kaveri Complex,  
96, Mahatma Gandhi Road,  
Nungambakkam, Chennai - 600 034 (India)  
Tele/Fax: 91-44-28229192 / 42138410  
[info@indianfolklore.org](mailto:info@indianfolklore.org), [muthu@md2.vsnl.net.in](mailto:muthu@md2.vsnl.net.in)

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## Post-field Positionings

SUSAN SEIZER

SUSAN SEIZER is Associate Professor in the Department of Communication and Culture, Indiana University, USA. Prior to her present position she was Associate Professor of Anthropology and Gender and Women Studies at Scripps College, California. Her research and teaching interests include cultural anthropology, performance studies, ethnographic narrative, stigma theory, and humor in use. This wide range of scholarly expertise informs her recently authored book, *"Stigmas of the Tamil Stage: An Ethnography of Special Drama Artists in South India"*. Susan Seizer has also published a number of papers in scholarly journals; for her full curriculum vitae, see [www.stigmasofthetamilstage.com](http://www.stigmasofthetamilstage.com). She is delighted to have had the opportunity to work with IFL as guest editor of the current issue.

Fieldwork is frequently viewed as the *sine qua non* of the discipline of cultural anthropology, a rite of passage for its students who anticipate moving into their professional identities as full-fledged scholars after returning from the field.<sup>1</sup> In broad strokes, the three stages of this rite<sup>2</sup> are: 1) a willing *separation* from the familiar, consisting of a move out and away; 2) a *liminal* period in which the scholar approaches and explores, often as a neophyte, some previously unfamiliar cultural or sub-cultural phenomenon; and finally 3) a return, bearing marks euphemistically known as fieldnotes, that culminates in a "write up" process facilitating *reaggregation* and professionalization. This tripartite process has been theorized, interrogated, attacked, defended, and well documented. The cultural scholar's relationship with his or her field – initially as chosen proving ground, and subsequently, if the famed "ethnographer's magic" works, as domain of professional expertise – does not, however, end with this practised three-step. Not only does experience tend to exceed anything one might make of it, it also resists containment in pre-selected beginnings, middles and ends.

In the spirit of moving beyond such tidy analytic models, then, and into a discussion of the kinds of real-life interpersonal effects fieldwork actually generates in our lives, this August 2006 issue of the NFSC newsletter is dedicated to reflections on the active presence of "the field" in the ongoing lives of scholars engaged in cross-cultural study, whether in India or from an Indian starting point. No longer the sole purview of anthropologists, scholars from a wide range of humanities and social

science disciplines now use the methods of intensive fieldwork, sharing a view of social and cultural life as a field of human affairs that deserves direct study. These include linguists, historians, psychologists, sociologists and folklorists as well as scholars of theater arts and gender studies.



What can the experiences of a group of scholars willing to reflect honestly on the "post-field" effects of extended periods of ethnographic fieldwork on their personal and professional lives teach us about the nature of intense cultural and cross-cultural encounters over time? In this post-field phase of our careers, have we found ways to address social inequalities revealed in our fieldwork? Do we maintain relationships with those who became intimates and collaborators in the field, and if so, how have these relationships transformed over time? Do we continue to speak, or write, or teach about people and places that at a certain period we knew so well and cared about so intensely?

The authors of the essays presented here each have their own way of approaching such questions of how the field remains active in their post-field lives. I have solicited reflections on the realities of how the give-and-take inaugurated in the field between ourselves and the subjects of our research lives on, beyond the canonical fieldwork period, to affect us post-field. These essays are first takes, really; there are many angles from which to approach this topic, one that seems to deepen at every glance and touch a different emotion at every juncture. None of us has gone as far as we might in tapping into the uncertainties of the post-field period: How do we ever repay people who have given us something as valuable as new ways to understand life? Can we maintain the open, questioning, vulnerable quality of fieldwork while also meeting the demands of expertise and authority that characterize the academic career? Who might we consult on these questions if they are rarely and publicly discussed? The post-field phase of our scholarship is generally longer than the fieldwork period itself. Yet to date, the post-field effects of fieldwork have garnered very little scholarly attention. The topic is difficult to write about; it demands deep questioning of one's self and one's commitments. (The generally anecdotal passages published in previous collections of reflective essays on anthropological fieldwork, while welcome, still treat periods of fieldwork itself as their primary objects of contemplation [Brettell 1993; Golde 1970; Kulick & Wilson 1995; Lewin & Leap 1996]).

*I asked contributors to make the sequelae of fieldwork in their lives the focus of their attention. Those who rose to the challenge*

*are a diverse group who from a range of disciplinary homes: Dr. Vijaya Nagarajan works in Religious and Environmental Studies; Dr. Phillip Zarrilli teaches and trains actors in Drama; Dr. Hanne de Bruin took her degree in South Asian Languages & Civilizations and now runs a school for theater artists in Tamil Nadu; Dr. Bernard Bate and Dr. Chandana Mathur trained and teach in Anthropology; and I am an anthropologist now teaching in Communication & Culture. We represent an equally wide range of personal identifications with India and Indian culture. The post-field relations we maintain to our prior field sites range from the close intimacy of marriage to the distance and alienation of communicative failure, and suggest an inspiring array of creative alternative outposts in between.*

I see Bruin's and Mathur's essays, then, as defining the two extreme poles of closeness and distance, respectively, that anchor the continuum of post-field relations discussed by these authors. Each set of relations seems, as well, to crystallize around and develop from a primary, particular relation: husband/wife for Bruin; mother/daughter for Nagarajan; guru/sishya for Zarrilli; Tamil family/U.S. family for myself; his own and other scholars' viewpoints for Bate; and the incomprehensible strangeness of "white working class men from the American heartland" for Mathur. Each of the resulting essays deserves a further word of introduction here.

For Bruin, her post-field life and the goals of her ongoing applied work in Tamil Nadu is inseparably entwined with that of her husband, the theater artist P. Rajagopal, who was her principal informant during her original fieldwork. Bruin has chosen to leave her natal home in the Netherlands to live permanently in her fieldsite, applying her academic skills to advocate for the cultural and economic rights of professional, rural Kattaikkuttu performers, making their goals her own.

Nagarajan finds her fieldsite – the artistic practices of women who draw the *kolam* – itself drawing new lines of connection, growing plural, reduplicating and replicating to match her own sense of having gained a double home through a life lived back and forth between India and the U.S. As a journey of reinscriptive practices, Nagarajan's post-field reflections circle back again and again to the artistry, voice and vision of her own mother, while as a mother herself she is simultaneously introducing her own daughters to this cultural field.

With an intensity that only the most devoted of students ever experience, it is Zarrilli's love for his guru and guide, Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar, that animates the rich life of theatrical, professional and pedagogical accomplishments he documents and discusses in his essay. Together he and his guru established the first "traditional" earth-floor *kalari* (place of training for Kerala's martial art) located outside of Kerala—the Tyn-y-parc

C.V.N. Kalari in Llanarth, Wales, a fully functioning counterpart to his own *kalarippayattu* training grounds at the CVN Kalari, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. Zarrilli writes of the "two-way traffic" between Kerala and himself wherever he is living/working that makes his post-field life one of "constant immersion in Kerala culture" even on the far west coast of Wales.

Equally ongoing and alive, my own post-field experiences center not on a single personage, but on a family. Ours has been a set of highly adaptive and malleable relations that is perhaps most interesting for the ways we have simultaneously held multiple *murai* (kin ties) – I have been many people and taken on many roles in my Tamil family – teaching me that it is possible to live-into-being familiarity. This is the first lesson the post-field years brought home to me: that living it makes it so. The second lesson has more to do with the possibilities new media has opened up for the continued growth of my Tamil consciousness, by which I mean both the thought processes and linguistic skills that buttress a growing sense of myself as a relational being, some of whose primary relations are now Tamil.

Bate offers us a wonderfully excruciating, honest essay in which he recounts what he calls "a story about one of the least felicitous papers I ever delivered." What he makes of his brief humiliation before a mixed audience of Sri Lankan Tamil Canadians, college students, university professors and senior scholars – a community about whose opinions he cares deeply, and with whom he is engaged in ongoing dialogic-learning – is an example of the kind of attentive devotion to scholarly practices and processes that make our post-field lives lively; the learning he does here unravels some of his prior lessons, and reveals them as encumbrances. The field, he concludes, is fluid, and he must himself continually reassess his trained, ethnographic eye to allow it to better take in its movements.

Post-field, Mathur finds herself sitting uncomfortably with a sense that the promise of an empathetic model of ethnography has failed her, and perhaps us, in failing to provide a way to understand viewpoints with which we continue to deeply disagree, and thus from which we distance ourselves. A South Asian woman, she worked with American working class men who seem to have remained foreign to her throughout both her field and post-field reflections. Mathur's essay reminds us that not every field experience ends happily, nor should we expect that all would: Some political realities in the world are true obstacles to interpersonal communication. While Mathur's essay thus demarks the far end of the close-distant post-field relational continuum, it is clarifying to see how distance itself can serve as a necessary defense in these political times of true communicative trouble.

In all their range, then, the processes of post-field positioning to which these essays attest are clearly as dialogically engaged as the richest periods of our fieldwork. And they are ongoing. For not only does experience tend to exceed anything we might make of it, it also resists containment in pre-selected beginnings, middles and ends.

If indeed our interactions in the field were as intimate and interactive as we now realize they must be for any real transformations of knowledge-through-experience to occur, and again if these transformations continue to be the ground to which we return again and again in memory and meditation to fashion the magical stuff of our best works, then the field extends into the lives we continue to live as scholars post-field. Indeed, as these essays make clear, post-field relations and practices are a critical aspect of the full story of cross-cultural encounter and exchange. May this issue then serve to encourage further scholarly discussion, and ever more critical exploration and valuation of the post-field period of our cross-cultural relations.

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Fieldwork" here is conceived as a period of intensive, direct engagement with the people whose lives bear meaningfully on the particular arena of social and cultural life a scholar has chosen to study. In such usage *the field* is a highly malleable and conceptual entity, rather than a geologic or geographical one, created anew each time a scholar delineates its contours for the purposes of a given study.

