"Public Presentation of Folklore: Politics of Technology, Culture, and Discourse"

by Eric Miller

Near the centre of a rural village in which I have been conducting folklore fieldwork concerning traditional verbal arts, there lives a young man who often plays recordings of cinema songs, loudly, day and night. The speakers are in his house, but the sound carries well beyond. Judging by the variety of the music he plays, and the fine quality of his sound system, he knows a lot about the music and the technology, and he seems to enjoy very much working with both of them. I am hoping that people such as this young man can be persuaded to join the public presentation of folklore effort -- rather than ignore or oppose this effort, as might seem to be the case at present -- and this paper offers some ideas towards this end.

An aspect of the politics of technology, culture, and discourse is that members of elite groups tend to be able to 1) access technology, 2) guide public culture, and 3) dominate public discourse, as they tend to be able to speak their minds in public through mass media. Performers of folklore within folk communities often do not seem to have these abilities to a very great extent.

Regarding the public presentation of folklore, this paper asks and begins to answer the questions, *Who presents what to whom, and why?,* and, *What technologies are used?* Among the reasons that these issues are important are that they have to do with the basic societal questions: Who -- a member of the group, or an outsider -- defines a group's culture and history to outsiders? Who defines what is acceptable and appropriate behaviour, onstage and off? Who decides what material is significant and admirable enough to be presented in a public situation? Who controls which cultural efforts will be supported by the community as a whole? Who makes

decisions regarding allocation of resources regarding such efforts? Who benefits, status-wise and materially, as a result of these decisions, definitions, and standards? In short: What goes into the shaping of a community's image and identity, and thus, to some extent, its soul?

The paper has three sections. First, it considers ways in which folklore performances occur, and do not occur, among the people of a village. Then, it considers what happens when group folklore is presented -- by group members, and also by various kinds of outsiders -- to outsiders. Finally, a (transcription of a) piece of folklore is presented, followed by a discussion about this presentation.

In this paper, the folk are being thought of as *people of rural villages and cultures*, and folklore is mostly being thought of as the folk's *traditional performing arts*. The piece of folklore that I present is a children's question-and-answer chant, of Kani tribal people of the Kanniyakumari district, Tamil Nadu, India. I am in the process of conducting my doctoral research in a Kani village (as a Ph.D. candidate in Folklore at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA). Even though my fieldwork experience is largely in a village of tribal people, much of what I have to say about folklore here may apply to rural villages throughout Tamil Nadu, and India.

Folk Performance Among the People of a Village

A core of village life is the interaction between mothers and children in and around their homes. In the course of this interaction, mothers often participate in language play with their children: this includes singing songs for them. In the case of infants, the mother's singing is often accompanied by her holding and gently bouncing or rocking the infant, finger-walking on the infant's skin, etc. This activity serves to help teach spoken language to the child, and sometimes to distract the child from crying. In a sense, an infant begins as not being a member of the community, and it is in part through the experience of this folklore that the infant begins to be acculturated into the group. Thus, mothers' verbal arts for children are very practical and functional, and are used in the context of a nurturing and teaching relationship.

Mothers' verbal arts -- and verbal arts that some children perform amongst themselves -- are two of the very few traditional verbal arts that continue to be widely practiced on a daily basis throughout village India. For, at least in my experience,

one is hard put to find in villages much folk performance being performed by people for and with each other anymore. Of course there remains a great deal of folklore built into the local languages themselves, especially in the everyday sayings and metaphors -- in the ways of thinking about things, and in the ways of saying things -- that people often are not even aware of using.

Traditionally, in small villages in Tamil Nadu, community members would often gather in the evenings for sessions of "கதையும் பாட்டும்" ("ka-thai-yum paaT-Tum", "story and song"), which would feature the telling of various types of folktales, and also often the saying of proverbs (Blackburn; please see note no. 1). These events, although often held in and around homes, might, if people from numerous families were present, be said to have occurred in a kind of public -- and the same can be said regarding the afore-mentioned folklore for and by children. In villages, many activities are held part inside the home, part outside the home, and so are part private, part public.

