Some Characteristic Meters of Hindi Riddle Prosody*

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The riddle as a form of folklore has long been a subject of considerable interest among folklorists, linguistis, and specialists in area studies. Although most of the riddle scholarship thus far published appears to be little more than long lists of riddles, raw data presented with little or no analysis, there have been a number of excellent formalistic treatments of folk riddles. Most of these studies have been primarily concerned with delineating types and varieties of riddles.[1] Unfortunately, relatively few attempts have been made to analyze in detail the formal features of individual riddle types, such as the true riddle, for example. Moreover, when folklorists on those rare occasions have considered formal features, they have invariably addressed themselves to folkloristic form rather than linguistic form. The concern has been with the nature of the riddle open-

*We beg to excuse that not all accents applied in Hindi transcription could be printed with our technical facilities.

1. Samples of this scholarship include: Robert Petsch, *Neue Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Volksrätsels* (Berlin 1899); Archer Taylor, "The Varieties of Riddles", in Thomas A. Kirby and Henry BosleyWoolf, eds., *Philologica: The Malone Anniversary Studies* (Baltimore 1949), pp. 1–8; Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, Über das Volksrätsel", *Beiträge zur Sprachlichen Volksüberlieferung* (Berlin 1953), pp. 106–120; Laurits Bodker, *The Nordic Riddle: Terminology and Bibliography* (Copenhagen 1964); Mathilde Hain, *Rätsel* (Stuttgart 1966); Roger D. Abrahams and Alan Dundes, "Riddles", in Richard M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore and Folklife:* and Introduction (Chicago 1972), pp. 129–143.

ing and closing formulae and with the types of semantic opposition discernable in the structure of riddle content.[2] The formal features of riddle *language,* that is, the linguistic characteristics of riddles, have been largely ignored by folklorists.

With few exceptions, what little work has been done on riddle language or riddle texture (as opposed to riddle text and riddle context) is by linguists rather than folklorists.[3] Yet in none of these textural studies does one find any extended consideration of the metrical characteristics of riddles. This is somewhat surprising in view of the fact that there have been metrical studies of other folkloristic materials. Most of these studies, however, have been limited to the genres of folksong and oral epic.[4] Inasmuch as there has been some interest in the metrics of folk poetry, it is all the more striking that there has been no extensive investigation of riddle metrics, for it has long been recognized that riddles share many formal features with poetry.[5]

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2. See Robert Petsch, *op. cit.;* Robert A. Georges and Alan Dundes, "Toward a Structural Definition of the Riddle", *Journal of American Folklore* 76 (1963), pp. 111–118; Elli Köngäs-Maranda, "The Logic of Riddles", in Pierre Maranda and Elli Köngäs-Maranda, eds., *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition* (Philadelphia 1971), pp. 189–232.

3. The most impressive of the works devoted to riddle texture is Charles T. Scott, *Persian and Arabic Riddles: A Language-Centered Approach to Genre Definition* (Bloomington 1965).

4. Typical of the metrical scholarship in folklore are George T. Stewart, "The Meter of the Popular Ballad", *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 40 (1925), 933–962; Robert Austerlitz, *Ob-Urgic Metrics: the Metrical Structure of Ostyak and Vogul Folk-Poetry* (Helsinki 1958); John L. Fischer, "Meter in Eastern Carolinian Oral Literature", *Journal of American Folklore* 72 (1959), pp. 47–52; Robbins Burling, "The Metric of Children's Verse: A Cross-Linguistic Study", *American Anthropologist* 68 (1966), pp. 1418–1441. For a sample of the extensive literature devoted to Slavic epic metrics alone, see Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (New York 1965), p. 282, n. 4.

5. Archer Taylor, "Riddles and Poetry", *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 11 (1947), pp. 245–247. S. J. Sackett has attempted to delineate some of these shared features, but his metrical analyses are of English proverbs only and not of riddles. See his "Poetry and Folklore: Some Points of Affinity", *Journal of American Folklore* 77 (1964), pp. 143–153. For a recent analysis of the metrical features of a non-European riddle corpus, see Nha-Trang Cong-Huyen-Ton-Nu, "Poetics in Vietnamese Riddles", *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 35 (1971), pp. 141–156.

Nowhere has there traditionally been more interest in metrical form than in India. There are literally dozens of treatises written on Sanskrit and Vedic meters.[6] However, metrics as an area of inquiry is almost exclusively limited to *literary* materials (mostly classical and medieval). One looks in vain for any reference in the vast scholarship devoted to Indian literature for a discussion of the metrical patterns underlying *oral* riddles. One reason for this may be the bias towards the study of literary rather than oral poetics. Certainly it is not because of any lack of riddles in the various Indic traditions. Indeed, the art of riddling is of considerable antiquity in India. The use of riddles on ceremonial occasions is described in the Rigveda, which dates from before 1000 B.C.[7] Some of these same Rigveda riddles were employed in the Ashvamedha, an old Aryan ritual celebrating a king's domination over less powerful rulers.[8] The tradition of an association between riddles and religion continued well on into the eleventh century. Riddles in this tradition were primarily concerned with the nature of Brahman and the world.[9]

Equally important is the great literary use of riddles in India. In the epics, for example, the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana, one finds hundreds of riddle verses. In the Mahābhārata it is explained why riddles are scattered throughout the work. Supposedly, at the author's request, Brahma asked Gaṇesha to act as scribe for the epic. Gaṇesha agreed, on condition that the author would dictate fast enough so that he would at no time have to stop writing. Veda Vyāsa, the author, agreed to this, but countered with the stipulation that Gaṇesha should understand every word he wrote. The author periodically posed

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6. Pinglala, *Chandas-sāstra* (Bombay 1938); H. D. Velankar, *Jayadāmana: A Collection of Four Ancient Texts on Sanskrit Metres* (Bombay 1949); *Jānāsrayī Chandoviciti* (Trivandrum 1949); *Ratnamanjusā* (Kashi 1944); *Kavidarpana* (Jodhpur 1950).