<sup>2</sup> These three stages derive from a general model for *rites de passage* developed by Arnold van Gennep, a Dutch ethnologist, at the turn of the twentieth century (Van Gennep, 1909). "Separation, liminality, reaggregation" are Van Gennep's terms.

\* \* \* \* \*

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## Fieldwork and Positioning

HANNE M. DE BRUIN

Facilitator

Tamil Nadu Kattaikkuttu Kalai Valarchi Munnetra Sangam and Kattaikkuttu Youth Theatre School, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu, India.

Email: kattaiku@vsnl.com

### The missing link

Susan Seizer's stimulating write-up, in addition to her invitation over the telephone, stimulated me to (re-)think the reasons why I am still in 'the field' long after the completion of my fieldwork. In hindsight, an important factor for staying on appears to have been my uneasiness with the fact that the traditional, tripartite *rite de passage* Seizer describes as having long guided professional anthropologists lacks, in my view, an important "fourth link".

The usual *rite de passage* of anthropologists embarking on a fieldwork project was delineated into three different phases: that of separation from the familiar; that of immersion in the field; and that of re-integration into one's own cultural and academic world. The latter phase includes the "write up" process and, ultimately, the anthropologist's installation within her professional domain (if openings are available). Subsequently, selected data collected by the anthropologist in the field and the conclusions drawn from these data are presented during academic events or appear in publication to become part of a global, academic discourse. Such academic discourse aspires to objectify the fieldwork data by separating it from the real world, analysing and formalising it, leading to conclusions that draw upon the existing theoretical grid of the Humanities. Through these processes of selection, objectification and formalisation, then, academic discourse claims a "scientific" identity and purposefully distinguishes itself from other, "non-scientific" genres, such as literature and journalism (Clifford 1986, 5-6).

Only rarely are fieldwork results made accessible to the original informants upon whose opinions and lived-in worlds our research was based, or are our conclusions often recycled into the field. A 'fourth link' could provide authority and closure to a research process within the Humanities. Among other things, this final link should provide for the feed-back of research conclusions into the field so as to test their soundness against the existing ground reality and, if possible, serve the needs of the informants. Though this may sound like a new variety of "action research," the fourth link does not claim to bring about social change. Rather it seeks the validation of our objectified findings and theories by testing them against the existing situation to see whether they still hold. The execution of a fourth link may help to bring practice and theory closer to each other and, subsequently, set off a different kind of theorizing about the world that should be able to take into consideration,

better than existing theories, the complexity (in terms of variables) and pragmatism of human behaviour. Lastly, the feedback of data and conclusions into the field may prevent to some extent the alienation of material from those who are our primary sources of information – often subaltern informants for whom the world of academics remains a closed book. Informants who have been pivotal to our research are entitled to know what has been written about them and how they have been represented by us; I see this as a fundamental right too often ignored. Rigidity of the university system and the realization that, as an individual research student without any policy mandate, I would not be able to bring about the installation of such a fourth link contributed to my decision to move away from institutionalized academics.

### Writing as the medium of representation of academic knowledge

The anthropologist's work depends to a large extent on writing. Writing is the medium *par excellence* to represent academic knowledge, to participate in the academic debate and, subsequently, to establish ourselves in our professional field and acquire professional merit. Bourdieu describes the academic discourse as a "permanent game of references referring mutually to each other" (Bourdieu as quoted by Kersenboom 1995:2). It excludes those who do not know the rules of the game: the dispossessed who have little or no access to the written word, but also literate people who are unfamiliar with the academic jargon, customs and theories. Writing facilitates separation of data from the real, lived-in world because it does not depend, like orality, on embodiment, nor on real time; furthermore, writing restructures consciousness and makes abstract thinking possible (Ong 1982, 78-116).

Basing herself upon the work of Bourdieu and Foucault, Saskia Kersenboom argues that Western scholarship's pre-occupation with the written text as the sign of knowledge and as a password to symbolic power and prestige clashes with the experiential reality and emotional power lodged in the texts-in-performance embedded in the lives and the real world of her informants (in her case, traditional Devadasis in Tamil Nadu) and with the indigenous concepts of Tamil learning and the arts. The latter emphasize *praxis*, or knowledge derived from 'doing', wherein experience and interpretation exist within the unsplit triad of performer, spectator and the artistic medium (or tradition) that holds these together over time. Authority then derives from the display of skills and knowledge in the act of (artistic) performance itself, and the ability to bring about the desired experience (Kersenboom 1995, 1-24; de Bruin 1998).

### Representing experience

Western academia and theory offer few satisfactory means of adequately representing and accommodating the experiential part of our (field) work in official academic discourse. Even though it has become more and more acceptable for scholarly authors to use a personal voice

to describe “the field” and their feelings towards or relationships with their informants (e.g. Trawick 1990; Seizer 2005), such a style of writing may still be seen by some academics as a form of (feminine) weakness. The untidiness of the actual field, our presence therein, and informants’ reactions to our presence (particularly when felt to be socially or academically undesirable) are often omitted from the published account (Clifford 1986, 13-26).

Our research and the way in which academic knowledge is accumulated and represented are never innocent of power (Sen 2005, 142). Any fieldwork is an intervention already by virtue of our physical presence in the field: our presence influences relationships and contexts and changes the ways in which we experience and interpret them as well as the ways in which we are being perceived by others. Reporting about experience—our own first-hand experience and the experiences we observe and interpret in others—means that we are at least one step removed from the ‘original’ thing that we claim to represent.

Western academic theories, by virtue of their goals of universal validity and applicability, objectivity and a desire for exhaustiveness and their bearing on writing as the means of representation appear to lack the mechanisms to cope with the processing and representation of experience, in addition to honouring the specificity of each particular situation encountered in the real lived-in world. Instead, we should acknowledge our subjectivity and ask ourselves how we could handle it best and whether the demands placed on us, as research students, by the academic frame do not cause injustice to, or alienation of, important information from those very human beings essential to the carrying out of our profession.

### Combining academic research and practical work

For the last twenty years, I have combined my academic work with practical work in my capacity as a facilitator of the Kattaikkuttu Sangam, a small NGO based in Tamil Nadu. The Sangam advocates the cultural and economic rights of professional, rural Kattaikkuttu performers. The organisation was the direct outcome of my fieldwork on the Kattaikkuttu theatre tradition in the northern parts of Tamilnadu, as well as of my personal involvement in

the life of my principal informant and now husband, P. Rajagopal. Already at the beginning of my fieldwork it was clear that the changes desired by the performers could be brought about only through articulating their own claim to the right to determine form, content and direction of the development of their theatre. Pursuing such a claim involved the difficult task of creating consensus among Kattaikkuttu performers representing different (sub-)styles and backgrounds so as to carve out a shared niche for this popular (‘folk’) theatre within the wider field of the Tamil performing arts. Historically, these had been dominated by an urban-based arts

establishment. The performers’ efforts had then to reckon with professional competition and jealousy amongst themselves in vying for the favours of the same local audiences, as well as with an incipient ‘communalisation’ of the genre because of local caste politics. The ‘coming out’ of Kattaikkuttu and its subaltern exponents appears, at least partially in the first instance, to have attracted the critique of the urban

intelligentsia, perhaps, because it was facilitated by my own, i.e. a foreigners, interventional research (de Bruin 2000).

### The interconnectedness of academic and practical work

For me, my academic and practical works have always been intimately interconnected and stimulatingly informative of each other. Yet, the different contexts within which both these activities take place, the different people they involve, and the fact that they depend on different tools to realize their different goals, have often resulted in the failure of important (decision-making) representatives, who inhabit both the academic world and the ‘practical’ world (e.g. donor agencies, cultural institutions), to recognize the importance of the cross-fertilization that takes place between these two domains. My own fieldwork would have been impossible without the support of my husband, who as a performer himself has strong ideas about the future of his art form, and of many other performer-informants who let me into their lives and shared with me their ideas. I derived many insights from my practical work as facilitator.

For my ability to make possible the realization and implementation of the activities developed by the



Mayakkudirai =The Magic Horse is a children's play in Kattaikkuttu style.

## NFSC'S RECENT PUBLICATION

FIFTH ISSUE

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Sangam—most recently the establishment of the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam and the construction of a rural Centre for Performing Arts—has profited enormously from my academic training and thinking. Artists belonging to a low status theatre such as Kattaikkuttu, who have little formal education, are not often able to 'define' and 'place' their art successfully within the wider field of the performing arts. They are not used to talking about the theatre and certainly do not talk about it in terms familiar and/or acceptable to the cultural establishment. By virtue of their lack of access to the wider cultural field, they are not able to provide urban audiences and patrons with 'added value', e.g. about the 'authenticity' or 'legitimacy' of a form and/or its exponents and the intimate reasons for interpreting or producing a play in a particular way, that nowadays have become necessary to publicize and legitimize the form outside its immediate local environment (Gopalakrishna 2005, 21-24).

Simultaneously, the cultural establishment continues to stick to a patronizing and, at times, demeaning attitude when it comes to 'preserving' and 'promoting' the 'folk arts' and the 'folk'. In my case, it was my own involvement in the actual practice of the theatre and of the running of an organisation that opened my eyes to such issues,—I grew to understand a little more of their complex, hidden causes often through a process of personally experiencing the different powers at work within the local field of the performing arts. Trying to get practical work done, in particular where it concerns operations at the bottom of the social hierarchy, opens up the nooks and crannies of the performative field by revealing some of its most interesting, stimulating and gratifying sides. These include the realization that real collaboration with the people whom the project concerns is possible, and the fact that innovations and new ideas do have their impact even in rural areas. But such an attempt also lays bare ugly aspects of inequality, discrimination, rigid prejudice, class/caste consciousness and lack of access of the disadvantaged to basic information and basic rights.

The feeling of impotence when one begins to understand how difficult it is to bring about small changes in the situation of informants-turned-friends, which in my case both they and I experienced as totally unjustified and degrading, is surely something with which every field worker must reckon. Examples of difficult situations I have had to confront include the selling out of the virginity of a rural actress' pre-teenage daughter by her own close relatives (and with the consent of the mother who was one of my informants), and the removal of a boy from the Gurukulam (an environment we tended to perceive as safe and stimulating) by his mother when he was successfully studying in standard 8 and about to take his 8<sup>th</sup> standard Government exam (he had a history of child labour and neglect by his parents) because his parents felt he was old enough to work and contribute to the family income. Such cases raise questions of whether writing about these no-way-out situations suffices as social action (see also Brown 2005).