But the recent booms in popularity of television, and FM radio, have greatly decreased the cultural emphasis on group storytelling sessions. Earlier milestones in the fading of the old storytelling culture include the advent of cinema in the 1920's, and the widespread appearance of portable audio cassette players in the 1980's. In India today, even on the outskirts of small villages, the playing of cinema songs on FM radios is a very common practice. At many Hindu weddings -- which in my fieldwork area are often announced with posters featuring photographs of cinema stars -- the standard public entertainment is, again, recordings of cinema songs (from audio cassette and CDs).

It is not only that women today usually do not perform folk verbal arts in public in their villages: in part due to local people's (usually men's) use of technology and culture from outside the local environment, it is often difficult for women to perform folk verbal arts even in private! For due to the use of the electronic sound-producing machines -- whether they are used to play recordings of cinema music, religious music, or other -- there really isn't any such thing as privacy in terms of sound in much of inhabited India anymore. The electronic sounds not only often fill public spaces, they often pervade private spaces also. Many evenings this electronic music is so prevalent that it is almost impossible for mothers to sing lullabies to their children.

In the course of my fieldwork in a village in the beautiful mountain forest countryside of southwest Tamil Nadu, I have often wondered about the loud playing of recordings of cinema songs. If I might be forgiven, here is a bit of speculative psychological analysis about why this machine use is so prevalent: Power is often expressed in terms of the ability to speak and be heard in public spheres. The loud-volume playing of cinema song recordings can be seen as a demonstration of power. It silences the local. It can be seen as an expression of identification and association with, and loyalty to, the urban, modern, and electronic. It can also be seen as an expression of disdain for local culture and traditions, disdain perhaps in part for the local's (including one's own) seeming powerlessness and insignificance.

One reason that it is usually men who are playing the radios and cassette players may be that men have more frequent access to places outside the village, where they can more easily obtain money and purchase batteries. (It seems it is always men who play the recordings of cinema songs at weddings; it is men who carry and install the sound machines; and it seems it is men who own and operate the businesses that provide such services.) It is especially the local women's culture which is silenced by the machines. If a woman has a lively verbal arts scene going with the children of the household, the man of the house might feel marginalized. Thus, the man might turn a radio on loudly, and so to put a halt to aspects of the mother-child communication process from which he might have felt excluded.

Many rural Tamil women share a nasal, high-pitched, wavering style of chanting and singing, varieties of which they have traditionally used both for singing lullabies ("தலாட்டு", "tha-laaT-Tu") and for lamenting over the dead ("ஒப்பாரி", "op-paa-ri"). This expressive nasal sound is often mimicked and ridiculed by boys and men of the community. This ridicule might contribute to the women's general hesitance to be heard in public.

Three contexts in which I have witnessed women singing publicly in my fieldwork village are: 1) in devotional singing sessions outside the village's Hindu temple, a small concrete building; 2) in the course of "கோலாட்டம்" ("koo-laaT-Tam", "kolattam") practice (the village has for years had a dance troupe that performs this genre, in which performers knock sticks together as they sing and dance); and 3) in ceremonies performed by one lady, who lives on the outskirts of the village, and who

summons divine figures during seasonal events, and by request. The first two instances perhaps should not be referred to as being fully "folk" and of the local culture, as both involve the singer reading the words of the songs from books; and in the case of the devotional singing, the words being read, although printed in Tamil, are Sanskrit.

As for the questions: On occasions such as Republic Day, who speaks in public in the village? Who speaks in public about the past and future of the village? Who appears on a stage, and uses a microphone? The answer is: usually only men.

What is a psychological meaning of the technology of a stage and a microphone? What, actually, is a stage? A stage may be raised off the ground, but this is not necessary. A stage is a somehow-demarcated area. The markings indicate that the space is, at least temporarily, meant to be a centre of attention for all of those physically present, and through them -- at least in poetic and spiritual senses -- for all of their ancestors before them, and their descendents to follow. Thus, the timeless collective emotional, intellectual, and spiritual being of a village's people is projected onto, and encapsulated within, a stage in a village. This is one reason why only certain people are permitted enter such spaces and speak from them. To speak from this space is to address, and to create anew, the identity of the group. The use of electronic audio amplification equipment in such situations can serve to increase the status and power of the space and the speaker.

