

MODERN SOCIAL FORCES IN INDIAN FOLK SONGS

Indian villages are not yet industrialized. Influences of modern technology on village life come mostly from outside. Industrialization has affected the urban centers and is bringing about a change in the relationship between these centers and folk societies, thereby influencing the latter as well.

Indian folk communities have not been isolated societies like the primitive tribes. They were closely connected with non-industrial urban centers and together with them formed regional cultures.¹ Folk and urban cultures maintained a give and take relationship during the ages. "Folk tunes, regional songs and styles, even non-Indian melodies," says Professor D. P. Mukerji "were incorporated into the classical texture, and the new classical style in its turn was always affecting folk music a great deal." He continues: "Throughout the Muslim period, the exchange between *marga* (classical) and *desi* (folk, regional) styles continued."² In the field of litera-

1. This view of folk culture corresponds with that of George M. Foster in "What Is Folk Culture," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 55 (April-June, 1953), pp. 159-173.

2. *Indian Music* (Poona, Kutub Publishers), pp. 9, 12.

ture as well such a relationship existed. A great deal in the folk songs seems to have been borrowed from Hindu mythology, but the people have thoroughly reworked the stories and sometimes even the themes. Alha, the most popular ballad of northern India, is believed to be the work of Jagnik, the court poet of King Parmal. Great poets like Tulsidas and Kabir have powerfully influenced the folk songs, but they also drew from folk literature. Tulsidas composed some songs in Charchari or Chanchar, originally the style of folk songs connected with Holi, the color festival. Kabir in particular used a variety of folk styles.

Modern social forces rapidly transformed the nature of the urban elite and profoundly affected relations between the elite and folk culture, with the result that many of the links that connected them are disappearing. For example, the professional dancing girls who helped the process of reciprocal interaction between folk songs and sophisticated music and poetry have lost much of their importance. They used to cater to both urban and rural audiences. While they generally presented sophisticated songs before urban audiences and folk songs before rural gatherings, they also sang folk songs, like Kajri and Purbi, with certain modifications, before urban listeners and simple sophisticated pieces like Gazal, Thumri, and Dadra before rural listeners. The landed aristocracy—Rajas, Taluqdars, and Zamindars, whose courts were the seats of sophisticated music and poetry—patronized the dancing girls, who therefore remained in touch with the prevailing trends in those spheres. Now a new class consisting of businessmen, government officers and clerks, lawyers, teachers, and writers has replaced the landed aristocracy in the leading position in urban social life. This new class does not provide patronage to the dancing girls, who have therefore lost touch with modern sophisticated culture and art. The lyrics of modern poets like Nirala, Mahadevi Verma, and Sumitra Nandan Pant do not influence the songs of the dancing girls. Thus an important link between the two streams of art has been severed.

More important perhaps is the change in the world view and the way of life of the urban people. Before the impact of Western industrial culture urban and rural people shared a common value system and a common set of goals. Indeed, if the unity of values and goals be regarded as the most important criterion of folk culture,³ the culture of preindustrial Indian towns itself was predominantly of the folk type. The impact of the West has resulted in the growth of secular and individualistic tendencies in the

3. This seems to be the view of Arden A. King, "A Note on Emergent Folk Cultures and World Culture Change," *Social Forces*, Vol. 31 (March, 1953), pp. 234-37.

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city. The saint poets who were enjoyed by both city and village people no longer appeal to the former.

Since the city people often need to communicate with people of distant places, they tend to abandon their regional dialects and take to Khari Boli Hindi or English. This is an additional factor responsible for their separation from the folk culture of the region.

City life is undergoing a rapid change, while in the country the pace of change is much slower. Thus the dissimilarity between the two increases. But industrial urban culture is projecting itself with much greater intensity than the preindustrial, and threatening the very existence of folk culture. The spread of the new means of transport and communication, construction of roads and canals, recruitment for the army from rural areas, emigration of large numbers of villagers to industrial cities in search of employment, commerce, printing, the spread of education, political propaganda, religious reform movements, cinema, radio, and loudspeakers are exerting powerful influences on folk songs.