### A second *rite de passage*

Staying on in the field to carry out practical work—a decision I took some years ago—confronts one with a second *rite de passage* that involves the separation from the known world of culture, academics, friends, family and home, giving up relative economic security, followed by an uneasy period where the shift of one's temporary presence as a fieldworker into a permanent guest is subjected to the critical evaluation of the immediate and wider environment in which one would like to operate, followed by a settling down and integration into one's immediate and wider social environments. Fighting for a place of my own—and a real acceptance of my presence and my own ideas and the ability to work—have radically changed my own perspectives on Indian society. I guess



The green room

that it must have changed the ways I am viewed by others—scholarly elite, arts establishment and non-elite—too.

My involvement in the Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam, which provides elementary education and professional Kattaikkuttu training to young, underprivileged rural children (5 to 15 years), including for the first time also girls, has opened up innumerable new areas with which I most probably would never have come into contact as an anthropological/Indological researcher: the nature of elementary education (an instrument of emancipation, or of suppression of the disadvantaged?) and the inability of school children to assess their own work and to think critically, as compared to the motivating power of traditional training in an oral theatre form such as Kattaikkuttu; the role of affection and the complexity of family relationships within a rural Tamil family; the rights of children, and girls in particular, to a career in the arts, and the chances that they will be able to exert these rights. The insights derived from these new vistas, and the new questions they bring with them, have affected my own writing. Being outside the academic (institutional) frame, I feel that I now have greater freedom to write as I like. My writing is driven by the need to explore issues I encounter in my practical work rather than by the prescriptive straightjacket of academic discourse and the goals of a specific research programme

that does not necessarily link up to the demands of a local 'field'.

However, my greatest satisfaction lies in direct involvement in practical work, which I have come to see as a kind of applied research, and my own, personalized form of a 'fourth link' which comes in the form of direct feed-back on many of the things I do or help to initiate. This direct feed-back — be it from the young performers of the School in their first all-night, locally paid for performance of *Disrobing of Draupadi* (the *pièce de résistance* of Kattaikkuttu) or in the form of an invitation to perform, for the first time in the history of this theatre, on the mainstream stage of Kalakshetra, showing that some part of our struggle with the urban arts establishment finally appears to have turned into collaboration—gives me the sense that collaboration, belonging and concrete impact do help to fine-tune what have become collective strategies and goals. It is my most important impetus for remaining firmly based in the field.

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## The Thinning and Thickening of Places, Relations and Ideas

VIJAYA NAGARAJAN

Associate Professor

Department of Theology and Religious Studies

Program in Environmental Studies

University of San Francisco, CA.

Email: nagarajan@usfca.edu

### Poetics of the Bifocal "Fields"

The place or field, for me, is a sea of glowing parrot-green seedlings of rice—planted, transplanted, harvested, threshed, scattering into the air, rays of light and rice-dust, bouncing lightly on the ground before being swept into jute bags, loaded up on oxen carts, ready for the market—in Tamil, the word which overlaps this semantic space of "field" is *vayal* (paddy field)<sup>1</sup>. There is a different sense of the post-field for someone like me, as these rice fields reside in my memory, long before I have arrived back there, a returned child from the capital city, and long after I have left them, back to the cosmopolitan. These rice fields were fed by the Kavery river spreading over a massive delta-wide watershed, all the way to the sea, the Bay of Bengal, on the southeastern edge of the Indian sub-continent, and, in turn, fed my imagination, long before I became interested in the subject of my research—dry and wet ground rice flour threshold drawings—the *kolam*, a Tamil women's ritual tradition.

The *kolam*—meaning form, beauty, ornament—is made every day by Hindu women to honor the goddess Lakshmi, a feminine, wide-hipped, nurturing and mother-like figure draped with layers of golden jewelry, who stands on a large open lotus flower, with a soft, sweet, mysterious, empathic and beneficent smile. The *kolam* is a visual call to goddess Lakshmi every morning—"Come gaze at me, O Goddess Lakshmi"—announcing the continued healthy functioning of the household. She is the carrier of good luck and wealth; alertness and quickness, shine and radiate out of her; she is someone by whose gaze and grace you want to be touched.

The "field", in the sense in which anthropologists traditionally use the term, is one with which I have always felt uncomfortable, as it necessitates a distance of which I am incapable. I am not alone. I join many within anthropology and religious studies who have offered highly nuanced and compelling understandings of their reflexive positionings, and I feel deep kinship with those who speak of "crossing over", and of "halfies".<sup>2</sup> The "field" of India was a return to my first home, the country my parents chose to leave when I was eleven, at which time I became a permanent alien resident in the United States. At that moment, America was the "field" in which I saw exotic, strange customs wherever I looked. But as

I grew into a teenager I became more and more comfortable with my adopted home and its customs, reducing the perception of distance embedded in the word, "field".

Whenever I returned to India, I fell into my Tamil "mother" tongue quite easily, as it had been lodged intimately in my everyday life in my diasporic home in Washington D.C. My memory flooded in and sometimes even took over my present experience, especially when my mouth formed a Tamil word. It was this simultaneous bi-focal vision, an integral part of my upbringing, which came to the fore when I returned to the field of India, the proportions between short and long view shifting, here India becoming the larger view, and America the shorter one in a faded background.

"Fieldwork" or, "ethnographic research", for me, then, was about going home, having the chance to become the person I would have been had we never immigrated. And, yet, as time moves forward for everyone back home or away, "home" was always changing its directionality, like a changing root; each time I came to India, I tried to catch up with who and what India had become. Whenever I returned once again to my California "home" once imagined more as a "transit" zone, the horizon of the "field" oriented itself in quite a different direction, the proportionality shifting with the horizon, this American cultural frame, and increasingly filled with many different cultural orientations, and yet imbued for me always with the Indian inside myself.

Yet, it is important to add that when I was doing research in India, and when I "hung out" with my fellow American anthropologists, retaining this bifocality gave me a deep sense of unease. I was with my American friends, I joined in the comradeship of being a fellow anthropologist studying India, though I was always deeply divided within myself, as to who I was at the particular moment. I became impatient and horrified at oversimplified stereotypes which would be bandied around in informal settings and I found myself trying to set them right. Some were happier that I did than other friends. When I was with my Indian friends, I inhabited more in the Indian English dialect, spoke vernacular Tamil, and felt that I was not seen as a fieldworker, or an anthropologist, but more as a young scholar and writer. This bi-focality remains within me as I continue to teach and write about India in America.

### January 2004, Fremont, CA

In the middle of January 2004, five years after the end of my formally funded research on the *kolam* (1987-1999<sup>3</sup>), I decided to do some follow-up ethnography with the *kolam*. I attended a *kolam* competition in the diaspora in Fremont, CA, a city with a high population of Indian-Americans. The context was a Pongal Rice Festival celebration hosted by the Tamil Manram. I had attended similar Pongal celebrations nearly every year between

1987 and 1994 in India, as these festivals were the heyday of *kolam*-making yet this was the first time I had attended one in this home of mine, northern California. I had never tried though to do "fieldwork" in the diaspora before, let alone with children, husband, and parents in tow.

I took with me my mother and father, visiting from their home in suburban Maryland; my Norwegian-Swedish-descended American husband; and our then three-and-a-half-year-old twin girls, Uma and Jaya. We entered the large auditorium of the junior high school, filled with noisy pools of commotion, and the organizers tried to steer us to different competitions, among them the *kolam* competition, in which I was most interested. I noticed right away many unusual aspects of this *kolam* competition. The drawings were done on paper with colored pencils and pens in people's homes, brought to the site and taped on the walls; they were not done on actual marked floor areas as they are usually done in *kolam* competitions in Tamil Nadu. I wondered if that has to do with some of the legal rules of not marking up spaces with colored powders in a rented middle school auditorium, and how hard it would be to wipe away on the finished flooring space in a junior high school after the event.

I watched other people's children and my own as they became slowly entranced by the *kolam*. They were drawn somehow to these designs on the wall, made by their older sisters and mothers and aunts and grandmothers, and people who looked like them. My children clambered onto my body demanding, insisting, "Teach me the *kolam*,"; "When are you going to teach us the *kolam*?" They looked excited, even at three and-a-half, by everyone else's love of the *kolam*.

I watched my mother's eyes light up, as she came to each *kolam* design and analyzed it. That lotus flower is a bit loose, she would say, see that is imbalanced in the right corner; now this one is really beautiful, see how the lines are balanced cleanly, pointing to the lined figures. She would laugh if she found a funny one. There were teenagers, mothers, and grandmothers, all competing to make the best *kolam*. It was sheer fun, I could see, flowing over in women's faces as they laughed, pointed and commented on their community of women drawing different designs, and competing with each other for the best one. And there were not a set of invited judges as usual at an Indian competition; the audience themselves were to be the judges, and each member of the audience was encouraged to do a written evaluation of each *kolam* entry, to be tabulated by the Tamil Association, until the first, second, and third winners were announced.

I looked into the faces of the Tamil women there; I began talking to them; they had emigrated from Madurai, Tirunelveli, Thanjavur, Chennai, Coimbatore and all



Kolam

other places in Tamil Nadu I had lived in and sometimes visited, for my *kolam* research. I looked at these women and realized how close the immigrant remains to her native place. The women had experienced *kolams* in their home country in these particular bodies, and were literally carriers of the tradition, as was my mother. At that moment, I became much more interested in the transmission of the *kolam*: how was it going to survive in this land which is so different from its native place? And yet, the buzz around the *kolam* in this middle school in Fremont, CA was surprisingly encouraging: there was still a deep, engaged interest in the *kolam*. I realized, all of a sudden, that we were all body carriers of memories of place, of habits of mind, of drawing designs, of *kolams*, of beauties which travel. I looked at the grandmothers' faces; they resembled those I had been with all over Tamil Nadu. I felt almost at home again, as if I were back in India, though I was still in Fremont, California.