7. Archer Taylor, *The Literary Riddle Before 1600* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1948), p. 13. See also Mathilde Hain, *op. cit.*, p. 52, for further references.

8. Verrier Elwin and W. G. Archer, "Extracts from a Riddle Note Book", *Man in India* 23 (1943), p. 316.

9. K. D. Upadhyaya, *Loka Sāhitya kī Bhūmikā* (Allahabad 1957), p. 161.

riddles, and while Ganesha pondered them had time to compose new verses.[10]

The important role of riddles in Indian rhetoric and poetics is also reflected in the fact that poets were specifically expected to know the art of riddle composition. In Kādambanī, a seventh century Sanskrit novel, riddling is mentioned as an integral part of the training of a poet. Apparently, poets in the royal courts sometimes held riddle competitions. Also, riddling was listed as the twenty-seventh art of the sixty-four which females were urged to study in addition to the art of making love, in the Kāma Sūtra.[11]

Despite the long tradition of riddling in India, there have been comparatively few extensive collections of Indic riddles. With respect to Hindi riddles in particular, probably one of the best known "collections" is the one by Amir Khusro (1255–1326), containing 295 texts.[12] From the district of Bulandshahr in the western part of Uttar Pradesh in north India there are few published collections of riddles. Yet riddling is very common in this district and continues to be popular among people of all ages and castes. A sample of this rich tradition may serve not only to illustrate the nature of the riddles typical of this and neighboring districts, but also to furnish an appropriate point of departure for a consideration of metrical patterns in riddles.[13]

The primary function of riddling in villages of this region of India combines competition and entertainment. After the evening meal, riddling may be begun. In home situations, the participants may be seated or they may be in bed, getting ready to go to sleep. All the members of the family and their guests, if any, may participate. Usually a person will pose a riddle

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10. Durga Bhagwat, *The Riddle in Indian Life, Lore and Literature* (Bombay 1965), pp. 10–29.

11. See Ved Prakash Vatuk, "Amir Khusro and Indian Riddle Tradition", *Journal of American Folklore* 82 (1969), pp. 142–154.

12. Brajratna Das, *Khusro kī Hindī Kavitā* (Kashi 1922).

13. The riddles were all collected by Kashi Ram Kaushik and Vatuk in the fall of 1964 and summer of 1965 from various individuals living near the village of Gesupur. We are very grateful to Kaushik for his valuable aid and support.

to someone of the same age or younger than himself, although there are no formal restrictions as to who may address a riddle to whom (except in the case of the daughter-in-law, as noted below). An adult may ask another adult or he may ask a child to solve a riddle. When visitors—who are normally relatives—are present, informal teams may compete. Thus if one of the permanent residents of the house puts a riddle to a visitor, he expects the other members of the household to refrain from giving the answer, since they have presumably heard the riddle before. It is these occasions of visiting which provide an important source of new riddles for the village community.

Riddling may also take place outside the home, in which case there would be members of more than one family participating. In the winter, a group would sit around a fire, the adults smoking their *hukkās* (water pipes). Informal competitions may arise in such a gathering, but these would rarely pit one family against another. An important distinction between the inside and outside riddling sessions is that women do not participate in the latter. Inside the home, however, women can pose riddles among each other and to male family members, subject to the conventional kinship avoidances governing affinal female speech behavior. In this region there is patrilocal residence, and a woman upon marriage goes to live with her husband's family. The daughter-in-law of the house is not permitted to show her face or to speak to a senior male member of her husband's household. Daughters of the household, on the other hand, are free to speak to older males and to participate in riddling with them. If a daughter-in-law has a riddle to offer, she may whisper it to a child or to her mother-in-law, or to a younger brother of her husband (a *junior* male member of the household), who can propose the riddle in her place. Similarly, if she wishes to give an answer to a riddle posed by someone else, she must utilize the same indirect communication channel.

There are a number of formal markers of a riddle session. A member of the group may signal the beginning of a riddle session by saying:

(Hindi) mhāri bāt batāvaigā?
(Literal translation) our matter (tale, riddle) will tell
(Free translation) Will you guess our riddle?

Someone else, or several together, will enthusiastically answer:

hā
yes!

The initial speaker will then pose a riddle. If he thinks that one or more individuals present already know the answer to the riddle he may address them as follows:

tū nā batāvai!
Thou not tell
Don't you tell!

If those trying to guess the answer to the riddle have proposed several incorrect answers, they may ask for clues:

atā patā?
whereabouts?
Any hint? (e.g., where is it found, where does one use it?)[14]

The riddler normally answers this request with such general information as:

jangal mẽ
forest in
In the forest.

ghar mẽ
house in
In the house.

sab ke dhorai
all of near
Everyone has it.

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14. One famous riddler is reported to end his riddles with the following formula:

So says Ghāsī, inhabitant of Savāsī village.
It's near, but you will find it after much searching.

See Ram Naresh Tripathi, *Grāma Sāhitya,* Pt. III (Deihi 1952), pp. 321–323.

If the guessers are still unable to answer the riddle, they may ask the riddler to tell them the answer. They may do this using any one of a number of phrases. For example, one such is:

ke hai?
what is?
What is it?

The riddler will then ask the following rhetorical question:

hār gayā
defeated?
Do you give up?

The unsuccessful guessers will answer affirmatively, *hā* (Yes!). At this point, the riddler may prolong the agony by asking additional rhetorical questions to which his victims must answer "yes" before they finally learn the answer. A typical example is:

jhak mār gayā?
whim is it killed?
Done your best? Had enough?

If the riddler wishes to humiliate his victims even more, he may ask,

kutte/billī	ke gū	mẽ	laut gayā?
dog/cat	of excrement	in	lay down?

Did you lie down in dog (or cat, or dog and cat) excrement?