Modern means of transport such as the railway train, automobile, bicycle, steamer, ship, and the airplane have already secured a place for themselves in the folk songs. Of all these, the railway train has found the most frequent mention. The reason for this is obvious. The common Indian villager can neither dream of using an airplane nor of owning an automobile. Railway journeys, on the other hand, are not uncommon. Indeed, the young woman awaiting her lover who is expected to arrive on a train from some distant place is a recurring theme in folk songs. A Punjabi woman sings:

The wheat crop will be looked after,
The wheat crop has grown,
My love must be coming.
• The wheat crop will be looked after,
Lamps have been lighted,
My love must have got down at the station.⁴

A Bhojpuri woman, possibly the wife of a railway employee, also awaits her husband:

The passenger train is late.
My lord has not yet come.

4. Devendra Satyarthi, *Bajat Ave Dhol* (New Delhi, Asia Prakashan, 1952), p. 83.

I served the food in a plate of gold,
I am tired of waiting for him.⁵

In many songs we find women expressing displeasure because railway trains carry away their loved ones. For example, a woman asks the booking clerk not to issue a ticket to her husband:

The train for Lahore has come,
Do not issue the ticket O Baboo,
This is our night of separation.⁶

Another woman is furious at the train itself:

O railway train, may God break you,
You took my darling away.⁷

Perhaps the most interesting song in this connection is the Avahdi version in which a woman calls the railway train her co-wife:

From the east came the railway train,
From the west came the steamer.
She has taken away my husband,
The train has become my co-wife,
She has taken away my husband.
The train is not my enemy, the steamer is not my enemy,
My enemy is money which makes him wander from land to land.
I do not feel hunger, I do not feel thirst, I feel love.
When I see your face I feel love for you.
A seer of wheat I shall eat throughout the year,
I shall not allow my husband to go,
I shall keep him before my eyes,
I shall not allow my husband to go.⁸

The woman at first accuses the train, but soon she realizes that poverty and not the train is the cause of her trouble. This is a country woman, musing on the part played by the new technology in making her miserable. The poor villager also grudges the railway fare. In a song he says that

5. Durga Shankar Prasad Singh, *Bhojpuri Lok-Geet Men Karun Ras* (Prayag, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1945), p. 206.

6. *Bajat Ave Dhol*, p. 83.

7. Devendra Satyarthi, *Bela Phoole Adhi Rat* (Delhi, Rajhansa Prakashan, 1948), p. 365.

8. Devendra Satyarthi, *Dharti Gati Hai* (Delhi, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1948), p. 140.

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instead of buying food he spent his money on railway fare and thus became lean and thin.

Since the railway train shot out
Forests and hills have been cut down.
The money I had I gave to my legs,
To my stomach I gave the bones of my back.⁹

The Indian villager also felt that the English (the Firangi) were running the trains for their profit.

The Firangi with his greed for money
Makes the carriage of smoke fly.¹⁰

Not all songs, however, express dislike for the railway train. There are some which praise the English for bringing them.

O Firangi, may your sons live long,
You have reached the railways to the village.¹¹

We often find an expression of the wonder and awe that the railways excite among the village people. A Marathi folk song (Ovi) says:

The train has a large number of carriages.
The train runs on the rails without bullocks.¹²

The automobile, the railway train, and the airplane look so magnificent to the villager that in describing his beloved he often compares her with them. In a song sung near Delhi the gait of a woman is thus compared with the Hariyana Mail.

I saw a fair damsel standing on the road,
She shone like a sunbeam and looked as pretty as a flower of
fireworks.
She wore a strange dignified look,
She carelessly chewed a betel-nut,
She was like an arrow from the bow
As she carried her small pitcher full of water.

9. Ram Naresh Tripathi, *Gram Sahitya* (Prayag, Hindi Mandir, 1951), Vol. I, p. 51.

10. Devendra Satyarthi, *Dhire Baho Ganga* (Delhi, Rajkamal Prakashan, 1948), p. 127.

11. *Dhire Baho Ganga*, p. 164.