#### *Like Stepping on a Thousand Good Lucks!*

In the middle of July 2005, in a small town in the San Francisco Bay Area where I have lived for nearly twenty-five years, my mother took an entire morning to draw a huge *kolam* in a side patio of our home, and our girls Jaya and Uma watched rapturously, squatting, aged four-and-a-half then, not moving, still as a leaf not stirring on a windless day. I have almost never seen them so quiet, but as they watched this grand, room-size *kolam* come into being, layer after layer of wet rice flour flowing evenly out of my mother's hands, they sat, awed by the process itself, and by the hours and hours of quiet, steady, almost meditation-like movement that it took for my mother to practise this ritual. "There is a lotus flower, a lamp, a mango leaf, a step, a banana-laden stem" they would whisper to each other, having heard my mother tell what it is the first time she drew it. They talked about this gigantic *kolam* over the next year, as it faded from view through the next rain-laden northern California winter. After going to India for the first time in the winter of 2005-2006, and seeing *kolams* there all over India, Jaya remarked, with a big grin, "Amma, it is



like stepping on a thousand good lucks!" I began to understand what my parents were trying to do with their friends in the 1970s and 1980s for the first time. When I was growing up in Maryland, they were building cultural organizations such as associations and temples, working every weekend to hold the cultural memories in place for them, but as importantly, perhaps more, for us, for the generations to come. At the time, I had been a somewhat surly teenager, refusing to believe that all their hard-won efforts would amount to anything, thinking that they were going to fail before they even began, it was impossible, I thought, begrudging them all their time away from us that went instead into the "Tamil community". How could they bring India here? Now, I watched the thirty-year-long fruits of their actions, their desires, grateful for their and their generations' efforts for the next generations to come. This was a culture that is serious about continuation.

I realized with a wry smile that I was almost "home".

#### ***Thinning and Thickening of Places, Relationships and Ideas***

I see post-field positionings as characterized by the unfolding of time, space and memory. Time moves forward, day after day "back home", and the entire gestalt of fieldwork, its thinning and thickening relationships with people, ideas and places, recedes back into the time and distance of my memory. And yet simultaneously, as I increasingly dwelled within the charged space of writing, the people I met in India through my work on the *kolam* take on a new embodiment in my own life. They live within me, my own mental dwelling space, and I try actively to clear out other thoughts which may intrude on my thinking about the people who taught me so much. It is the gift of time that I am most struck with now, that women, after their everyday chores, were so willing and generous to give of their "free" time to me to discuss the *kolam*. And, I, in turn, am giving my "free" time to write up what I have learned. Time stolen from my duties of teaching, mothering, and serving the various communities I belong to. While you are far away from the place of "fieldwork" and you are working in the language of your field notes and you lay out the pieces of the puzzle to ponder and mull over, you literally remember what you did and how it all made sense back in India.

My sense of time in the re-imagining and remembering of fieldwork texts and contexts in the writing process pulls together a complex weaving and reweaving of a thinning and thickening of relations among the multiple selves of the ethnographer and the many community members in whom she finds herself reflected, or into whose lives she seeks to actively imagine herself. These relations unfold in the movement of time and the changing, connecting links of knowledge, understanding and epiphany that occur both during fieldwork, and post-"field".

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> *Tamil Lexicon Vol. VI*. 1982. (Madras: University of Madras), p. 3496. Other words with overlapping linguistic connotations include *nilam*, meaning ground, earth, land, sometimes adding a sense of possessiveness, as in my *nilam*; furthermore, *bhumi*, meaning earth, is another word used more in rhetorical language. According to *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, edited by Judy Pearsall and Bill Trumble (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 516-517, a field in English is "an area of open land, esp. one used for pasture or crops, often bounded by hedges, fences etc.," and "fieldwork", "the practical work of a surveyor, collector of scientific data, a sociologist etc., conducted in the natural environment rather than a laboratory, office etc."

<sup>2</sup> See Lila Abu-Lughod's many fine ethnographies: *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) and *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1993. See also Narayan 1997; Visweswaran 1994; Behar 1996, 1993; Ghosh 1992 and Brown 2001. For more recent entries within South Indian anthropology, see Nabokov 2000; Caldwell 1999; Seizer 2005, among many others.)

<sup>3</sup> 1) month-long winters in: 1987-1988; 1988-1989; 1990-1991; 1991-1992 (sponsored by *The Institute for the Study of Natural & Cultural Resources* via *The Tides Foundation*); 1998-1999 (*University of San Francisco Faculty Development Fund*) 2) year-long: 1989-1990 on an *American Institute of Indian Studies Advanced Language Program*; Dec. 1992-Feb. 1994 on a *Fulbright-Hays Dissertation Research Grant*.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Toward a “life” Well Lived between...

Phillip Zarrilli

Professor of Performance Practice  
Department of Drama  
University of Exeter, UK.

I have led two closely inter-related lives since 1976 when I first traveled to Kerala, India to begin ethnographic field research. One of those lives is that part of my academic work that is focused on and inspired by, but not limited to, my work in Kerala. Between 1976 and 1993 I lived in Kerala for a total of seven years, immersing myself in *kathakali* dance-drama and via *kathakali* in the closely related martial art, *kalaripayattu*. While much of my focus during my seven years in Kerala was on issues of embodiment and experience in *kalaripayattu* and *kathakali* (Zarrilli 1984, 1998, 2000), I also spent time attempting to understand and write about numerous other genres of traditional and contemporary Kerala performance—from folk dances (*paricamuttumkali*) to ritual performances (*teyyam*) to contemporary theatre such as the work of SOPANAM (Kavalam Narayana Panikkar, Artistic Director) and the Kerala People's Arts Club (KPAC, subsidized by CPI [M]), resulting in a co-translation with Jose George and introduction to Toopil Bhaasi's final play, *Memories in Hiding*.

Ethnography for me is about my innate curiosity and sense of exploring relationships and assumptions wherever I am living or working. Ethnography never stops; it is a state of mind/being/doing. Therefore, my fieldwork has not been in some “other” location which happens to be India; rather, it has taken place in India, as well as in the small town of New Glarus, Wisconsin, where I lived for three years and undertook research on the role of performance in the life of this American community, and equally in the training and rehearsal studios where I currently live the “other” part of my professional life.

This, my second life, is lived as a professional theatre director, actor, and teacher of actors and dancers. This life is lived in the global network of contemporary, cosmopolitan culture, and literally takes place throughout the world. One major project has been worked focusing on a psychophysical approach to the plays of Samuel Beckett. *The Beckett Project* was first produced in 1999 at the Grove Theatre, Los Angeles, and then toured the UK in 2001 with an expanded set of performances at the Granary Theatre, Cork, Ireland in 2004. Other recent projects have included directing contemporary Japanese playwright/director Ota Shogo's *The Water Station* with a cast of nineteen actors (seventeen Asian actors from Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore, India, and Philippines, with two Europeans) at the Esplanade Theatres on the Bay in Singapore, produced by TTRP; a semi-devised original piece of theatre, *Speaking Stones*, created with internationally-known UK playwright Kaitie O'Reilly as

a commission with Theatre Asou in Graz, Austria with performances in a massive underground quarry used by the Nazis in World War II; or my collaborations on new dance-theatre work with bharatanatyam dancer/choreographer, Gitanjali Kolanad—*Walking Naked* based on the ecstatic poetry of the twelfth century saint, Mahadeviakka which premiered in Chennai in 1999 and has been on international tour since.

All of this professional work — training actors/dancers, rehearsing, and directing — is directly informed by my years of fieldwork in Kerala. There is an intimate, symbiotic relationship between them. The reason is simple—I immersed myself as a performance practitioner directly in what I was researching in Kerala, undertaking a kind of research that could *only* result from participating completely in the training itself. At first, this was eight hours of intensive *kathakali* training daily undertaken at the Kerala Kalamandalam in 1976-77 under the guidance of M.P.Sankaran Namboodiri along with boys aged nine



Dagger Fight

to eleven. Later in 1977, I began six hours of intensive daily training in *kalaripayattu* under the guidance of Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar of the CVN Kalari, Thiruvananthapuram.

From my perspective as a theatre director, it was my encounter with Govindankutty Nayar's version of *kalaripayattu* that led to my total dedication in pursuing this practice for the remainder of my life. *Kalaripayattu* has “re-made” me as a person, and as a professional theatre practitioner. *Kalaripayattu* and *kathakali* together revolutionized the way I perceived, and practice theatre as an art form—both as a theatre director, and as an actor and trainer of actors and dancers.

Why? My in-depth, intensive immersion in daily practice of these yoga-based psychophysical disciplines shifted my awareness so radically that I experience my body-mind and their relationship in a completely new way. All my previous assumptions about my culture, the body, emotions, and self shifted. Trying to understand how Malayalees understood their experience of embodied practice, helped me to conceptualize “the body” and experience as multiple rather than singular. It led me away from psychology and behavior to alternative notions

of experience and interiority. It has helped me conceptualize an entirely alternative paradigm of attempting to understand contemporary acting as an inter-subjective sensuality. This experience led me to reevaluate Western acting and approaches to teaching acting and to conceptualize a new paradigm for articulating the practice of the contemporary actor (Zarrilli 2002, and forthcoming).

I am writing this brief reflection at my now permanent home on the far west coast of Wales with distant views of the Irish Sea. The home is an old stone farm house. On the property, the old milking parlor has been converted into the first "traditional" earth-floor *kalari* (place of training for Kerala's martial art) located outside of Kerala—the Tyn-y-parc C.V.N. Kalari. In 1987-88 Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar gifted me the traditional *pitham* (seat/stool of knowledge) representing mastery in *kalarippayattu*. For me, this was a momentous and unexpected occasion. I did not feel that I had reached a level of mastery deserving receipt of the *pitham*, yet I knew that receiving it was both a recognition and a (welcome) obligation to share my knowledge of *kalarippayattu*. In 2004, when the CVN Kerala Kalari Sangam was established, the Tyn-y-parc CVN Kalari in Llanarth, Wales, was officially sanctioned, as was I as Phillip B. Zarrilli Gurukkal. I now serve as one of two international advisors for the CVN Kalari Sangam—an important function given the increasing number of people going to Kerala to study *kalarippayattu*. During periods when I am able to be "home", traditional *kalarippayattu* training, massage and physical therapy treatments go on here as they do in a Kerala *kalari*. *Kalarippayattu* is part of my daily life. Both home and *kalari* were "blessed" in 2000 when my dear friend, translator, and collaborator Kunju Vasudevan Namboodiripad was visiting me with two Kerala Sama Veda chanters in Wales as part of the Centre for Performance Research's bi-annual GIVING VOICE festival focused that year on "Divinity of the Voice". Being their first time traveling outside of India, this was also the first occasion in which the Vedic chanters shared their tradition in a public forum.