After the guessers say "yes" to this, the riddler announces the answer. Usually there is some pleasurable surprise in hearing the answer. Occasionally there is some dispute about the aptness of the answer, and the riddler may even be asked to "prove" that his answer is correct. In this event, the riddler will either explain the riddle or fall back on the traditional "That's the way I learned it!"

If one of the guessers answers the riddle correctly, then there may be jubilant exclamations praising his cleverness by various members of the group. Anyone may then ask another riddle. There is no formal or necessary order of riddle asking.

As for the riddles themselves, the majority are metaphorical nonoppositional riddles.[15] Few have opening formulae or introductory frame elements. On the other hand, there are fairly elaborate closing formulae or concluding frame elements. Typically, a prize is offered for the successful solution while a punishment is threatened for those who fail to solve the riddle. It is tempting to try to correlate the relatively higher frequency of closing formulae with general Hindu worldview. The end would appear to be more important than the beginning, but at the same time the end is much more rigidly bound by ritual formula. In any case, perhaps the most dominant stylistic characteristic of Hindi riddles is their meter. This will be discussed at some length. However, before discussing the individual riddle texts, it may be well to spell out some of the relevant metrical principles.

In Hindi poetry there are two kinds of metrical systems. One of these is *vārṇika,* which is based upon units of three syllables (*varṇas*). One unit of three *varṇas* is called a *gaṇa.* A *varṇa* (that is, a syllable) may contain either one long or one short vowel. Using the traditional Indic s-shaped line (S) to indicate a syllable with a long vowel and the traditional vertical line (|) for a syllable with a short vowel, one can indicate the eight possible *varṇa* combinations:

| S S
S S S
S S |
S | S
| S |
S | |
| | S
| | |

Whatever the sequence of *varṇas* in the first line of a poem, it is repeated in all succeeding lines of the poem. Thus, if the first line of a poem has a *varṇa* pattern of

| S |; S S |; | S |; S | S

15. Georges and Dundes, *op. cit.*

then the second and following lines would have exactly the same pattern. *Vārnika* meter is clearly quite sophisticated and it is, as a matter of fact, extensively used, both in Sanskrit and literary Hindi poetry. However, it appears to be a literary convention and is not found in Hindi oral poetry.

The second principal type of metrical system in Hindi is called *mātrika.* A *mātrā* is a unit of measure based upon the length of a short vowel. (The short vowels of Hindi are written here as "a", "i", and "u" and correspond roughly to the English vowel sounds in the words "but", "bit", and "put".) A long vowel is considered to be twice the length of a short vowel, and hence has the value of two *mātrās.* (The long vowels of Hindi are written here as "ā", "ī", "ū", "e", "o", and "ai", and correspond roughly to the English vowel sounds in the words "bar", "beet", "boot", "bait", "boat", and "bat".)[16] A line of poetry, called a *pada,* is measured by the total number of *mātrās* contained in it. The number of *mātrās* may be spoken of as the "weight" of the *pada* or line. It is interesting that the term *mātrā* as used in Hindi poetics refers both to "measure" and "weight". The English cognate "metric" also refers to poetic measure, but the notion of "metric weight" has become a native category separate from poetry.

A line or *pada* may have, *in theory,* from one to thirty-two *mātrās.* A *mātrā* count higher than thirty-two is referred to

16. There are several additional rules for counting *mātrās.* In one special case, a short vowel preceding a consonant cluster may be counted as a long vowel, that is, as two *mātrās* rather than one. This is so even though it is still pronounced as a short vowel. Further, both internal and final juncture is counted as one *mātrā* if the phoneme preceding the juncture is a consonant. The reason for this is historical; short vowels originally present in Sanskrit and/or Prakrit have been dropped in the Hindi derivatives. For example, Rāmadāsa (in Sanskrit) becomes Rāmdās (Rām#dās#) in Hindi, each juncture counting for poetic purposes as one *mātrā.* It must also be realized that poetic license can also result in departures from the poetic "rules". A particularly frequent example is the pronunciation of Hindi long vowels as the corresponding short vowel ("ā" pronounced as "a", "ī" pronounced as "i", for example), enabling the syllable to be counted as one *mātrā.* Thus in such particles as *kī* (meaning "of") or *kū* (meaning "to") we often find a shortening of the long vowel to *ki* or *ku* for the purpose of conforming to the desired metrical pattern.

as *dandaka* and is rare in oral poetry. In fact, the occurrence of *mātrā* counts in riddles is not spread evenly over the thirty-two possibilities. Most popular are such *mātra* counts as 15 (*chaupaī*), 16 (*chaupāī*), and 24 (*dohā*). Extremely rare are *mātrā* counts less than eight. The *mātrika* system is much more flexible than the *vārnika* system because each individual line may have a different combination of long and short vowels. It is the total *mātrā* count in the line which is critical, not their order or the manner in which total is accumulated. For example, if the meter is one of eight *mātrās*, in theory any of the following thirty-four combinations could be utilized in succeeding lines:

||||||||	||||S||	S||S||	|S||S|	||||SS	S|S|S	SS||S
S||||||	|||||S|	S|||S|	|S|||S	S|S||	|S|S|	SSSS
|S|||||	||||||S	S||||S	||S|S|	S|SS|	||SSS	SS||||
||S||||	|SS|||	||SS||	S||SS	|SS|S	|SSS|	S|S|||
|||S|||	|S|S||	|||SS|	SS|S|	||S||S	|||S|S	

This is only one small sample of the great range of choice in Hindi riddle metrics. Clearly, the greater the *mātrā* count, the greater the number of mathematical possibilities of forming appropriate line combinations of long and short vowels. The question, of course arises as to just how many of the theoretically possible combinations actually occur in Hindi riddles. A problem in answering this question lies in the fact that one would need to have at least as many lines of riddle text as the total number of all possible *mātrā* combinations of from one to thirty-two *mātrās* in order to compare the actual with the possible. And since the number of possible combinations appear to total more than nine million, and since nine million lines of Hindi riddle text are not presently available, one can do little more than to note the more common combinations found in oral tradition. The theoretically possible ccmbinations in lines containing from one to thirty-two *mātrās* may be indicated numerically as follows:

Number of *mātrās*	Number of possible vowel combinations
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	5
5	8
6	13
7	21
8	34
9	55
10	89
11	144
12	233
13	377
14	610
15	987
16	1,597
17	2,584
18	4,181
19	6,735
20	10,946
21	17,711
22	28,657
23	46,368
24	75,025
25	121,391
26	196,418
27	317,811
28	514,229
29	832,040
30	1,346,269
31	2,178,309
32	3,524,478
Total[17]	9,227,463

17. Formula: $\left(\frac{5+\sqrt{5}}{10}\right)\left(\frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}\right)^n$

If n is greater than 2, add the total of the two previous numbers. That is, the total possibilities for n is the total possibilities for $(n-2)+(n-1)$. We thank R. Sherman Lehman for providing this formula.