Public Presentation of Folklore to Outsiders

First of all, it should be noted that folk performances for outsiders -- especially outsiders of high status, wealth, and power (such as maharajahs) -- have long been a built-in component of India's folk cultural systems. This traditional performance situation is portrayed in many folktales and legends, in which sometimes the folk performers visit the court, and sometimes the maharajah visits the village. In these stories, the folk performers often receive validation and/or a material gift from the high-status outsider.

In stories in which the maharajah visits a forest, members of the folk may tell him about what has been going on there. Sometimes, in the course of the visit, the outsider witnesses a form of folk worship involving song and dance, and asks to be

told the story of how this form of worship came to be. This, according to legend, was the case in the instance of the Cheran king, Shenguttuvan, who, while visiting the south Indian forest, came upon people worshipping at a shrine for the goddess, Kannagi. King Shenguttuvan eventually requested his brother, Prince Ilango Adigal, a forest ascetic, to write down the story of Kannagi, and the text survives to this day. Prince Ilango Adigal's written version of the story is, in a sense, a textual representation of a community's folklore.

While women still perform some folklore privately and semi-publicly in villages (as noted, often in relation to child rearing), and there are some elderly women who still know many of the songs that used to be sung during women's group activities such as wood gathering, and during life-cycle event celebrations -- it is often men who present folklore to outsiders. In such cases, the type of folklore that is presented, and the manner of presentation, is quite different from some of the folklore performed by women in the village.

This state of events has brought to my mind the idea presented by a number of scholars in recent years who have been attempting to show that in Greece -- beginning in the very early days of the civilisation, around the time of the epic poet, Homer -- women's lamenting has been appropriated (that is, imitated and transformed) by men, who have instead presented (performed and written) funeral orations, and epic poems (Holst-Warhaft 1992; Murnaghan 1999; Weinbaum 2001). Women's lamenting has continued in Greece, but it has often been suppressed by the men who have created and ruled public society. The women's lamenting tends to stress the pain of the experience of the personal loss of the lamenter, and deals with the practical hardships that result from this loss. The men's orations and epics, on the other hand, tend to be delivered in a less rawly-emotional manner, and stress the heroism, glory, and fame of the deceased man, and the excellence of his service to, and sacrifice for, the community (often the nation) and its ideals and principles.

In any case, on a recent trip to Salem (an eleven-hour van ride from the village in the Kanniyakumari district), for a state-wide meeting and performance event involving tribal people, organised by a church, it was only men from the village who went (I went along also). It was explained to me that some of the women of the village had gone to an event in the past at the Salem venue, and had performed there as members of the village dance troupe, but that due to some drinking and rough

behaviour by other people present at that event, the feeling was that the village's women should not attend this time.

In India, it seems it is often taken for granted that men will sometimes go to town, to public places, where they can trade with, work for, and otherwise interact with outsiders, and in the course of doing so, they might, in a sense, suffer some pollution. According to one line of thought, women, on the other hand, as the bearers and often the primary educators of the next generation, should stay at home, where they can remain protected, safe, and pure. There are positive and negative results to this approach. Negative results include the constraints on the women. There is a need to balance these two, at times opposing, needs: 1) to keep the women safe, and 2) to enable women to perform and speak in publics, so that, for one thing, their knowledge and wisdom can be contributed to those publics.

It must be said that in Tamil Nadu many village women do go to nearby traditional markets, both as sellers and buyers. In some markets -- fish markets, for example -- sometimes all of the sellers are women (although in such cases men with knives are often close by -- their job is to clean the fish that customers have purchased). In traditional markets, one must draw attention to oneself and one's products, and both women and men use stylized calls and shouts for this purpose: these calls are an interesting and understudied form of public folklore.

In regard to the trip to Salem, there was some payment involved, and when money is involved in a public presentation of folklore, one must ask: Who is paying, and who is being paid?

In India, large institutions (organised religions, branches of the Government, non-government organisations, etc.) tend to own and/or control the large venues where folk performers can gather, perform on a large stage, eat, and sleep. These institutions also have the publicity mechanisms needed to gather the performers and audience members. Managers of the institutions enable folk performers to communicate in public spheres, but the rules concerning the performers' expression are set by these managers. For example, at the Salem function, no modern lyrics or dialogue were permitted in the song-dance-drama performances that were presented by the various groups during the evening and night. In the afternoon, during the conference component of the gathering, a brief play with modern narration and dialogue had been presented. This play had portrayed some people's responses to

some social problems: it could be inferred that this play had presented points of view condoned and endorsed by the organizers of the gathering.