There has clearly been "two-way traffic" between Kerala and wherever I am living/working. One form of this traffic is my professional theatre work. My *kathakali* teacher, M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri came to the US to help realize three collaborations with me—a production of *Sakuntala* at UCLA in 1979, and later productions of adaptations of India folktales at the University of Wisconsin. Artistic Director of SOPANAM, Kavalam Narayana Panikkar, was in residence in Madison to collaborate with me on producing two Sanskrit dramas as part of the 1985 Festival of India in the U.S. Such collaborations have continued, such as my recent work with SANGALPAM—a professional UK-based bharatanatyam dance company on an adaptation and performance of the seventh century Sanskrit farce (*The Farce of Drunken Sport*) performed at the Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall and on national UK tour in 2003.

A second form of "traffic" has been that of Westerners going to Kerala in increasing numbers. Because very little had been written about *kalarippayattu* prior to my research and writing on the tradition, my publications have led to international recognition of *kalarippayattu* and a massive influx of foreign students from around the world often searching for the "mother of all martial arts". As is usual, this global, cosmopolitan flow of information and people has, of course, been a doubled-edged sword in relation to the traditional practice of *kalarippayattu*.

A third form of "traffic" has been my experience of sharing non-Indian disciplines and practices with martial artists and theatre practitioners in India. Many of these practitioners are curious about unfamiliar practices. While living in Kannur in 1988-9, I shared my knowledge of Chinese *taiquiquan* with *kalarippayattu* practitioners with whom I was working. And on a number of occasions I conducted workshops with actors at the Calicut School of Drama, Trissur, the National School of Drama in New Delhi, and at the first international "Asian Martial Arts and Performance Conference" sponsored by Padatik in Calcutta.

As a professional actor, director, and trainer of performers, I am in the somewhat unusual position of focusing both my academic work and my practical work around the shift in my own experience that resulted from my fieldwork in Kerala. When teaching at University or professional actor training programmes, students around the world are exposed to *kalarippayattu* both as a mode of traditional Kerala embodied practice, but also as a useful, pragmatic "tool" for gaining an entirely new experience of one's body-mind relationship in order to potentially become a better, more "aware" actor. The training "heightens" and "deepens" one's ability to use awareness so that—according to the Malayalam folk expression—*meyyu kanakkuka*, that is, "the body is (or becomes) all eyes".

In terms of the more academic side of my work, I recently co-authored a new theatre history textbook, *Theatre Histories: An Introduction* (2006) that could never have been written without my extensive fieldwork in Kerala. This book for the first time brings to students of world theatre history a truly "global" perspective on histories of theatre that integrates the study of non-western performance—both traditional and contemporary—into the study of what has too often been a dominant Euro-American history. But perhaps even more important is that my original mentors in my studies of *kathakali*, Vasudevan Namboodiripad and M.P. Sankaran Namboodiri, have just authored their own book on *kathakali*, and I will be assisting them in attempting to place an eventual English translation of their own book with an English-language publisher.

I have not conducted lengthy fieldwork in Kerala since 1993. In this "post field" phase of my life, transactions and contacts are sustained in all the usual ways with friends, collaborators, and teachers—from email and telephone calls to visits—and perhaps, more importantly,



the inhabitation of a “mental/personal space” that encompasses my constant immersion in Kerala culture. One can never pretend that inequalities do not exist in a fieldwork setting, but working with as much integrity and respect as possible for individuals as well as traditions can lead to interactions that are sustained for a life-time. The warp and weft of friendships, modes of embodied knowledge, and reflections, analysis and insight can lead to relationships that transcend the well-rehearsed and often limited means we have of “representing” what is ultimately un-representable—a life and world-view as they continue to be lived in relation to and between....

*This reflection is dedicated to the memory of Gurukkal Govindankutty Nayar—March 22, 1930 – January 22, 2006.*

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## New NFSC Publication



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## On Memory: Processes and Supports

Guest Editor:  
**Nicole Revel**

Directeur de Recherche,  
Centre National De La  
Recherche Scientifica, France.  
Email: revel@vjf.cnrf.fr

In order to observe and detect techniques and practices related to memory, we shall focus on various forms of interaction and interlocution as rituals and/or narratives take place.

We favor an ethnographic approach and the use of

miscellaneous supports: gestures and movements; rhythms and melodies; multimedia recordings audio, audio-video, CD-Rom, DVD-video, photos; objects and books; graphism on cloth, shell, wood, bamboo, lontara; face paintings and costumes; theatres of actors, shadow plays and puppetry.

During performances, these actions and multimodal experiences develop and we shall try to bring to surface memorizing processes, transmissions of know how and the mastery of miscellaneous verbal musical, kinesic, plastic and literary expressions .

As the analysis develops, we might focus on a relationship to History of the respective groups.

Lists of contributors and papers

**Nicole Revel:** *On Memory*.

**Denis Matringe:** *The Cultural Referents of a Punjabi Lay*.

**Laurent Maheux:** *The Meaningfulness of Recentering: Case Study of a Thar Narrative*.

**Catherine Servan-Schreiber:** *Singing Tales and Reading chapbooks: The Bhojpuri Tradition*.

**Daniela Berti:** *The Memory of Gods: From a Secret Autobiography to a Nationalistic Project*.

**Marie Lecomte -Tilouine:** *Drawing a Genealogy of Genealogies: A Contextual Study of Western Nepal's Vamshavali*.

**Christine Guillebaud:** *Variation and Interaction of visual and musical components in a Kerala Ritual for the Snake Deities*.

List of *PURUSARTHA* relevant issues by Marie Fourcade.

## The Afterlife of Fieldwork Relations

SUSAN SEIZER

Indiana University,  
Department of Communication and Culture  
Email: sseizer@indiana.edu

During my fieldwork in Tamil Nadu in the early 1990s, a relatively small Tamil family — consisting of an accomplished drama actress in her late thirties, her talented composer-musician “husband” in his late forties, and their wonderfully articulate ten- and twelve-year-old daughters — took me up as kin. Collectively, they have acted as my primary informants during the first years of fieldwork as well as throughout the subsequent twelve years in which I have continued to research and write about the genre of popular Tamil theater known as Special Drama (*Special Naadakam*, a.k.a. *Isai Naadakam* or Music Drama). Rather than any one person, having a family play this key anthropological role for me has had great benefits during fieldwork and beyond. Greatest perhaps of these is the way it has allowed our relational roles to shift and grow over this period of fifteen-plus years that we have now called each other family. I have a different ongoing relationship with each family member (to which I return shortly). The things I have learned in this process about myself and about being family now intimately affect both my domestic and my professional lives in the U. S. Indeed, recognizing the extent to which I learn from and enjoy multiple relational roles in my Tamil family has been a source of strength and pleasure as I build family at home.

From the beginning of our relationship, I was interpellated into this Tamil family through two different kin relations, or *murai*. *Murai* is the Tamil word used to invoke notions of how a thing ought to be organized (“Do like this, *muraippadiyaka*, correctly,” or, “*Ithu taan murai*, this is the proper way”) as well as of how social relations actually are organized (“He is my uncle” is expressed in Tamil by saying “he bears the *murai* of uncle to me,” *Avar enukku maaman murai ventum*). Regardless of this blend of the prescriptive and the descriptive that defines the term *murai*, we have for years now lived two relations of *murai* that are normally mutually exclusive. Were it not for our years of experience I would have thought such a thing impossible! — though I now see that life is more malleable than that. I discuss the lessons I have learned from my two *murai* with the family as the soil out of which grow my more general thoughts about my life as an anthropologist, post-field.

Mapped loosely onto the two *murai* themselves, the lessons are: 1) Living it makes it so; and 2) Continuity can occur through a variety of media.

### First *murai*

I met Natarajan as Jansirani’s husband. Jansi is an actress whose long-term involvement with the field of Special

Drama helped guide me into this rich research field in the first place. Their two daughters, Viji and Kavitha, were aged eleven and nine when we first met (they are both married and mothers in their own right now). The family lived in a rented apartment near mine in the center of town; I found them warm, forthright and easy to talk with.

*It was after a spiritually intense visit to his natal village, involving a puja and a powerful possession in the house of his kula deivam or family deity, that Natarajan asked me to call him Annan (“older brother”). He said he had understood during our visit who I was, and clarified: when just a young child, he and his baby sister — the only girl child his mother bore — came down with small pox. They lay for days in the throes of it, side by side on a large banana leaf; the girl-baby died, while her elder brother survived. He now recognized me as the reincarnation of this lost baby sister: why else would we move so easily together and share so much family feeling across two sides of the ocean? He voiced no doubt as he spoke; his voice betrayed awe, though not in any thunderous, “awestruck” sense but rather was tinged with gratitude, like the actual rain, rather than its announcement.*

Since that day, as bidden, I call him “Annan” and I call Jansi “Anni,” the corresponding appropriate kin term for “wife of my elder brother”.

The ensuing years of recognizing our relations linguistically in this way have significantly altered my attitude towards the practice of doing so. Instead of *Annan* being a term I first used placatingly, but about which I knew not what I really thought, this term now names relationships we live and have lived. One might say that at first I humored my informants and that now I believe them, but the situation is more fairly represented by saying that questions of belief — whether or not I believe in reincarnation, for example, or more specifically whether or not I believe that I was once a little girl who died of small pox on a banana leaf in a village near Madurai in Tamil Nadu, South India — have now been superceded. We have become family to each other through mutual support. And even if aspects of our relationship might equally have been born of the family’s attempts to humor me, now they believe in me as I do in them.

### Second *murai*

For a female fieldworker this first *murai* was ideal in pragmatic ways, providing a safe platonic relationship with the man of the house and a means by which my closeness with the women in the family derived from a primary bond between him and me. The second *murai* has none of this. At a certain point Jansi declared that she feels I am her first-born child and eldest daughter. The scant eight chronological years that separate us clearly have no bearing here. Extended to me by her alone, this *murai* expresses as primary her bond with me, and she began then to refer to me as her child, *muttu pillai*, though I continue to call her *Anni*, older brother’s wife.