Having sketched the theoretically possible range of *mātrā* count combinations, one has a better perspective from which to approach the various traditional meters actually found in Hindi riddles. As might be expected, the number actually found is a tiny fraction of those theoretically possible. There are many limiting factors. For one thing, although the overall *mātrā* count is primary, there are several special internal groupings of *mātrās* within the *pada* or line. In defining literary meters, Hindi prosodists customarily make use of *mātrā* clusters containing from one to six *mātrās*. The most common of these are 3-*mātrā* and 4-*mātrā* clusters. Possible 4-*mātrā* clusters are: SS, ||S, S||, and ||||. Equally possible is |S|, but this is regarded as unpopular or unaesthetic. Possible 3-*mātrā* clusters are S|, |S and |||. An example of a restrictive rule utilizing these *mātrā* clusters is that in Arilla Pādākulaka meter which is one of those based on a 16-*mātrā* line. Here the sixteen *mātrās* must be grouped in such a way that four consecutive groups of exactly four *mātrās* each are found (see riddle number 11, below). Thus it is often a question of the internal patterning or arrangement of a line (in terms of juncture, intonation, and rhythm) within the overall line *mātrā* weight which proves crucial in defining a given meter.

Still another distinction in meter typology concerns whether or not all the lines or *pada* contain the same number of *mātrās*. If all the *pada* contain the same number of *mātrās*, then all the lines are said to have equal weight, and the meter would fall into the general category of *sama-mātrika* meter. Quite commonly, one finds two pairs of lines, each pair with its own distinct *mātrā* count. The most popular of such pairings opposes lines one and three to lines two and four. Such a combination, in which lines one and three are of one weight and lines two and four of another, would fall into the general category of *ardha-sama-mātrika*. (*Ardha* means half, and thus one has "half-equal-weight" in contrast to *sama-mātrika* or "equal-weight".) In addition to "equal-weight" and "half-equal-weight" meters, there is also an "unequal-weight" category of meters termed *visama*. In riddles or poetry of this type one finds no regular *mātrā* patterning. In terms of the aesthetic

value hierarchy, *viṣama-mātrika* is considered the least desirable type of poetic meter. *Sama-mātrika,* however, is not rated higher than *ardha-sama-mātrika.*

The great importance of metrics in Hindi riddles is also evident when one examines other stylistic features, for example rhyme. In *vārṇika* meters, rhyme is not essential. It does not occur at all in Sanskrit poetry and is found only rarely in contemporary Hindi poetry. In *mātrika* meters, however, rhyme is a significant characteristic. Even in *viṣama-mātrika,* where the metrical patterning is irregular (e.g., each line of a four-line riddle may have a different *mātrā* weight), there may be a distinct rhyming pattern. The rhyme in Hindi riddles is normally end rhyme, but there are examples of internal rhyme as well.

Three degrees of rhyme quality are distinguished. They are, in descending order of quality: *uttama* ("best"), *madhyama* ("medium") and *adhama* ("low"). Distinctions are based upon both the quality and the quantity of the end rhyme of the two or more *pada* concerned. Quality refers to the degree of similarity of the rhyming units. Similarity might consist of the consonant preceding the final vowel being aspirated (or unaspirated), voiced (or unvoiced), etc., in each of the two or more rhyming *pada.* Another example of similarity would be parallel, or perhaps identical, consonant clusters preceding the final vowel. The greater the similarity of both vowel and consonant phonemes, the higher the quality of the rhyme. Quantity, as opposed to quality, refers to the extent of the rhyme through time. Here is where the metrical characteristics become relevant. The greater the number of consecutive *mātrās* in the two lines which rhyme, the higher the degree of the rhyme. If the two rhyming lines have four or more *mātrās* of the same quality, then one has an example of *uttama* rhyme. If the rhyme were of only three *mātrās* duration, one would have an example of *madhyama* rhyme. Rhymes of two or only one *mātrā* would be classified as *adhama.*[18]

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18. It may be worth speculating that there could be a correlation between durational meter and durational rhyme. As meter can be durational rather

One other crucial stylistic feature of Hindi riddles is also intimately related to metrical matters, and that is the feature of juncture. In each *pada* there may be one or more rhetorical pauses. Such a pause, termed *yati,* is roughly equivalent to the caesura in Greek and Latin verse. In the light of the present study, it is necessary to observe that a meter may often be partly defined in terms of the location of the *yati* in the line. Thus, in riddle number 22, which has a 30-*mātrā* meter called *lāvanī,* the *yati* occurs after the sixteenth *mātra.* If, however, the *yati* had occurred instead after the tenth and eighteenth *mātras,* the meter would be a different one. It would still, to be sure, be a 30-*mātrā* meter, but because of the positioning of the *yati* would be of a different sub-type, called *cavapaiyā.*