12. *Bajat Aye Dhol*, p. 129.

Her sandals were cut in a flowery fashion,
Her muslin was prettily embroidered;
She wore a lady-like sari,
I saw it covering her fair body.
Her hair was fastened with clips and was full of fragrant oil.
O friends! She walked as fast as the Hariyana Mail.¹³

The song describes a modern, fashionable girl. One can guess that the fast pace of this emancipated lady so overwhelms the folk poet, accustomed to the slow, short-paced gait of the rural woman, as to remind him of the terrific speed of the mail train. In fact, even the men of the villages do not normally walk fast, for they are still free from the rush of industrial urban life. The charming figure of the maiden with a pitcher of water balanced either on her head or on her hip is described so often in folk songs that the folk poet finds it difficult to picture a pretty young woman without it, even the sophisticated damsel of this verse.

Another variant of the same song, also from Mr. Bansal's collection, tells us that:

Her sandals were cut in a flowery fashion,
Her muslin was prettily embroidered.
She was riding a Japanese lady's bicycle;
I saw her riding.

Songs genuinely folk in spirit, style, and content mention automobiles and bicycles. The description of the bridegroom's marriage party, a favorite theme of folk songs, often contains references to them. This is not surprising, since marriage parties have begun to use them in villages.

How nice looks the ceremony at the door.
The courtyard of the father-in-law looks very nice
When elephants come shining at the door.
The courtyard of the husband's elder brother looks very nice
When horses come trotting at the door.
The courtyard of the husband's younger brother looks very nice
When cycles come gleaming at the door.
The courtyard of my husband looks very nice
When the car comes calling at the door.¹⁴

13. Taken by Mr. R. N. Bansal on January 1, 1954, from Dhoom Singh, district Saharanpur.

14. Krishna Deva Upadhyaya, *Bhojpuri Gram Geet* (Prayag, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1948), Vol. 2, p. 152.

The airplane is never referred to in songs as a means of transport, and the villager does not, in fact, think of it as such. Yet it excites his admiration. In a Braj song (Rasia) youth is compared with the British Raj and the flight of the airplane.¹⁵

Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.
Like the rule of the English,
Like the flight of the aeroplane.
Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.
Why should I apply collyrium to my eyes,
My eyes are killing even without it.
Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.
Whoever exchanges glances with me
Becomes my slave.
Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.
When one becomes aged nobody cares—
The world is for the youth.
Youth whirrs and rattles
Like the rule of the English.¹⁶

Songs describing war often refer to airplanes and ships. India has not yet undergone any major air-raid, but a minor one made by the Japanese on Calcutta during World War II has left its impress on oral poetry. People of distant places go to Calcutta to earn their living. The air-raid frightened them and this fear found expression in songs of the various languages, spoken by them. One of the songs in Avadhi says:

Airplanes are flying above,
Below the riot is fearful:

A Malvi song which seems to have been composed some time during World War I, describes the effects of war and expresses the wish that the war may come to an end.

O King of Germany do not fight with the English.
Cannon balls like lightning rain in the sea and on the ship.

15. This song is specially difficult to translate, for it has many examples of onomatopoeia.

16. *Bela Phoole Adhi Rat*, p. 73.

You have made green and yellow colors and Kumkum¹⁷ costly,
You have made the price of red color rise; how am I to dye the clothes?
O King of Germany do not fight with the English.
You have made pulses costly and sugar scarce,
You have made the price of ghee¹⁸ rise; how am I to taste delicious rice?
O King of Germany do not fight with the English.¹⁹

The recruitment for army from rural areas has affected the folk songs a great deal. Naturally, the songs of areas like the Punjab and the hilly regions which provide recruits in large numbers have been affected more than those of other parts of the country. A Punjabi song sung with the Giddha folk dance says:

In days gone by travellers used to ask about the way;
Now they ask where the war is raging.²⁰

In a long and pathetic Garhwali song a man returns home after a long time. His loyal wife fails to recognize him. The man tells his mother that he had joined the army and had gone to China and Japan.