The author seated among Special Drama actresses at the 1992  
Guru Puja, Madurai.

Photograph courtesy of Buffoon M.K. Sattiyaraj.

To complete the picture, the two girls, Natarajan and Jansi's biological daughters, followed their mother's lead and address me as "*akka*" (older sister). And I feel unconditionally sisterly towards them: Viji and Kavitha are now not simply some stand-ins for 'the younger sisters I never had,' but rather, my younger sisters, full stop. They pour out their hearts to me; I answer with advice and love; I care intensely about what happens to them, and they about me.

What is particularly lovely about this simultaneous living of two otherwise impossibly coexistent kinship relations – after all, one's brother's sanctioned wife may never be one's mother, because then one's brother would have somehow managed to marry his own mother, and get away with it – is that I have a parallel-side-kin closeness with all members of this Tamil family: with Annan as a brother, with Jansi as a mother, and with the two girls as sisters. We draw on each *murai* for different ritual occasions as appropriate: I was *attai* (paternal aunt) when the girls needed gold bracelets for their *sadangu* puberty ceremony; I was *akka* (older sister) when they married and wanted to talk; I am *pillai* (child) when Jansi misses me painfully — though at the same time, she won't hesitate to beg me to speak to her husband as only a *tangai* (younger sister) might to her older brother (*annan*), too, should the need arise.

Living it makes it so. In palpable ways, this first lesson holds for my life in the U. S. as well: I live with a woman I call my wife, as she does me, and we live this relationship regardless of whether our marriage is legally recognized or not; we have a son we did not give birth, though we are his legitimate parents; and on the baby's birth certificate I am listed as his father, though he calls us both "mommy." All these terms and relations are more malleable than I ever imagined. And I feel now too like these experiences of multiple *mura*, and of living relations into being, bring me closer to others whose emotional lives I would not have understood had I not learned this lesson.

And so onto the second lesson, regarding continuity and change through a range of media.

## Speaking Fieldwork Personae

I used to feel that I was a different person in Tamil than in English. Just as Sapir & Whorf hypothesized, I said different things in the different languages because the languages themselves see and say different things. I conducted fieldwork primarily with monolingual Tamil speakers, and my fieldwork persona was Tamil.

This makes what has happened during the years since my visit to Tamil Nadu in 2001 particularly interesting. At the end of that visit I introduced Viji to email. We found a decent email shop near her home and set her up with a Yahoo account. Here is the first email she wrote, just a week after we separated:

**From:** naganandini1999@yahoo.co.in

**Date:** December 12, 2001 10:48:58 PM PST

**To:** sseizer@scrippscol.edu

hello susan akka and k  
cathi akka how are you and our family.

i see your e.mail i am so happy.  
please sorry for the late. i write the letter in tamil  
for you.  
so you please wait for my detail message in tamil.  
how is your work.i am so happy to talk with e.mail  
to

you. please sorry for the spelling mistakes and  
meaning mistakes.

take care your health .my sweet sisster cathy eapadi  
erukkanga.nanga ungalai nenaichukitte eruppom  
eppavume.

yours lovingly sister and family.

What just barely begins to show here has grown significantly more pronounced in subsequent emails: Viji begins her letters with a good faith effort in English – learnt as a mandatory subject in her elementary school education – and fairly quickly moves on into Tamil to convey anything more substantive than greetings. My emails are just the reverse: English creeps increasingly into my introductory Tamil as what I say complexifies.

Prior to email, it was Jansi and I who were the family emissaries, painstakingly composing snail mail letters to each other in Tamil (we each write Tamil at about a fourth standard level). We barely managed to exchange two or three letters each year for the seven years we persisted. Now I find that email is making it possible to write more the way I actually think when I am doing fieldwork in Tamil Nadu: in and out of Tamil and English. Over the course of the roughly five hundred emails we have now exchanged, our communication has deepened in ways that allow the relations we bear, post-field, to grow. Our missives are more integrated into our everyday practice, moving us into what I think of as a more other-aware phase in our relationship. During my fieldwork years the family knew little of my life in the US – there were no pegs on which to hang even the information I attempted to give them, it seemed – while now the



changes wrought on US–India communications through internet technology bring the two nations into each other's consciousness on a daily basis, via media both glamorous and mundane (which says nothing of course of the huge swathes of our respective cultural consciousnesses that remain uniquely Tamil and uniquely American, and is the subject of another paper entirely!). Email is proving the best means of maintaining and honing a practice I only just began in the field, that of thinking and feeling at least to some extent in Tamil ways with my *tangai*, in an ongoing exchange of mutually partially-intelligible and linguistically oscillating sisterly mother tongues.

My field and post-field experiences have been richer for the fact that in the position of key informant, I have had not one person but a family. The value of plurality here is perhaps comparable to the important shifts in anthropological thought over the years regarding the plurality and multivocality of culture in general: "cultures" are not static, bounded wholes but living dynamics of particularities and contingencies. Fieldwork is not something that occurs only 'over there' and 'back then,' separate and apart from our real lives: the field lives on in my own now-familiar ways, and continues wherever I live. For example, my own daily practices are changed post-field. What and how I eat, what I feed my family and offer my guests, what I wear and where I shop, what I read, what I teach, and what I write: all these now have a Tamilness to them that continues to reposition me in the world, in that ongoing ethnographic process I now think of as "post-field positioning."

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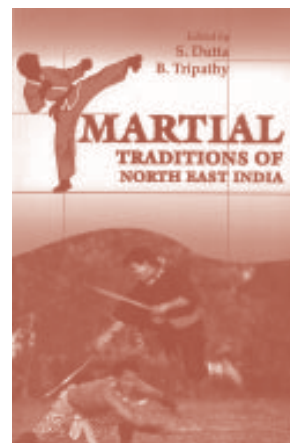
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## The Fields of Toronto

BERNARD BATE

Assistant Professor  
Department of Anthropology  
Yale University, U.S.A.  
Email: [bernard.bate@yale.edu](mailto:bernard.bate@yale.edu)

The field used to stay where it was. It was discrete: a village, a town, a time period. It did not move from one place to another, its temporality was fixed between a series of dates, beginnings and endings. It was the place and time an anthropologist went to, took notes, and came home again. The field certainly did not come back – or talk back. It did not yell at you. We were different, the places were different, the cultures different.

In my case the field began in southern India – Tamil Nadu and south Tamil Nadu at that. I worked there in the early to mid-1990's on sociocultural and historical elements of oratory, specifically what we might call the Dravidianist style of political oratory: *avarkale, avarkale, avarkale*. In further investigations into the history of oratory, the field shifted spatially about one hundred fifty miles southeast to Jaffna and temporally about one hundred fifty years. A few months ago it shifted again ten thousand miles west to a May afternoon in Toronto.

I want to discuss the fluidity of the field – spatially, temporally, cognitively and politically – by telling a story about one of the least felicitous papers I ever delivered. The venue was the Toronto Tamil Studies Conference, one of the highest profile academic conferences the Tamil community in Canada had ever mounted. The conference gathered together several dozen scholars, mostly from North America, for three days of intensive discussion about Tamil literature, history, culture and society before a mixed audience of college students, university professors, independent scholars, and members of the general community. Overall it was very successful.

My talk was written quite hastily, based on research I had done the previous year in Jaffna, specifically based on a talk I gave in Jaffna almost exactly a year before the Toronto conference. I had spent about four months in Jaffna looking for archival material regarding nineteenth century Tamil sermons. I was particularly interested in what kind of social relations surrounded the delivery of sermons around 1847, the period in which the Champion Reformer of Hinduism, Arumuga Navalar (1821-1879), first (in)famously gave a sermon (*piracangam*) outside of the Christian context.

Navalar is a big deal in Jaffna, especially among the Saivite upper classes/castes, the Vellala in particular. Every school child knew him, like George Washington in the States, like Periyar E.V.Ramaswamy in Tamil Nadu. In some respects, he was more important than that. Navalar articulated a modern view of Saivism – it might even be said, tentatively, and disturbingly for many, who admire him, that he not only reformed Saivism, he created it. It is not to say that Saivism was not a vital realm of practice

and thought, that Saiva Siddhantha, for instance, did not have a philosophical tradition that stretched back centuries. Rather, it is to claim that Saivite philosophy was neither a mass phenomenon nor did the vast majority of the people who worshiped Siva consider themselves first and foremost Saivites – and certainly did not consider themselves Hindus. This radical reduction of identity into a realm of belief and practice is what these days we call “religion.” The massively reductive phenomenologies of self and social order that characterize such claims – I am Hindu, I am Buddhist etc. – are some of the chief hallmarks of what we now call modernity. My interest in Navalar stemmed from my inquiry into the communicative and cognitive elements of his reformation/creation of Saivism and my sense that events in the relatively peripheral Jaffna in the middle of the nineteenth century played a disproportionately large role in the production of a peculiarly Tamil public sphere – and a peculiarly Tamil modernity.

Navalar's reformation of Saivism was very much like Martin Luther's reformation of Christianity some three hundred years earlier: both focused on language and communication in general. Like Luther, Navalar transformed the ways that people would come to understand and use texts. Sacred texts (i.e. the Bible, *Kandapuramam*, *Thevaram* etc.) would no longer be restricted to the few, but would be openly available to all; they would no longer be couched in archaic languages that only some could understand, but would be written in a style that was contemporary, clear and accessible to a far wider range of people; and the institutions necessary to produce a population capable of textual up-take (i.e. schools and presses) would be established broadly. In Navalar scholar Darshan Ambalavanar's terms, the texts would be universalized. And, as an intimate element of that universalization, he would start to do something quite new: he would begin to offer sermons in Saivism. Navalar encountered the sermon, like the other forms of communicative action he inaugurated, in the Protestant Christianity of the British and American missionaries who had been engaging in just such practices since approximately the second decade of the century. Navalar's resemblance to Martin Luther is no accident: in essence, what had been a *kandapurana kalachchaaram* became a *vethaakama kalachchaaram*, a culture of the vernacular Bible even if what they read was still the story of Skanda.