Having briefly considered some of the general principles of Hindi riddle metrics, one may be better able to appreciate the metrical characteristics of individual riddles. The following texts are intended to illustrate some of the various meter types found in Hindi riddles. For the sake of economy, only one example of each meter is presented. However, if a particular meter is especially popular, this fact will be noted. In one instance, the case of the extremely popular *dohā* meter, more than one illustrative riddle text will be presented. After each meter type is named, the essential distinguishing characteristics of that meter will be given. These characteristics include the *mātrā* count(s) of the lines, the traditional internal sub-grouping of *mātrā* clusters within lines, and any other salient stylistic feature peculiar to that meter type. Inasmuch as non-natives may have difficulty in counting or perceiving

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than depending upon stress, so rhyme may be guaged in terms of duration rather than stress. In English, where meter is stress rather than durational, the principal types of rhyme are based upon stress positions: for example, masculine rhyme in which the rhymed syllables are the last syllables of the words in question. The length or duration of rhyme in this case is usually limited to two or three syllables. Incontrast, when one has durational meter there is more freedom. Arabic appears to provide an example wherein durational meter works in concert with durational rhyme. See G. E. von Grunebaum, "Arabic Poetics", in Horst Frenz and G. L. Anderson, eds., *Indiana University Conference on Oriental-Western Literary Relations,* University of North Carolina Studies in Comparative Literature No. 13 (Chapel Hill 1955), p. 28.

the *mātrās,* these will be indicated beneath each line of text, using the | (short vowel or one *mātrā*) and S (long vowel or two *mātrās*) orthographic conventions. In addition, there will be both an interlinear, word-for-word translation (where possible) and a free translation of each riddle into English. Finally, each riddle will be explained at greater length, because even with a brief free translation the sense of the riddle or the relation of the riddle question to riddle answer may not always be obvious. Too often, scholars with linguistic rather than folkloristic or ethnographic interests paramount fail to provide sufficient explication of the cultural meanings of the texts they utilize. The lack of such minimal explanatory data seriously diminishes the value of the presentation of texts. It is hoped that the riddles reported here will be of interest to a wider audience than those primarily interested in studies of metrics.

I. Riddles in *sama-mātrika* meters

1. *Karimakarabhuja.* This is an 8-*mātrā* meter. Each *pada* consists of two groups of four *mātras* (4, 4).

din	kū	laṭkai
| |	S	| | S
day	in	hangs
rāt	ku	aṭkai
S |	|	| | S
night	at	fastens

"It hangs during the day and is fastened at night"

—sānkal
—door chain

Normally, doors are locked only at night. This fact provides the wherewithal for a pretended-obscene riddle in which the phallus is apparently being described.

2. *Jambhedikā.* This is a 9-*mātrā* meter with an internal breakdown into four and five *mātrās* (4, 5). This means that

if the third vowel in either line were long instead of short, then the metrical pattern would be broken—assuming that the first two vowels were as they are in the present text. Clearly, a long vowel in that position would result in a *mātrā* combination of |SS, which would total five instead of four. In *Jambhedikā* meter the first sub-unit of *mātrās* must be four.

khaṛā	bhagat	jāy
| S	| ||	S|
stands	running	goes
meṛ	badhāt	jāy
S|	| ||	S|
fence	tying	goes

"It stands and goes running and fence-building"

—cakkī
—hand grist-mill

The handle of a hand grist-mill, used for grinding flour in the home, stands perpendicular to the ground, but moves in a circle (normally counter-clockwise) in a place parallel to the ground. It thus stands but runs around. As a result of this circular grinding motion, an ever-increasing ridge or "fence" of flour is formed around the edges.

3. *Kāñcanalekhā*. This is a 10-*mātrā* meter with a six-four breakdown (6, 4).

harī	harī	kyārī	
| S	| S	S S	
green	green	field	
motiyõ	ki	bārī	
S | S	|	S S	
jewels	of	garden	
candā	ki	bahan	o
|| S	|	| ||	S
moon	of	sister	and

sūraj	kī	sārī
S ||	S	S S
sun	of	wife's sister

"A green, green field, a garden of jewels, sister of the moon and sister-in-law of the sun".

—os
—dew

First, notice that this is clearly a riddle in *sama-mātrika,* inasmuch as each line has the same number of *mātrās, viz.* ten. It is interesting that in line three, *candā* has been counted as four *mātrās.* The "a" as a short vowel counts one, the "*ā*" as a long vowel counts two, and the juncture after "n" counts one. One may also compare the *ki* of line three with the *kī* of line four. The governing restrictions of a 10-*mātrā* limit required the shortening of the long vowel "ī" to "i" in the third line. With respect to rhyme, one can observe a fine example of internal rhyme in line one (*harī kyārī*). There is also the obvious linear rhyming scheme involving lines one, three, and four. One can also see the durational quality of the rhyme employed. Since the rhyme carries over for at least four *mātrās,* it qualifies as *uttama* rhyme.

Now for the explanation of this exceptionally beautiful riddle. *Kyārī* refers to a segment of cultivated land. After a field is sown it may be divided into a number of smaller segments, to facilitate watering and harvesting. The image of the glistening dew as a garden of jewels is a striking one. By calling the dew "sister of the moon and sister-in-law of the sun" a clever comparison is made between the dew's appearance vis-a-vis these celestial bodies and some stereotyped kinship patterns. Just as sisters may be freely seen by and with their brothers, the dew can be seen with the moon. However, since a man has a joking relationship with his wife's sister—*sārī*—it may cause gossip if he is seen too much with her. Likewise the dew cannot be seen too much with the sun. Still another facet of this equisite riddle is the fact that in Hindu mythology the sun and the moon are brothers. Thus the sister of one could not be the sister-in-law of the other without an act of

incest. Thus the formal opposition in the riddle structure corresponds to a similarly patterned contradiction in the social structure. It might also be observed that if members of a culture elect to describe natural phenomena such as dew in terms of the finer points of kinship norms, this in itself may reflect the deep-seated importance of such norms in the native value system.