Three types of participants often involved in large-scale public presentations of folklore are: 1) the institutions which own and/or control the performance venues; 2) the middle-people, who act as go-betweens between the institutions and the folk performers; and 3) the folk performers themselves.

The middle-people -- or culture-brokers, as they are sometimes called -- are sometimes social workers, and sometimes workers in non-government organizations. They receive the telephone calls, faxes, e-mails, and mailings that invite the folk performers. They then make the arrangements with the local people, and hire the vans and buses. They also often pocket a large percentage of the cash that is given by the organising institution. The middle-people can communicate with a wide variety of people, as often they speak Hindi and/or English, the local state language, and at least a bit of the local folk dialect or language. Because of their linguistic, social, financial, telecommunication, and transportation capabilities, they are in the position to make all of the arrangements.

Following the paradigm (mentioned above) of men operating in publics, and women for the most part being limited to domestic and natural spheres, the middle-people (who tend to live in large towns) seem to be playing the male role, and the folk performers (who tend to live in small villages) seem to be playing the female role.

It must be said, on behalf of the middle-people, that they do provide needed and valuable services for all concerned. But all around the world, it is a fact of life that performers are often misled and underpaid by management. Performers tend to be so in love with performing that they are often willing to perform almost for free, and this sometimes makes them vulnerable to possible financial exploitation by middle-people and event organizers.

A solution is for members of folk communities to be more deliberate and assertive in their dealings with the middle-people and organisers -- for example, when possible, requesting to discuss financial matters before the event. Also, members of folk communities should develop their own managerial (including communicational and technological) abilities. Perhaps in some cases such individuals could become apprentices to established middle-people, or even business partners with them.

Of the many folk performances I have witnessed in India, in very few cases has public discussion occurred between the folk performers and the audience members before or after the performances. Such conversation could help audience members better understand the contexts in which the folklore has developed, and this contextualisation could make the experience of exposure to folklore more enjoyable, interesting, and educational.

The infrequency of such public conversation in the past can in part be ascribed to language difficulties, but language difficulties can be overcome through the use of various types of translation methods (please see below). Conversation with folklore performers may also at times have been avoided for sociological reasons. That is, some audience members may at times have been shy about having personal interaction with folk performers. Perhaps at times this might have been the case because the folk performers might have been perceived to be of a lower socio-economic class. Perhaps at times it might have been the case due to the fear that the folk performers might raise troubling social, environmental, or political issues. In any event, folk performers should no longer be seen and treated as objects. Although there may be awkward moments in the course of dialoguing, folk performers are generally likely to do their best to make the public discussion of folklore an enjoyable experience for all.

<u>A Public Presentation of Folklore</u>

The presentation method being used below displays the material repeatedly in three different forms, each on its own line: 1) *Tamil letters*; 2) *English sounds* (in Roman letters); and 3) *English words* (in Roman letters). Usually, I also give a fourth line, composed of the colloquial English sentence, but in this case this seemed unnecessary.

The second line is actually not a direct phonetic (sound) representation of English, but rather follows the International Phonetic System. In the version of the IPS being used here, 1) a long Tamil vowel is represented by a doubled Roman vowel letter; 2) a Tamil consonant that calls for the tongue to be directed up and back is represented by a capitalized Roman consonant letter; and 3) "ந" (which is produced with the tongue halfway up and back) is represented by "<u>n</u>".

In each of the following eleven questions-and-answers, one child says the question, and the other children say the answer.