Now, to suggest that The Champion Reformer of Hinduism, Arumuga Navalar, was anything other than a self-actualized genius (which, in some senses, he was), is profoundly offensive to a great many people. I had already encountered that sentiment in Jaffna when I first offered my paper in no less a venue than the Arumuga Navalar Memorial Hall in May of 2005. I thought that talk went fairly well: the students asked good challenging questions, a number of older intellectuals yelled at me, and a number of younger intellectuals yelled at the older ones. Good fun. And I felt rather confident in what I was saying, since it really couldn't be denied when and upon what basis Navalar produced these institutions and

practices. Furthermore, I had discussed at length my ideas with some senior scholars that I admire very much – Christian, Saivite, and atheist – and they had offered their blessings on the thesis.

And so, how hard could the Toronto talk be? It was the end of a long semester, and I really didn't have time to prepare the English version as carefully or as thoughtfully as I would have liked. Hence the talk was full of theoretical jargon, a kind of shorthand that might have gone over in a purely academic conference. And my experience in Jaffna had given me courage along with a good sense of what kind of objections I might face from the audience; I had my answers ready.

As expected, then, after my talk, one lovely older woman indignantly challenged my take on Navalar. She subtly and (I thought) effectively mocked some of my jargony pronouncements, but mostly defended the *sui generis* genius of Arumuga Navalar: 'He brought Tamil literature to all the people,' she said. I reiterated the basis of my thesis and ended with my complete agreement with her: he had, indeed, brought Tamil literature to all the people.

What happened next, however, I hadn't anticipated. Why, one person asked, was I taking Navalar – and his primary text, the *Kandapuranam* – as the emblem of Jaffna culture? Furthermore, how could I take Navalar as the paragon of the Sri Lankan Tamil? He's a Jaffnaman – a Vellala Jaffnaman at that. With whom do I ally if I make the claim that Jaffna culture and society stand as the synecdoche of Tamil Sri Lanka? What of Trincomalee and Batticaloa, let alone Upcountry? Furthermore, Navalar was famously castist, a real Vellala chauvinist. By today's standards, he was a bigot: a brilliant bigot, but a bigot nonetheless. If he denied Dalits' access to temples and schools, how could he be said to 'universalize' Tamil texts? How could he have brought Tamil literature to 'all the people' if, in his view, Dalits were not even people?

Oh my. All I could do was agree, pathetically, as the youngest members of the audience clapped in support of that last question – an assertion and an accusation both. A few people came up to talk to me afterwards, but I was defensive and snappish. I hasten to point out that I spoke to those I snapped at later in the weekend, even apologized to one of my interlocutors with whom I was particularly upset and admitted that he had a point. Some folks, though, were not so forgiving as he. I had fundamentally misunderstood Sri Lankan culture, society, and history. And people who would not agree about much else agreed on that point.

At the very least, the presentation was rhetorically infelicitous, i.e., I had failed to pitch my talk to my audience, a fundamental oratorical error. At the Toronto airport heading home, I ran into Stanley Tambiah, among the most accomplished of senior scholars of Sri Lanka. He jocularly suggested – twice! – that I might have anticipated these critiques. Indeed. I especially might have anticipated the Dalit critique. And I might, too, have anticipated the opposition of people from the East and Upcountry to an assertion of Jaffna hegemony. In

some places on the island calling someone a 'jaffnaman' (*yazhppaanaththaan*) is equivalent to calling them a miser, a snob, a selfish bigot. And that does not even include the political oppositions that now divide Sri Lankan Tamils between (at least) two different nationalist factions.

In the final analysis, what snookered me was Jaffna itself – the authentic field site, as it were, the ultimate archive. I had tested my thesis out in informal conversations with scholars at the university and formally in an address. There was only one Dalit scholar in Jaffna to critique what I had to say, but I never heard that critique: it seems that he was marginalized from the circles I was moving in (and at this point I can understand why – senior scholars in Jaffna do not appear to be nearly as sensitive to the Dalit critique of knowledge and history as their counterparts in India, insofar as their counterparts in India are sensitive to it. The debate continues...). The assertion of Jaffna as a *kandapurana kalachchaaram*, as my senior colleagues had maintained for decades, was the assertion of upper-class Vellala culture as Jaffna culture itself. My training in Tamil Nadu and Chicago, furthermore, had sensitized me to hegemonic claims by Brahmins, not non-Brahmins. Ironically enough, my own Dravidianist biases, cultivated in the fields of Chicago, Madurai and Chennai, had blinded me even further to the socio-ideological flora and fauna of the fields of Toronto.

The field, then, appears neither bounded nor discrete. It can not be contained in our fieldnotes, processed and indexed, and consulted again as the ultimate archive. It does not stay where it was because it is not a fixed entity in time and place, but a construct based on our interactions, our training, our localities, our attachments, our tendencies to look for experts who can tell us what the meaning of it all might be. Our fields, then, need to be seen as shifty, fluid, and open to negotiation by people ten thousand miles away from the object. The senior scholar who nodded in approval at my thesis is a member of the field, as are the lovely older woman who challenged my language, the youngsters who yelled at the oldsters in Jaffna and those who yelled at me in Toronto. The field gets deeper and richer the more it includes us all, becoming a necessarily more nuanced index of human social life.

\* \* \* \* \*



## A Passage to Indiana: Reflections on Fieldwork in a Reverse Direction

CHANDANA MATHUR

Lecturer in Anthropology  
National University of Ireland, Maynooth  
Chandana.Mathur@nuim.ie

My two years (1989-91) of dissertation fieldwork were spent in Southern Indiana in a small town located near the flagship plant of a major multinational corporation, the Aluminium Company of America (Alcoa). As an Indian woman anthropologist whose work centres on mainstream American culture, I have become well used to the inevitable amused chuckle drawn by this disclosure. Any exploration of the intentions underlying the project, of the fieldwork experience itself, of the particular difficulties involved in writing about it, and (most pertinently for this collection) of the residues remaining, however, requires reaching beyond the cheap paradox element of this fieldwork encounter.

When I first began to frame the project, I had been profoundly influenced by the perspectives of anthropological political economy; thus, the basic premise of my work has been that cultural processes in the contemporary United States cannot be understood without referring to the symbols, structures and practices of present-day capitalism. Initially drawn to the project by the paucity of studies of Western societies by Third World anthropologists, I have now come to realise that fieldwork in the American heartland at the end of the twentieth century has taught me unlovely and invaluable truths – say, about class, or nationalism – that may have been less accessible elsewhere or at another time.

My fieldwork dates back to an important moment of self-doubt for the discipline, to the era of the reflexive turn in anthropology. It would have been hard at the time to ignore the central insight of this moment, that my data was going to be deeply inflected by the identities of the ethnographer and the subject, by who I was and who they were. At the same time, I was uncomfortable at the prospect of casting the power differentials underlying this encounter as the main issue: it could easily teeter into self-absorption, and perhaps sideline many other questions that seemed particularly pressing. In the end, the ethnography that has been written out of this experience acknowledges the issues surrounding the power relationships underlying the encounter, but prioritises a quite different set of questions. Focusing on the narratives provided by the people I met, it tries to document how individual lives are shaped and subjectivities structured at the intersection of local history with state power and systemic transformation.

For instance, my dissertation addresses a series of questions about the nature of work as experienced by

(mainly) white male workers in traditional manufacturing jobs in Indiana. In what terms are work routines described and remembered? Is this daily experience foregrounded in a strong sense of themselves as workers, and by extension, as members of a working class? What are the political consequences of the process of identity formation evoked by workers' narratives, and obversely, what is the relationship that obtains for these workers between the labour movement and the workplace self? As globalisation and its consequences, actual and perceived, sweep through continually and unstoppably to alter the face of everyday work, how do workplace identities keep pace? I have explored the meanings that Alcoa workers have assigned to the reshaping of the labour process in the present era of flexible accumulation, which has entailed changes in the scheduling of work shifts to meet the demands of just-in-time production, or changes in management techniques such as the introduction of the 'team concept' (Mathur, 1998). Finally, my discussion of labour touches on themes that lie entangled at the junction of social memory and history, as in a chapter that traces the impact of the memory of a long, bitter and ultimately unsuccessful local strike in 1986 on the resistance that Alcoa workers were to offer towards later demands placed on them by the company.

Would it have been a better idea to focus instead on a reading of the unequal power encounter between white American males in an affluent Midwestern town and a Third World woman? For one thing, for an aspiring middle-class academic researching and representing the lives of working class men, it would be disingenuous to argue that the power balance was clearly freighted against me. Perhaps the most forceful example is provided by one of my interview tapes that has made me wince whenever I have gone back to it. An electrician was speaking to me on this tape. At one point, I finish his sentence for him, and then apologise for doing so. He responds saying, "no, no, you said it so much better than I would have". All the factors complicating the putatively reverse direction of my fieldwork are present here: the middle-class ethnographer's presumption in representing others' experience, the display of class deference from the working class ethnographic subject etc.

In an early discussion of the "relation of power involved in the very conception of the autonomy of cultures" (Chatterjee 1999, 17), Partha Chatterjee has expressed his pessimism regarding the viability of an 'anthropology in reverse'. "It is not trivial to point out here", he writes, "that in this whole debate about the possibility of cross-cultural understanding, the scientist is always one of 'us': he is a Western anthropologist, modern, enlightened and self-conscious (and it does not matter what his nationality or the colour of his skin happens to be)" (Chatterjee 1999, 17).

Under these circumstances, would my ethnographic account of small town Indiana be much different from one produced by a White American anthropologist? Or by a Black American anthropologist? Or an Indian-

American anthropologist? I would argue that the inversion entailed in my fieldwork, such as it was, nevertheless carries certain methodological implications. For instance, my dissertation also focuses on the first Gulf War, a key moment of American nationalism, and therefore, a particularly apposite time to look at ideas about collective selfhood, at 'community' and at 'nation'. "If you are not a Patriot, you're a Scud", was the anti-war slogan of the time. My goal was to ethnographically chart the processes whereby the war became the main field of contestation defining membership within the community, which was itself redefined to mean nation or national interest. Because I was a dissenter from the notion of community-as-nation, both by ascription (as ethnographer-outsider, foreigner and Third Worlder) and by choice (I did not conceal my association with the small handful of local anti-war protestors), I was constantly being brought face to face with competing notions of collective identity that were reluctantly being held in abeyance. The minister of a conservative Southern church, the coalminer and the high school teacher who were reluctant to express their opposition to the war among their peers, felt more comfortable discussing their views with me.