The jogi²¹ fell down on the feet of his mother,
His wife was taken aback.
“O mother, I am your son,
I have come home from a foreign land.
I joined the army,
I went to China and Japan.
I served for nine years,
I get a pension of nine Rupees ”²²

New means of communication also find mention in some of the songs. The villager appreciates the facilities offered by the postal system.

Charming is the rule of the English,
The postman goes from village to village.²³

17. Saffron used for toilet.

18. Butter clarified by boiling.

19. *Bajat Ave Dhol*, p. 67.

20. *Dhire Baho Ganga*, p. 32.

21. Saint.

22. *Bela Phoole Adh' Rat*, p. 54.

23. *Dhire Baho Ganga*, p. 164.

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Some songs also refer to the telegraph. The following song from western Uttar Pradesh suggests that the villagers regard the sending of telegrams to be a costly affair.

O my friend! My darling always remembers me though he is in a far off land.
This dark night may soon be over and he may soon come back to me.
O my friend! I sent him a telegram for ten Rupees,
I sent him five letters full of love.²⁴

The new means of communication have connected the Indian village with the international market. Thus far, Indian farming has primarily been for subsistence. Cash payments were relatively few. For some time, however, the villages have increasingly been exposed to price fluctuations. The great depression of the thirties hit the Indian peasantry hard. A Bundelkhandi folk song describes the misery caused by the fall in the price of *Junhariya*.²⁵

The revenue is being collected.
Junhariya now sells at a maund for a Rupee.
The Munshi²⁶ came, the Patwari²⁷ came,
And came the Tehsildar,²⁸
The attachment has begun.
Junahriya now sells at a maund for a Rupee.
My lahanga²⁹ has been sold, my shawl has been sold,
The blouse from my body has been sold,
Junahriya now sells at a maund for a Rupee.
The turban of my lord has been sold,
The whole house has been put to shame.
Junahriya now sells at a maund for a Rupee.³⁰

The Punjabi peasant also wished for a rise in the price of wheat:

O wheat! how I wish,
You were costly once again.³¹

24. Taken from Saroj, a 16-year-old Rajput girl of Saharanpur district by Mr. R. N. Bansal on March 13, 1954.

25. A kind of large millet.

26. The clerk.

27. A minor official who keeps village records.

28. An official who collects revenue.

29. Woman's garment similar to petticoat.

30. *Dharti Gati Hai*, p. 112.

31. *Dharti Gati Hai*, p. 13.

The excessive rise in prices during the last World War also became a cause of trouble for some villagers. An Ahir (cowherd) says in his Birha song:

The rise in the prices has made me forget my Birha song,
I have forgotten my Kajri song and my Kabir song.
The rising breasts of a fair damsel
No more cause a pang in my heart.³²

Increasing contacts with modern industrial civilization are undermining the old ways of life of the Indian countryside. Ideas and attitudes are undergoing a rapid and profound change and the importance of the acquisition of wealth is increasing. A Marathi folk song regrets the growth of this tendency.

Village life has been polluted, the beauty of the village is gone,
Even the big people have fallen prey to lust for money.³³

The hold of religion is lessening. A Punjabi song says:

God has died and deities have run away,
Only the Firangi rules.³⁴

The sanctity of the caste is also declining and the Brahman (priest) is no longer accorded the respect he used to have. This is expressed in an interesting way in an Avadhi song. Dashrath, the father of Ram, invites the Brahmans on the occasion of the birth of Ram, but they refuse to come. Dashrath says:

Let Kaliyuga come, let Kaliyuga come,
You will go begging from door to door and nobody will give you alms.³⁵

Kaliyuga is the fourth or the present age of the world according to Hindu scriptures. It is believed that, in Kaliyuga, faith in ancient values is bound to be lost. A Bhojpur folk poet regrets that even the low castes have now begun to adopt forms of worship proper only for the high castes.

32. *Gram Sahitya*, Vol. I, p. 19.