1

எ ன் ன   வே ட் டெ ?
en   na   veeT   Te
   what   hunting

ப ந் நி   வே ட் டெ .
pa<u>n</u>   <u>n</u>i   veeT   Te
  pig   hunting

2

எ ன் ன   ப ந் நி ?
en   na   pa<u>n</u>   <u>n</u>i
   what   pig

ஊ ர்   ப ந் நி
uur   pa<u>n</u>   <u>n</u>i
town   pig

3

எ ன் ன   ஊ ரு ?
en   na   uu   ru
   what   town

அ ரி சி   ஊ ரு .
a   ri   si   uu   ru
  rice   town

4

எ ன் ன   அ ரி ?
en   na   a   ri
   what   rice

பொ ன்   அ ரி .
pon   a   ri
gold   rice

5

எ ன் ன பொ ன் னு?
en na pon nu
what gold

கா க் க பொ ன் னு.
kaak ka pon nu
shining gold

6

எ ன் ன கா க் கா?
en na kaak kaa
what crow

rhyme #1 ...க / ...கா
...ka ...kaa

அ ண் ட ங் கா க் கா.
aN Dang kaak kaa
big crow

7

எ ன் ன அ ண் ட ம்?
en na aN Dam
what pot

rhyme #2 ...ட ங் / ...ட ம்
...Dang ...Dam

சோ த் த ண் ட ம்.
choot thaN Dam
rice pot

8

எ ன் ன சோ று?
en na choo Ru
what rice

ப ழ ஞ் சோ று.
pa LRZanj choo Ru
old rice

9

எ ன் ன ப ழ ம்?
en na pa LRZam
what fruit

rhyme #3 ...ழ ஞ் / ...ழ ம்
...LRZanj ...LRZam

க றி வா ழ ப் ப ழ ம்.
ka Ri vaa LRZap pa LRZam
unripe banana

10

என்ன கறி?
   en   na   ka Ri
     what   gravy

pun #1   கறி
           ka Ri
     unripe / gravy

முட்டெ கறி
 muT Te   ka Ri
   egg   gravy

11

என்ன முட்டெ?
  en na   muT Te
    what   egg

கானாங்கோழி முட்டெ.
kaa naang koo LRZi   muT Te
   forest   chicken   egg

It is amazing to me that the young children who perform this chant seem to understand its rhymes and pun, which change the meaning of what is being spoken about in an instant. These sudden changes contribute to the fun -- and certainly to the linguistic and other cultural educational value -- of the chant.

The first *meaning-changing rhyme* occurs in questions-and-answers no's. 5 and 6: "காக்க" ("kaak-ka", "shining"), becomes "காக்கா" ("kaak-kaa", "crow").

The second meaning-changing rhyme occurs in questions-and-answer no's. 6 and 7: "அண்டங்" ("aN-Dang", "big"), becomes "அண்டம்" ("aN-Dam", "pot").

The third meaning-changing rhyme occurs in questions-and-answers no's. 8 and 9: "பழஞ்" ("pa-LRZanj", "old"), becomes "பழம்" ("pa-LRZam", "fruit").

Then, a meaning-changing pun occurs in questions-and-answers no's. 9 and 10. "கறி" ("ka-Ri") is actually a triple pun word: it can mean 1) "unripe" (as in, a fruit that is still green), 2) "gravy" (either vegetarian or non-vegetarian), or 3) "meat" (such as mutton). In this chant, first it means "unripe", then "gravy". These meanings are determined by the contexts, that is, from the words that are used in the phrases

along with "ka-Ri". In the first case, the question-and-answer is "What fruit?, An unripe banana". Then, in the following question, the meaning of "ka-Ri" is suddenly different: "What gravy?, Egg gravy".

In this chant, one word is taken from each answer, and a new question is asked about that word. A similar "chain" pattern is used in a genre of Bhakti poetry known as "அந்தாதி" ("an-thaa-thi"), which was especially used by Abirami Pattar. This raises the questions of origin; and of exchanges between genres, and between levels of culture. As has been posited in the case of lament and epic, it may be that this informal children's chant folk form has been picked up by people who have used it for more refined, formal, professional, artistic, ideological, and/or religious public expression. It may also be that there have been back-and-forth exchanges between the various levels of culture. In recent times, a Tamil television game show ('பாட்டுக்கு பாட்டு", "paaT-Tuk-ku paaT-Tu", "Paattukku Paattu"), which concerns cinema songs, has been built around versions of this same chain pattern.