4. *Shashivadanā.* This is also a 10-*mātrā* meter, but it differs from riddle 3 in that the *mātrā* breakdown is four, four and two (4, 4, 2). The requirement that the last *mātrā* unit be two, in essence results in the last vowel in the *pada* being a long one.

bāman	pyāsā	kyõ
S | |	S S	S
Brahman	thirsty	why
gadhā	udāsā	kyõ
| S	| S S	S
donkey	sad	why

"Why is the Brahman thirsty? Why is the donkey sad?"

—loṭā	nā	thā
jug/lying	not	was

"There was no jug"
"He was not lying down"

This is not a true riddle inasmuch as a "why" rather than a "what" question is asked. The riddler does not give a description for which the audience/addresses must seek the referent. Rather the riddler gives an answer or resultant condition and asks the audience to provide a description or explanation. In this joking or riddling question the answer depends upon two meanings of the word *loṭā.* The noun *loṭā* refers to the jug-like vessel normally used to fetch water. The verb form *loṭā* is the past participle of *loṭnā,* which means to lie down. The point of the riddle concerns the folk stereotype of the Brahman. In Hindi folklore, the Brahman as a folk figure exemplifies simple-

mindedness. There is a proverb, for example, which refers to three castes: Baniā (merchant, shopkeeper), Jāṭ (peasant), and Brahman (priest).

āgam	buddhī	bāniyā,	paccham	buddhī	jāṭ
beforehand	intellect	Baniā	afterward	intellect	Jāt

kabhī	nā	buddhī	bāmnā,	pūrā	sappamsāṭ
ever	not	intellect	Brahman	complete	blank

"The Baniā knows beforehand (has foresight), the Jāṭ learns later (has hindsight), but the Brahman will never know (either by foresight or hindsight), his mind is a blank."

It is clear that the folk stereotype of the Brahman is quite different from the European stereotype of the Brahman as a wise intellectual. In the riddle the Brahman is paired with a donkey, an animal which is invariably conceived to be particularly stupid. In this instance it is assumed that donkeys enjoy lying down in the dust. The donkey's sadness is stupidly unnecessary as he could easily roll around in the dust if he wished. The Brahman is equally foolish. Travellers normally carry with them on their journeys a jug and a rope so that they may draw water to drink along their way. The Brahman, had he taken along his *loṭa* or even borrowed one, could easily have quenched his thirst. To the folk, the Brahman, with his great concern for spiritual matters is little better than a donkey when it comes to satisfying physical needs.[19]

5. *Mārakritā.* This is an 11-*mātrā* meter with a four, four and three breakdown (4, 4, 3).

choṭī	sī	tirvāl
S S	S	| | S |
small	-ish	tarpaulin

baiṭhe	hāi	gopāl
S S	S	S S |
is	sitting	Gopal

19. This kind of riddle where one answer applies to two separate questions is called *do sakhunā* (*do* meaning "two", *sakhunā* meaning "speech", "language") by Khusro. See Vatuk, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

"There is a small tent in which Gopāl is sitting"

—jībh
—tongue

The name Gopāl, which may have been used partly for rhyming purposes, is a man's name. It means "one who herds cattle", and is one of the names used for Lord Krishna. The fact that the answer, "tongue", is a word of feminine gender suggests that possibly the male name is intended to serve as a confusing device.

6. *Mahanubhāvā.* This is a 12-*mātrā* meter with alternative breakdowns, either four, four, and four, or six and six (4, 4, 4 or 6, 6).

ek	jināvar	aslī	
S|	| S ||	||S	
one	animal	real	
jiske	haddi	na	paslī
|| S	|| |	|	||S
to whom	bone	not	rib

"It is a real animal which has no bones nor ribs."

—jōk
—leech[20]

7. *Puṣpamālā.* This is a 12-*mātrā* meter with a breakdown of three, six and three (3, 6, 3).

hāth	vākai	pāy	nā
S |	S S	S|	S
hands/arms	to whom	feet/legs	not
saṭak	leto	khāy	nā
| ||	S S	S|	S
swallow	takes	eats	not

20. This riddle is widespread, not only in India, but in Europe and Africa as well. For reference to parallels see Archer Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1951), p. 91. For an African text, see P. D. Beuchat, "Riddles in Bantu", in Alan Dundes, ed., *The Study of Folklore* (Englewood Cliffs 1965), p. 191.

"It has hands/arms, but no feet/legs. It swallows but does not eat."

—koṭ/kurtā
—jacket/shirt[21]

8. *Hākalikā.* This is a 14-*mātrā* meter with a four, four, four, and two breakdown (4, 4, 4, 2).

corī	kī	nā	khūn	kiyā
S S	S	S	S|	| S
theft	did	not	blood	did

bīso		kā	sir	kāṭ	diyā
S S		S	||	S|	| S
all	twenty	of	head	chopped	off

"They did not steal or murder, yet the heads of all twenty were chopped off."

—nākhūn
—fingernails/toenails

This riddle is a parallel to one found in Khusro's thirteenth century collection of Indic riddles. Noteworthy is the fact that the answer is concealed in the question. In line one, we find ". . . *nā khūn* . . . " meaning "not blood" but having the same sound as *nākhūn,* meaning "finger and/or toenails", which do not have blood! In Sanskrit, this technique of hiding the answer in the question is termed *antarlāpikā* (*antar* meaning "within"), as opposed to *bahirlāpikā,* "outside" the riddle.[22]

9. *Chaupaī.* This is a 15-*mātrā* meter in which each *pada* must end in a long vowel followed by a short vowel (S\|). This is one of the most popular meters in riddles and folk poetry.

paṭak	podnā	lambī	pūch
| ||	S| S	|| S	S|
dashing	wagtail	long	tail

21. For parallels see Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition, op. cit.,* p. 12.

22. See *Hindī Sabda Sāgara,* Vol. I, p. 29.

nāy	batai	to	mā	tai	pūch
S|	| S	S	S	S|
not	told	then	mother	to	ask

"A dashing small wagtail (*Sylvia olivacea*) has a long tail. If you can't tell what is, ask your mother."

—mūlī
—radish (white)

The formulaic "Ask your mother!" has a slightly insulting innuendo, implying that the addressee is still immature and has not yet grown up.