33. *Bajat Av Dhol*, p. 128.

34. *Bela Phool Adhi Rat*, p. 380.

35. Ram Kishori Srivastava, *Hindi Lok Geet* (Allahabad, 1946), p. 18.

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The pigs pollute the water of Ganga,
The Chamars³⁶ have become devotees,
With beads of tulsi³⁷ in his hand,
The Kalwar³⁸ counts Ram Ram.³⁹

New political and social ideas are also reaching the villages. India's struggle for freedom has left its impress on songs all over the country. Reference to Mahatma Gandhi occurs in folk songs of all the Indian languages. A Bhojpuri folk song predicts the doom of the British rule thus:

O Firangi! you will not win in your struggle against Gandhi,
Howsoever hard you may try.
You have enjoyed yourself well in this country,
Now your houses will be sold.⁴⁰

An Andhra song says:

Work the spinning wheel, O daughters,
Spin the cotton yarn, praying for the victory of Gandhi.⁴¹

There are signs of political and social ferment in the villages. The peasant protests against his miserable lot and is rising against the injustices done to him. Landlords used to collect various levies from their tenants. The following song refers to these:

How can there be a compromise?
Tell me, how can there be a compromise?
When I came to your house to pay the tax,
You charged the tax of granting audience.
Tell me, how can there be a compromise?
You brought a horse from Makkhanpur,
You charged the horse-tax.
Tell me, how can there be a compromise?
You brought an elephant from distant Chhattar,
You charged the elephant-tax.

36. Caste of leather-workers.

37. A plant regarded sacred by the Hindus.

38. The caste of wine-sellers.

39. *Bhojpuri Gram Geet*, Vol. I, p. 349.

40. *Bela Phoolle Adhi Rat*, pp. 399-400.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 396.

Tell me, how can there be a compromise?
You brought a car from Calcutta,
You charged the car-tax.
Tell me, how can there be a compromise?⁴²

The increase in rural population and the destruction of the village industries as a result of competition with the large-scale industries force many villagers to seek employment in industrial centers far away from their homes. Usually only male youths leave their homes and the rest of the family remains in the villages. This emigration greatly affects the life of the countryside. Nearly all types of folk songs carry the impress of the effects of emigration in regions where this takes place on a large scale. A Bhojpuri woman sadly sings:

The arhar⁴³ rots in the fields of arhar,
In the pitcher rots the flour,
The wife rots in her mother's home,
The husband rots in Calcutta.⁴⁴

During the absence of the husband the wife has to suffer many hardships. If the husband stays away from home for a long time, and if he does not send home large sums of money, his wife is ill-treated and even the essentials of life are begrudged her. Normally, since the joint-family system prevails, a woman expects support from the brothers of her husband, but his prolonged absence begins to put too much strain on the system. The following portion of a Bhojpuri song sung by women while grinding corn describes the situation well.

I cooked puris⁴⁵ for everybody and jauria⁴⁶ for the prince alone,
But the eatables became poison, as the prince went away to a foreign land.
My mother-in-law asked me "On whose earnings will you live?"
"My father-in-law's offspring is Lakhan Devar,⁴⁷ I shall live upon his earnings."
"I have a married woman myself," the Devar said.
I put my torn clothing under my arm, and started for the land of my father.

42. *Dhire Baho Ganga*, p. 172.

43. A cereal.

44. *Bhojpuri Lok Geet Men Karun Ras*, p. 195.

45. Thin cakes fried in clarified butter.

46. A pudding made of rice and milk.

47. Husband's younger brother.

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“O father, sitting in the meeting, I am your daughter in distress,
If you were to give me the fallen hut
I would pass my miserable days.”
“The falling hut has fallen down,
O daughter, go to your mother.”⁴⁸

During their long stay in the city away from their wives men often develop intimacies with other women and sometimes take them to their villages when they go back.

