

structure of the Badaga proverb, in which the bipartite form is discussed in detail as the most common (37-38). Hockings does not avail himself of the recent proverb studies in this analysis, although to his credit, he does come to some of the same ideas. Dundes (1975) deals directly with the bipartite structure that Hockings describes as characteristic of the English proverbs that he cites. Hockings has hit upon what clearly is the "basic" structure of not only Badaga proverbs, but of many other paramiological systems. Together with this bipartite structure, Hockings suggests that alliteration is the most common rhetorical feature. In fact, he suggests, that the balance of the two parts is rarely achieved without the use of alliteration. Among the other features of note are the use of cliché in his collection, and a short discussion of simile which often adds to the structural parallels.

The collection of proverbs and proverbial phrase is made accessible with the very careful discussion glossing each text. Hockings has produced a carefully edited collection that represents a significant addition to the world's stock of proverb collections.

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KUMAR, NITA, *The Artisans of Banaras. Popular Culture and Identity, 1880-1986*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988. xix+279 pages. Figures, plates, appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. Cloth US \$34.00; ISBN 0-691-05531-9.

It must be said to the credit of Nita Kumar, who is a Mellon Fellow in History at Brown University in the USA, that she has undertaken three progressive tasks in this book. The first is that she concentrates attention on leisure-time activities, a dimension which has not been adequately explored by research-scholars. The second is that she takes up the artisans of Banaras and is thus concerned with what she calls "popular culture" rather than with the culture of the elite or the bourgeoisie. And the third is that, although her Indian disciplinary background and experience has been history, she ventures in this study to bring two disciplines into relationship with each other—history and anthropology.

It is a happy augury that of late anthropologists have begun to arouse themselves from their dogmatic slumbers into which they were lulled by their long-drawn and overweening interest in the natural sciences, and to realize that there is more in man than a mere determined automaton, a fact which has lain far too long unattended right beneath their noses. It is thus appropriate that Nita Kumar should take as her ob-

jective the unveiling of structure in history and of history in structure, even while eschewing the use of elegant schemes of analyses after the fashion of Marshall Sahlins. Since history is basically a flux (you cannot step into the same river twice) in which human creativity activates itself and erects structures and since it would seem that at the present time a global society is struggling to be born, Kumar's emphases are dialectically in keeping with the spirit of the times.

The artisans of Banaras with whom she is concerned are the weavers, metalworkers, and woodworkers, and the time-span in which she examines their leisure-time activities and their identity is 1880–1986, a time-span of slightly more than a century. The silk-weavers, it must be pointed out, are mainly Muslims; whereas the metalworkers and woodworkers are Hindus. They have been knit together in a common identity, and continue to do so even today to a large extent, by “banarasipan” which is a style of life common to the artisans of Banaras who also, alternatively, call themselves Banarasis for this reason. And if a certain measure of separateness and corresponding animus has crept into their ranks, the cause is the Hindu-Muslim politics which emerged in the second part of the period here considered and not so much their religious ideology or institutions.

So far as their popular culture is concerned, Kumar finds that in the first half of the period it included all the residents of Banaras but that in the last four or five decades, the élite have tended to distance themselves from it so that popular culture is now regarded as lower class. While identity is based on productive processes and social structure, the artisan unexpectedly loves his way of life because it enables him to assert his freedom. And Banaras to him is not so much the Banaras of the pilgrims but is largely characterized by neighbourhood consciousness. As an artisan the Banarasi sees that his main advantage is that his time is his own, and so he lends himself to his leisure-time activities with enthusiasm because they mean much to him.

Hence, for example, their zestful attachment to *bahri alang* or, as an informant put it, “People like to go on picnics.” *Bahari alang jana* is the activity of going out and is a matter of mood, time, and a ritualized pattern of activities. Thus the *bahri alang* is an occasion for grinding *bhang*, an intoxicant derived from the hemp plant, for defecating and bathing and for washing clothes vigorously with a lot of soap till they become very clean. As Kumar puts it, “Bahri alang is always described as being the quintessentially Banarasi activity: to be a Banarasi means to enjoy bahri alang, and bahri alang is that which is most loved by Banarasis” (89). To the artisans themselves this feeling for being outdoors is not connected with utilitarian values but arises from their idea of time. The core of this idea is appropriateness, and appropriateness signifies necessity at one extreme and the aesthetic at the other. Thus *bahri alang* is rooted to the aesthetic dimension of time or to the ideology of freedom and leisure. But since *mauj* or *masti* or the philosophy of pleasure is characteristic of Banarasis in general, the attachment to it by the artisans is fortified by the nature of their occupation, that is, by the fact that they are masters of their time. That the Muslims share these interpretations of time, space, and pleasure with their Hindu counterparts vindicates their character as a Banarasi attribute in general. One notes that with an environment progressively less encouraging to it, *bahri alang* has begun to decline in recent times, and this implies, as Kumar rightly points out, that a structural change in the meanings of space, time, the body, and pleasure has begun to manifest itself.

In her hermeneutic quest for meanings, Kumar next deals with institutionalized body-building and wrestling. In this direction, too, the essential qualities of working-class culture are exemplified, and these are in Hobsbawm's words “a continuing means of asserting oneself as a human being, as an agent in the world and not the subject

of others' actions, as a discipline of the soul, a daily testing, an expression of the values and sense of life, a way to perfection" (3). Notwithstanding their poverty, we thus see in this spirit the artisans' assertion of their essential humanness. Like *bahri alang*, the *akharas* or arenas for body-building and wrestling have also become lower-class activities and have begun to decline as a consequence of the cessation of élite participation and patronage.

In dealing with fairs and festivals and the world of music in Banaras, Kumar uncovers more or less the same attributes and developments. These are the ideas of appropriateness in time, the importance of the neighborhood, the insignificance of caste and religious divisions, the ideal of certain pleasures as ends in themselves and the progressive separation of upper and lower classes. Passing to the four major festivals of Banaras, she considers them from the structural, functional, and existential standpoints, and focussing attention on the Nakkatayya, the largest festival of Banaras, she registers the fact that they have not declined greatly, but demonstrate subtler transformations which indicate far-reaching changes in social structure and its corresponding ideologies. Penultimately, she considers celebrations of a communal, caste, and occupational character and concludes that the question of identity is far from being a simple one, as is to be expected in a complex urban environment rendered more complex by the incursions of modernization.

Although the notion of modernization does not figure in the pages of this book conspicuously—there are only three references to it in the index—and although Kumar at the very outset discounts her interest in "universal patterns" and "a predictable course of modernization," it would appear highly probable that the elite's declining participation and patronage in many of the patterns of behavior elaborated in this book can be ascribed to the impact of that phenomenon at first, second, or third removes. This is, of course, not to affirm, as it was affirmed by earlier theorists, that modernization must needs take a predictable course wherever its impact is felt. Wiser counsels have come to prevail, and today one perceives that the impact of modernization is much more complex than was believed earlier.

And it is because Kumar lends her allegiance to the notion that human situations are complex and that it is necessary to interpret them hermeneutically, that is in terms of symbols and meanings, without simultaneously disregarding material and other constraints that this book strongly commends itself for its sobriety, all-round vision and relevance. The artisans of Banaras, as depicted in this book, teach us many things. But the most important lesson that they offer us is that the human spirit is a force to reckon with at all times.

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