This chant presented above was performed in a form of spoken Tamil, and the Tamil letters shown are a direct transcription of what was spoken. As is often the case, the spoken language does not always follow the same grammatical rules as standard written Tamil. For example, in question-and-answer no. 4, the word used for rice is "அரி" ("a-ri"), which is an abbreviated version of "அரிசி" ("a-ri-si"). (The full form of the word is used first, before the abbreviated form is used, in question-and-answer no. 3.)

Forms of spoken Tamil often differ from standard written Tamil especially in regard to matters of pronunciation. As the Kani people who performed this piece of folklore live in southwestern Tamil Nadu, near the border with Kerala, their version of Tamil is sometimes flavoured with aspects of the Malayalam language. This is the case with the transliterations, "choot-thaN-Dam" and "choo-Ru", for the words, "rice-pot" ("சோத்தண்டம்"), and "rice" ("சோறு"), in questions-and-answers no's. 7 and 8, respectively. The standard Tamil pronunciations are "soot-thaN-Dam", and "soo-Ru".

However, sometimes the accent of these folk performers is neither standard Tamil, nor fully Malayam-ised. This is the case in regard to the ending of the word for "hunting" (question-and-answer no. 1): the standard written Tamil form of the word is

"வேட்டை" ("veeT-Tai"); a Malayalam-ised pronunciation is "வேட்ட" ("veeT-Ta"); and -- as given above -- a Kani pronunciation is "வேட்டெ" ("veeT-Te").

The same is the case for the word for "egg" (question-and-answer no. 11): the standard Tamil is "முட்டை" ("muT-Tai"); a Malayalam-ised pronunciation is "முட்ட" ("muT-Ta"); and -- as also given above -- a Kani pronunciation is "முட்டெ" ("muT-Te").

Discussing the Presentation

What are some of the politics of technology, culture, and discourse in regard to the above presentation? What does it mean that I have shown this in public? What happens when outsiders select and, using new technology, display some folklore material, and take it upon themselves to comment upon this material?

In my opinion, a top priority when presenting a people's folklore is to present the material in as positive a way as possible, so as to avoid causing any possible embarrassment. One area in which this issue may arise is in regard to the question of whether or not transcriptions should show the language as it is actually spoken, even though some readers might perceive this speech as being incorrect. It depends on the situation, but in many cases it may be best to show both the spoken and the standard forms of the language, and explain the differences -- pointing out the often ingenious and consistent rules of the spoken language.

Intelligence tests that require the person who is being tested to write, often do not detect that person's intelligence if he or she is of an oral-centric culture; but micro-analysis of transcriptions of oral-centric individuals' verbal activities often do show a great deal of intelligence. The children's chant presented above strikes me as being an intelligent, creative, and sweet activity. Consideration of this chant might bring to mind our common humanity, as versions of chain chants-songs-games are known throughout much of Tamil Nadu, India, and the world. I certainly recall -- as an English-speaking child growing up in New York City -- playing the somewhat annoying game of asking, "Why?", in response to each successive answer that was given to me by my mother or father. (For example, "Why do I have to eat such-and-

such a vegetable? Because it is good for you. Why is it good for me? Because it has vitamins. Why does it have vitamins?" Etc.)

In my experience, there is not, among either adults or children of folk communities, a great deal of secrecy or possessiveness in relation to children's chants-songs-games -- once people realize that one has a sincere interest in the material and is not out to make fun of what some people might consider foolishness. As mentioned, verbal arts for and by children serve to help acculturate children into the community, and so whoever is exposed to this material is also in a small way being educated into the group, and community members generally do not seem to have a problem with well-behaving outsiders receiving some of this sort of education. However, whenever folklore is to be presented publicly, members of the folk community should have a common understanding in advance regarding which aspects of the traditional culture can be shared with outsiders, and which aspects should be kept private within the community.

Public presentation of folklore can be greatly enhanced through the use various types of simultaneous translation systems. One method is to use a computer with which one can type in various languages (such as the one being used for writing this paper), and a projector and a screen, so that outsiders who cannot understand the group's spoken language can read, in a language they do understand, what is being said by the performers, and at the same time can listen to and watch the performers.