In terms of subject position issues, it remains unclear which way the power balance tilts with this fieldwork and my attempts to write of it. Obviously it is not an unequal encounter between a powerless Third World woman and omnipotent white American males. Yet, as we met in the field to make sense of one another, it was they who were able to confidently approach me with dominant Western categories of understanding the non-West. No matter how steeped I may be in what Chatterjee terms "bourgeois rationalist thought", I was not really in a position to counter-apply these same categories towards them. If it can accomplish little else, an encounter of this kind can definitely muddy the waters around received ideas about anthropological knowledge production, about ethnographic authority and the power of representation.

The legacy for me of this fieldwork encounter is probably not dissimilar from the ways in which other anthropologists are changed by their fieldwork experiences. One's place in the world is problematised by the experience, one gets the sense that one has better understood some phenomena while failing to understand certain others. The stakes involved in the failure to understand feel higher for me than they may for other anthropologists, though, given that we all live in a world which depends disproportionately on the voting decisions of white working class men from the American heartland.

Also, the failure to understand has left me with many questions about the practice of fieldwork. In the face of really uncomfortable realities, how far can anthropology's empathetic method of data collection take us? If we do not ourselves manage to internalise viewpoints that we deeply disagree with, and successfully understand them from within, can we be said to have moved much further

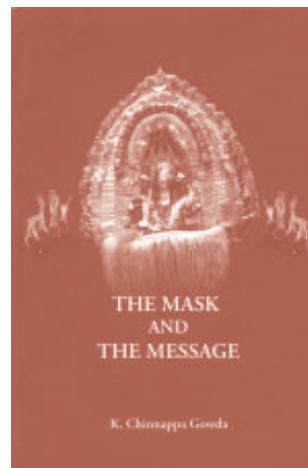
beyond a priori, pre-fieldwork understandings of these points of view? Should we be content merely to chart the global flows and local contexts within which the baffling is embedded?

## References

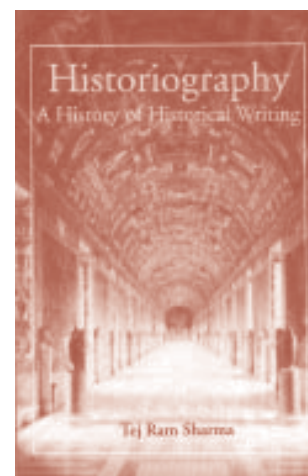
- Chatterjee, Partha. 1999. 'Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?' *The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Mathur, Chandana. 1998. "Transformation as usual?: The meanings of a changing labour process for Indiana aluminium workers" *Critique of Anthropology* Vol 18(3), pp. 263-277.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Review Shelf



**The Mask and the Message**  
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# NFSC Public Programmes at Indian School of Folklore – Schedule

508, Kaveri complex, No.96, Nungambakkam High Road, Chennai – 600 034.

Phone: 28229192 / 4213 8410









Email: info@indianfolklore.org, muthu@md2.vsnl.net.in www.indianfolklore.org

April 2006	
	Issues in Arts and Humanities Today - Lecture 1, on Wednesday, April 12, 2006 (at 4.30 p.m.) <b>Lecture by N. Muthuswamy on "Tamil Folk Theatre".</b>
	"What is freedom?" Lecture series by M.D. Muthukumaraswamy - Lecture 1, on Wednesday, April 19, 2006 (at 6.00 p.m.) - <b>"Are We the Captives of the Narratives We Create?"</b> .
	New images for the public sphere – Film Screening 1, on Friday, April 21, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) <b>"The Second Birth"</b> , documentary film by <b>Arunmozhi</b> .
	NFSC collaborative research projects public presentations - Event 1 on Friday, April 28, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) Category: Folklore Genres and Performances in Rural India: Performing Prahalatha Myth – Ongoing project lecture <b>"Pralatha Saritiram"</b> by Balaji Srinivasan and Gandhi, Independent researchers and NFSC collaborators, Chennai.
May 2006	
	Arts, Crafts and Creativity: Event - 1, from Tuesday, May 2, 2006 to Sunday, May 7, 2006 (11.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.) – <b>Kalamkari Paintings - Exhibition cum Sale</b> Featured Artist: <b>Kalahasti Subramanyam</b> , President of Kalasrusti, a social voluntary organization. He is Master craftsman from Andhra Pradesh. He is a National merit holder in 1974.
	Issues in Arts and Humanities Today - Lecture 2, on Friday, May 12, 2006 (at 6.00 p.m.) Lecture by K.A. Sachidanandam on <b>"Life and Works of Ananda Coomarasamy"</b> .
	"What is freedom?" Lecture series by M.D. Muthukumaraswamy - Lecture 2, on Wednesday, May 17, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) – <b>"Deconstructing Structures of Belief"</b> .
	New images for the public sphere – Film Screening 2, on Friday, May 19, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) – <b>Bharathiyar"</b> , documentary film by <b>Amshan Kumar</b> .
	NFSC collaborative research projects public presentations - Event 2 on Friday, May 26, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) Category: Enquiry into the "Tribal India" – Ongoing project lecture <b>"Dangi Ramayan"</b> by Aruna Ravikant Joshi, Former Editor, Dhol Magazine, published by Basha, Vadodara, Gujarat.
June 2006	
	Arts, Crafts and Creativity: Event - 2, from Saturday, June 3, 2006 to Friday, June 9, 2006 (11.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.) – <b>Kerala Mural Paintings - Exhibition cum Sale.</b> Featured Artist: <b>K.U. Krishnakumar</b> , Principal, Guruvayur Institute of Mural Paintings.
	Issues in Arts and Humanities Today - Lecture 3, on Friday, June 16, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) Lecture by <b>Nirmal Selvamony</b> on <b>"Eco criticism"</b> .
	New images for the public sphere: Film Screening 3, on Wednesday, June 21, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) <b>"Dikshidargal"</b> , documentary film by <b>Janaki Viswanathan</b> .
	Special Lecture on Saturday, June 24, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) Lecture by <b>Jyotindra Jain</b> , Chairman, NFSC and Dean, School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi on <b>"Indian Popular Culture: The Conquest of the World as Picture"</b> .
	NFSC collaborative research projects public presentations - Event 3 Category: Understanding Discrimination on Friday, June 30, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) - Ongoing project lecture <b>"Jambapurana"</b> , <b>P. Subbachary</b> , Head, Department of Folklore and Tribal Studies, Dravidian University, Kuppam, Andhra Pradesh.



July 2006	
	Arts, Crafts and Creativity: Event - 3, from Saturday, July 1, 2006 to Friday, July 7, 2006 (11.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.) <b>Madhubani Painting – Exhibition cum Sale.</b> Featured Artist: <b>Shanthi Devi, Kiran Devi, Phoolmaya Devi.</b>
	"What is freedom?" Lecture series by M.D. Muthukumaraswamy - Lecture 3 on Wednesday, July 19, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) - <b>"Self as Inter-textual Construct"</b> .
	New images for the public sphere – Film Screening 4, on Friday, July 21, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) <b>"Pali Peedam"</b> , documentary film by <b>Leena Manimekalai.</b>
	NFSC collaborative research projects public presentations - Event 4 Category: Folklore Genres and Performance in Rural India, on Friday, July 28, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) - Ongoing project lecture <b>"Mailaralinga"</b> , by <b>M.N.Venkatesha</b> , Professor, Department of Folklore and Tribal Studies, Dravidian University, Kuppam, Andhra Pradesh.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS (Tentative Schedule)

August 2006	
	Arts, Crafts and Creativity: Event - 4, from Tuesday, August 1, 2006 to Friday August 4, 2006 (11 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.) – Photo Exhibition on the Making of Veena and Lecture Demonstration on the Craft of Veena Making by <b>Nataraja Achari</b> on Wednesday, August 2, 2006 at <b>Padmabhushan Shri Komal Kothari Endowment</b> Lecture on <b>"Cultural Issues in Veena Making"</b> by <b>Karaikudi S. Subramanian</b> , Director Brhaddhavani, Research and Training Centre for the Music of the World, Chennai on Friday, August 4, 2006 at 5.30 p.m.
	Issues in Arts and Humanities Today – Lecture 5, on Friday, August 11, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) Lecture by <b>Indran</b> on <b>"Search for Self in an Urban Jungle: Notes on Contemporary Art in Chennai"</b> .
	NFSC collaborative research projects public presentations - Event 5 Category: Understanding Discrimination on Wednesday, August 16, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) - Epic narration and <i>Urumu</i> performance by <b>Urumu Naganna</b> , Ananthapur district, Andhra Pradesh.
	New Images for the Public Sphere – Film Screening 5, on Thursday, August 17, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) – <b>"Chappal"</b> , documentary film by <b>R.P. Amuthan.</b>
September 2006	
	Arts, Crafts and Creativity: Event - 5, from Friday, September 1, 2006 to Friday, September 8, 2006 (11.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.) – <b>Gond Paintings – Exhibition cum Sale.</b> Featured Artist: <b>Ramesh Tekam.</b>
	Special Lecture on Monday, September 11, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) Lecture by <b>Lee Haring</b> , Professor Emeritus of English, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York on <b>"Uncovering Stories"</b> .
	Issues in Arts and Humanities Today – Lecture 6, on Thursday, September 14, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) – Lecture by <b>C. Ramachandran</b> on <b>"Social History of Tamilnadu"</b> .
	"What is freedom?" Lecture series by M.D.Muthukumaraswamy – Lecture 4, on Wednesday, September 20, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) - <b>"Expression Vs Institution"</b> .
	New images for the public sphere – Film Screening 6, on Thursday, September 21, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) – <b>"Naanga Adhivasinga"</b> , documentary film by <b>Ayyappan.</b>
	NFSC collaborative research projects public presentations - Event 6 Category: Enquiry into "Tribal India" on Thursday, September 28, 2006 (at 5.30 p.m.) – Ongoing project lecture <b>"Maraigan"</b> , <b>Kishore Bhattacharjee</b> , Professor and Head, Folklore Research Department, University of Gauhati, Assam.