Wheat was sown but ankari⁴⁹ grew,
My lord laments sitting on the road.
“O lord, do not lament, do not kill yourself by lamenting,
I shall exchange ankari and grind wheat.”
“My wife, you have become thin due to grinding and pounding,
If you like I shall bring a maid for you.”
He went for a maid, but brought a co-wife,
How shall I send away the co-wife?⁵⁰

This Bhojpuri folk song also tells that the man went away from home because the crop had failed. As a matter of fact, folk songs from all over the country suggest that men are really not attracted by cities. They leave the countryside only when it becomes very difficult for them to earn their livelihood, as the following Braj folk song tells:

The locusts ate all the leaves of the jungle,
My husband went to Calcutta.
The locusts came and caused a havoc,
Not even torn clothes were left in my house.⁵¹

The songs show that the villager does not like the city atmosphere. The newcomer to an industrial city is faced with innumerable difficulties in a world completely unknown to him. Many songs express the nostalgia of these people. In the following, Birha an Ahir (cow-herd) is lamenting the loss of his old surroundings and occupation.

48. *Bhojpuri Lok Geet Men Karun Ras*, p. 123.

49. A kind of grass used as cattle fodder.

50. *Bhojpuri Gram Geet*, Vol. 2, p. 281.

51. *Bela Phoole Adhi Rat*, p. 43.

The watching of cows is gone,
The bath in the Ganges is gone,
The gathering under the pakari tree is gone,
God has taken away all the three.⁵²

Some songs describe the new surroundings and the factories in which these emigrants go to work:

Hearing the siren of the mill, my husband jumps into my lap,
He works in the jute mill.
On the walls of bricks there is a roof of tin,
There are lots of leather ropes.⁵³

Though some folk songs contain descriptions of factories and mills, it appears that genuine industrial love has not yet developed in India. Many of the factory workers maintain relations with their villages and do not give up the rural modes of living and so feel themselves to be peasants. Though the songs pick up the names of some new objects, the themes, the compositional devices, the imagery, and the poetic diction have by no means changed radically. There have not yet emerged in India new heroes like Joe Magarac, the Slav hero of the Monongahela valley steel mills, "who made rails by squeezing the hot steel through his fingers—four rails from each hand—and jumped into the furnace to make better steel."⁵⁴ However, we cannot be quite sure of these conclusions since the collectors of Indian folk lore have not yet spent sufficient time in industrial centers.

The villagers who live in the city for a long time acquire urban manners and ways of living. Such people are often ridiculed in folk songs.

He has become a gentleman, my dear,
He has become a gentleman.
Twenty-four miles away he has built a bungalow,
In that he has kept a mem,⁵⁵ my dear,

52. Krishna Deva Uppadhyaya, *Bhojpuri Gram Geet* (Prayag, Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, 1943), Vol. 1, p. 353.

53. *Bhojpuri Gram Geet*, Vol. 2, p. 316.

54. B. A. Botkin, "Industrial Lore," Funk and Wagnall's *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (New York, 1950), Vol. 1, p. 522.

55. A term used for a European or Europeanized lady.

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He has put on a watch on a chain,
In his hand, my dear, he has taken a cane,
He has prepared his bed and got a prostitute,
He has started saying "good main."^{56, 57}

On the other hand, there are also songs which express the desire of common village folk to use modern amenities. The following Jhumar song, which is popular mostly among the women of the lower castes, serves as an example.

I am king's and queen's daughter,
I can have you fined.
Spread gravel on a pucca road,
On that goes my motor-car,
Get me news from Delhi,
Plant a garden,
Make a cuckoo sit in it,
Let me hear words of love.⁵⁸

Printing has not affected the Indian folk song as much as one might expect, in part because the writings of the modern Indian poets have scarcely reached the villages. This is true at least of the vast area covering several states in which Hindi is the language of sophisticated writing. The spirit and style of modern poetry have deviated so much from the old poetic tradition, partly due to the Western influence, that it has become incomprehensible for the common people in the villages. However, a large number of cheap song books have been published for rural consumption. They are sold in rural fairs and on footpaths in towns. But the writers of these books are not highly educated. Many of them can just read and write and have a predominantly rural background. Often such books contain songs of oral tradition with little change, which, when it occurs, is usually confined to diction. The producers of this rural literature are seldom acquainted with sophisticated poetry. The urban elite also remains almost completely unaware of their literary activity. Thus there is little chance of mutual exchange between the two types of poetry.