10. *Chaubolā.* This meter, sometimes called *hansī,* is a 15-*mātrā* meter which ends with a short vowel followed by a long one (| S). The only difference between this meter and the preceding one (*chaupaī*) is the ending.

nadī	ki	pār	pai	bok	care
| S	|	S|	S	S|	| S
river	of	bank	on	goat	grazes

nadī	sūk	gaī	bok	mare
| S	S|	|S	S|	| S
river	dried	went	goat	dies

"On the bank of a river there grazes a goat. The river dried up and the goat died."

—diyā
—earthenware oillamp

In this striking riddle the river is the oil and the goat is the wick. The flame, in Hindi folklore, is a metaphor for life. Thus when the river dries up the flame goes out, which means that the goat dies.

11. *Mātrāsamaka Pādākulaka.*
In this 16-*mātra* meter there are four subdivisions of four *mātras* each (4, 4, 4, 4). Perhaps the major additional restriction is that there be no combination of short, long, and short vowels (| S |), termed a *jagaṇa,* at the beginning of a *pada.*

Other "rules" include the requirement that the ninth *mātrā* be short (|), and that the *pada* end with a long vowel (S).

aṭsan	hālai	paṭsan	hālai
|| ||	S S	|| ||	S S
Atsan	shakes	Patsan	shakes

lāl	havelī	kabhī	na	hālai
S|	| SS	| S	|	S S
red	mansion	ever	not	shakes

"Atsan shakes and Patsan shakes, but the red mansion never shakes."

—gājar
—carrot

This riddle comments on the fact that while the carrot top may shake in the breeze and the surrounding grass or weeds may shake, the root in the ground does not move. Aṭsan and Paṭsan are nonsense names.

12. *Caupāī.* In this extremely popular 16-*mātrā* meter the *mātrās* are grouped in a very special way. In general, an even-numbered *mātrā*-cluster must be followed by another even-numbered cluster (though not necessarily the same even number). Thus a cluster of four *mātrās* might be followed by a cluster or two or four *mātrās*. According to the same general principle, an odd-numbered-*mātrā* cluster (usually a 3-*mātrā* cluster) must be followed by another cluster (again usually three). However, the second *mātrā*-cluster of such a sequence need not be followed in turn by a third matching it in terms of evenness or odd-ness of number. Examples of *caupāī mātrā* subgroupings include the following possibilities:

(3, 3, 4, 4, 2) see the first *pada* of the riddle below;

(3, 3, 3, 3, 2, 2) see the second *pada* of the riddle below.

It should be noted that two groups of two-*mātrā* clusters may be substituted for a four-*mātrā* cluster, and vice-versa. However, in the event that the first cluster in a *pada* is a four-*mātrā* cluster, it would utilize the combinations of: SS, ||S, S||, or |||. The combination |S|, the *jagaṇa,* is regarded as undesirable in the initial position of a *pada.* An additional

caupāī rule is that the final cluster in each *pada* must be a long vowel (S).

ek	rāg	se	rahtī	gātī
S|	S|	S	| | S	S S
one	*rāga*	with	remains	singing

cale	rāt	din	kahī	na	jātī
| S	S|	||	| S	|	S S
goes	night	day	somewhere	not	goes

"It goes on singing just one tune; it runs day and night and goes nowhere."

—ghaṛī
—clock

To appreciate the first portion of this riddle one must know something about Hindi onomatopoeia. A native speaker of Hindi perceives the sound that a clock makes as *ṭik ṭik* (rather than as in English, "tick tock"). Thus the clock can play in only one *rāga*—there is no exact equivalent in English of this India musical concept—just the one note of "tune" of *ṭik ṭik ṭik*.[23]

13. *Arilla Pādākulaka.* This 16-*mātrā* meter is similar to the *mātrāsamaka pādākulaka* meter described above (see riddle 11), but differs in that the ninth *mātrā* does not have to be an independent short vowel, and also in that each *pada* must end in this meter either with two short vowels (\| \|) or with two long vowels preceded by a short vowel (\|SS).

kāla	bāṛā	lāl	nikārā
S S	S S	S|	| S S
black	thrust	red	removed

ukṛū	baiṭh	danādan	mārā
|| S	S |	| S ||	S S
on	one knee having	sat violently	beat

23. For a discussion of the concept of *rāga* eee W. G. Raffe, "Ragas and raginis: a key to Hindu aesthetics", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 11 (1952), pp. 105–117, and Walter Kaufmann, *The Ragas of India* (Bloomington 1968).

"Thrust in, it was black, removed it was red. By someone squatting on one knee it was violently beaten."

—luhar	kā	garam	phālī	kā	pīṭnā
blacksmith	of	hot	ploughshare	of	beating
—beating of a ploughshare by the blacksmith					

In this riddle there is a description of a black iron ploughshare being placed in the forge, where it becomes literally red-hot. Following this, the blacksmith hammers it "violently" on his anvil. This is a typical specimen of a pretended-obscene riddle. The flesh-colored phallus enters and becomes reddish. The verb *mārnā* means to strike or beat, but in colloquial usage it refers to a male's having sexual intercourse. Part of the humor of the riddle stems from the fact that a position of squatting on one knee is *not* a normal position for intercourse. Moreover, the position suggests an illicit situation in which neither time nor place would permit the more relaxed prone position.