Folk performers should have some say in how the folklore is presented to, and interpreted for, audience members. I apologise that mine is the only commenting voice that is being heard in this paper: I would prefer for my writings concerning village folklore to contain quotes from individual local people, and in general to be more collaboratory than this paper. Along these lines, I have recently co-authored a paper with a young man in the village who has been my primary fieldwork research assistant and partner (Miller and Kani).

Conclusions

Two types of public presenters of folklore from outside a folk community are middle-people and researchers. I believe that both have a responsibility to help members of the folk community become co-presenters of the folklore.

As a community's folklore is being presented to outsiders, it can also be presented to children of the folk community. That is, the performance event can be used for two purposes instead of just one. The outsider audience members' interest in the folklore can stimulate the folk community children's interest.

Using computers (featuring fonts in a variety of languages) and projectors for public presentation of folklore introduces a good deal of technological expertise, and a certain kind of glamour, into a folk community. It is good for this glamour to put at the service of, and thus be invested in, the folklore material. Doing so communicates that the folklore is worthy of the recording and display technology; and this can cause members of the folk community, as well as outsiders, to have more respect for the folklore.

Public presentation of a community's folklore can give increased visibility and status to that community. The resulting benefits may include improved public services, and the gaining of presentation-related skills and tourism-related income.

Members of folk communities should be trained in intellectual, as well technological, aspects of research methodology. For example, their skills in various oral languages should be built upon, and training in reading and writing should be given to the degree that there is interest. Oral and literary language skills are helpful in transcribing (from the oral to the written) and translating (from one language to another) the words of folklore performances.

It is fine if members of folk communities who are interested in learning and practicing public presentation of folklore skills are not interested in actually performing folklore. Interested members of folk communities should, as they are receiving training in folklore presentation skills, be helped to get and use some communication equipment of their own. They should be helped to join the global electronic communication system, to participate in interactive telecommunication discussions about folklore (including about folklore development and presentation practices). All the while, members of folk communities should be encouraged to deepen their knowledge about their own local cultures -- for a key to their successes as global citizens, as paradoxical as it may sound, can precisely be their cultivation of these local cultures. In other words, such people should be helped to arrive in the Digital Age with something to contribute to the global conversation. Members of folk communities

should not just be the commented upon, but also the commentators; not just consumers, but also producers.

Let us especially seek to enlist in the effort to present folklore publicly the young people of the community who love cinema music and electronics so much -- the local young people who at present play recordings of cinema songs so loudly day and night. By virtue of their interest in, and involvement with, cinema music, these young people are already well into our shared new world. These young people can act as bridges, links, interfaces between the traditional cultures of their parents and grandparents, and the modern cosmopolitan world. They can help to present the folklore of their local communities to members of ever wider publics -- including international publics, for this is quite possible with good translation methods, and the use of the Internet for marketing and distribution. Possibilities for international travel (the folklore performers visiting others), and for tourism development (others visiting the folklore performers), are also there. These young people will also be well-positioned, if they so desire, to creatively apply aspects of their community's folklore to cinema, disco, rock, world, and/or fusion music, and also to engage in artistic and commercial experiments in all of the other arts.

Public presentation of folklore done in partnership with members of folk communities can very effectively utilise these communities' human and cultural resources, helping the individuals and groups involved to develop and fulfil themselves, for the benefit of all. Members of folk communities should be encouraged and assisted to bring their traditional community identities into the modern world, as state, national, and international public spheres are enriched by the active participation of a wide variety of peoples and cultures, by the addition of these unique points of view and abilities. These are some ideals for the politics of technology, culture, and discourse, in reference to the public presentation of folklore.

Note

1) Stuart Blackburn, a USA scholar based in London, recently published the extremely valuable book, Moral Fictions: Tamil Folktales from the Oral Tradition. This book is composed primarily of (an English translation of) transcriptions of sessions in which folktales had been told (without the singing). However, these

storytelling events had not been found occurring naturally in just any village: the performances occurred at the request of the visiting scholar, and the performers (who had been located with the help of local scholars) in some cases had not told the stories for years.

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Eric Miller <emiller@sas.upenn.edu>, a Ph.D. candidate in Folklore at the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, USA), is nearing completion of his doctoral research project with Kani people of Tamil Nadu's Kanniyakumari district. His dissertation will centre around children's chants-songs-dances-games, and on how such activity can help children to learn spoken language.