Bhikhari Thakur, the most popular folk writer of eastern Uttar Pradesh

56. A corrupt form of "good morning."

57. *Bhojpuri Lok Geet Men Karun Ras*, p. 188.

58. *Bhojpuri Gram Geet*, Vol. 1, p. 292.

and Bihar, who belongs to the Nai (barber) caste can serve as an example. When he was nine years old he was sent to a school, from which he soon returned without having learned anything. For some time he tended the cattle and later took to the profession of his caste and became a barber. Now he wanted to learn to read and write and took lessons from a boy of the Baniya caste. He was much interested in Ramlila, a religious folk drama. When he was thirty years old he started a dance-party of his own and through his songs and plays became known to millions of country people. Bhikhari cannot write chaste Khari Boli Hindi, which is the language of the city people of his region. His writings are not free from anachronisms, such as his mention of the firing of guns during the marriage celebrations of the epic hero Ram. Such anachronisms are common in literature of this type. Printed versions of the lay of Alha in many dialects mention the use of modern weapons such as bombs and pistols in wars fought in medieval times (about the twelfth century A.D.). Most of these versions are anonymous, a characteristic folk trait.

Thus the writers of books popular in the countryside are not much different from the common village folk and their writings are therefore not a serious threat to the spirit of folk literature. Yet some of these writers are responsible for introducing new political and social ideas in the villages, since they are generally more aware of the political and religious reform movements than the common villager. Pamphlets distributed by governmental agencies and political parties have also begun to exert some influence.

Due to oral transmission, the folk song is always being changed. When it is written down, this growth stops. The printing of popular songs must therefore check their normal development. However, printing can play this role only to a limited extent in India, since not many villagers can read. More than eighty per cent of Indians are non-literate, and this percentage must be still higher for the villages, so that even a printed song depends largely on oral transmission for its propagation. However, printing influences the folk song by making available to the villager songs of other places and dialects. Printing has also brought within the reach of the villager many old and new religious writings.

The film song is probably the most serious threat to the existence of folk songs as it becomes more and more popular, even in the villages. It is produced on a commercial basis for mass consumption, has simple words and tunes, and the villager can enjoy it far more than he can the sophisticated poems. The music and themes of many film songs are based on those

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of the folk songs, and these spurious folk songs especially attract the villager.

Not all villages get an opportunity to see a motion picture. Cinema houses have so far been confined to towns. But film songs reach the villages in many other ways. Radio receiving sets, wherever they have reached, have helped their spread. On festive occasions like marriage ceremonies records of film songs are often played on gramophones. The loudspeaker is often used, making them audible to a whole village. Film and radio songs, besides influencing the nature of folk songs, tend to reduce the part of the villager from that of an active participant to that of a passive auditor. Instead of singing for himself he now begins to depend more and more on the radio and the gramophone, which will inevitably lead to the decay of folk songs.

The direct effect of the machine on folk songs has not yet been felt much in India. Agriculture has not yet been mechanized and so the songs connected with sowing, weeding, and reaping have survived. However, the long and beautiful songs sung by women while grinding corn by the hand-worked mill (*Jant*) have suffered. The mechanized flour mill has reached the villages and the hand-worked mill is falling into disuse. Naturally, the songs sung while grinding are dying out. It has been said that the power driven flour mills, while grinding the corn, are also grinding (to destruction) the songs of *Jant*. Similarly, the songs sung at the time of crushing sugarcane with the old press (*kolhu*) are being forgotten. It is significant that modern industry in India, while destroying the old work songs, has not proved conducive to the growth of new ones. It would seem that the folk songs are unable to adapt themselves to the rapidly changing circumstances. Instead of being modified they are dying out.

NOTE: All translations of folk songs given in this text were made by the author.