14. *Chaupaī* and *pādākulaka.* Two meters are used in this riddle. *Chaupaī,* the most popular 15 *mātrā* meter, has already been described (see riddle number 9). The *pādākulaka* meter used in this riddle is one of sixteen *mātrās* arranged in four groups of four *mātrās* each, but lacks the various special characteristics of the *pādākulaka* meters described above as *mātrāsamaka* and *arilla* meters (see riddles number 11 and 13). One reason for the inclusion of this riddle is to remind the reader that the folk do not always make the fine distinctions between meters as do the literary prosodists. Combinations of different meters of the same or nearly the same *mātrā* counts are fairly frequent in riddles as well as in other folk poetic forms. Interesting is the fact that, due to the great popularity of the *chaupaī* meter among the folk, this text and others like it is thought of by the folk as being essentially an example of *chaupaī* meter, despite its composite features. The folk are of course not familiar with the names of all of the various meters, but know primarily only the more common ones.

us	ko	chūte	dhote	hāth		
||	S	SS	SS	S |		(*mātrā* count: 16)
it	to	touch	wash	hands		

tab bhī us ko rakhte pās
|| S || S || S S| (*mātrā* count: 15)
then even it to keep near

jag mē is kī cā hai bhārī
|| S || S S S S S (*mātrā* count: 15)
world in it of wish is great/heavy

is se darte sab nar nārī
|| S || S || || S S (*mātrā* count: 16)
it with fear all men women

"When they touch it, then they wash their hands. Even then they keep near it. It is greatly desired in the world, yet all men and women are afraid of it."

—jūtā
—shoe

The explanation of this riddle shows clearly why the presentation of text alone is not sufficient for an understanding of riddles. It is doubtful whether someone unfamiliar with the cultural context from which this riddle comes could fully understand the appropriateness of this description of the shoe. First, Indian men and women always wash their hands after touching their shoes or the shoes of others. The shoe is considered to be impure or dirty, in part because it is associated with the foot, the lowest-ranking portion of the human body. In addition, the shoe is commonly made of leather, an impure material. Still another reason for the shoe's low status is the fact that it comes into direct contact with a variety of culturally-defined dirty substances, such as mud, faeces, and the like. It is for this reason that shoes are normally not worn inside the house. Even in a modern home (in which tables and chairs are used), where shoes may be worn indoors, one would refrain from wearing shoes into the kitchen. Food must be kept free from possible pollution at all costs.

But this is not the entire explanation of this riddle. What about the fear of the shoe? This does not refer simply to fear of contact with impurity or pollution. People are afraid of the shoe because it may be used to administer a physical assault

or beating. A beating with a shoe constitutes a far greater insult than a beating with any other object, and even the threat of such a beating is considered highly insulting. For example, if a boy flirtatiously teases a girl, she may take off one of her shoes and wave it at him, or even actually strike him with it on his head. The head, as the container of the mind, is the purest part of the body and therefore touching it with the shoe would be considered a particularly humiliating act.[24]

15. *Shakti.* In this 18-*mātrā* meter, each *pada* must end with a sequence of three short vowels (|||) or a short vowel followed by a long one (| S).

harī dibbī lāl dibbī ras tapkai
| S || S S| || S | | | | S
green box red box juice drips

māyke kū jāū jab man bhaṭkai
S| S S SS || || || S
woman's natal home to I go when heart wanders

"I am a green box, I am a red box, and the juice drips from me. When my heart wanders, I go to my natal home."

—ān
—mango

The first portion of the riddle describes the green, unripe mango fruit becoming ripe (red) and juicy. The second part refers apparently to the traditional custom of a wife's periodically visiting her parents for several months at a time. In patrilocal residence, a woman living with her husband and his parents tends to become homesick for her natal home (her "heart wanders"). The rainy season (June to September) is considered the romantic season. There is little work in the fields and husbands are home more often. After the rainy season, according to the traditional conception presented in folk and classical literature, the husband is away and the wife goes to

24. For further discussion of this point see G. Morris Carstairs, *The Twice Born* (London 1957), p. 79.

visit her mother's home. All this constitutes a basic clue in the riddle. The mango grows during the rainy season. Presumably in terms of the riddle metaphor, after the rainy season, once the mango fruit is ripe it has beeen fulfilled and it drops to mother earth, its original "natal home". The word *māykā* literally means "of mother" or "Mother's home". In Hindi folk parlance, to die is to return home or to go to the place whence one has come. The mango's ultimate origin is in the earth and thus it yearns to return (fall) to the earth.

It might also be noted that one of the classic symbolic equations in Sanskrit literature (particularly in Kālīdāsa's *Shakuntala*) is that of the mango (*cūtā*) and its blossoming with the vagina and procreation. Possibly there is a play on this equation in the first part of the riddle. In any case, this tradition might explain why a maturing female could serve as a metaphor for a mango, the word for which in modern Hindi is of masculine gender.

16. *Avalī*. This is a 20-*mātrā* meter with a breakdown of six, four, four, four, and two *mātrās* (6, 4, 4, 4, 2).

janābyālī	sir	ke	ūpar	jālī
| S| SS	||	S	S ||	SS
'Your Honor'	head	of	above	net

haddiyā	bahut	magar	peṭ	hai	khālī
|| S S	| ||	| ||	S|	S	SS
bones	many	but	stomach	is	empty

"Your Honor, you have a net on your head. You have many bones, but your stomach is empty."

—mūṛhā
—wicker stool

The honorific vocative can be used sarcastically to mean just the opposite, as is the case in this riddle. The stool in question is of a hollow, cylindrical form, with wickerwork sides and a seat of flaxen webbing. The net is this webbing seat, the bones are the wicker, and the empty stomach refers to the hollow interior of the stool.

17. *Shāstra.* This type of 20-*mātrā* meter differs from *āvalī* (see riddle 16) in that the *pada* must end in a short vowel preceded by a long vowel (S |). There are no other specific mandatory *mātrā*-cluster requirements.

māṭī	kā	maṭūlnā		lohe	ki	lagām			
S S	S	| S| S		S |	|	| S|		
clay	of	clay horse		iron	of	rein			
caṛh	baiṭhā	vā	pai	bhūbhariyā		paṭhān			
||	S S	S	S	S	| | S	| S|			
riding	sat	it	on	ashy		Pathān			

"There is a clay horse with saddle and reins of iron. On it rode a rough Pathān."

—cūlhā, tavā, roṭi
—fireplace, griddle, bread

This riddle is somewhat unusual in that it involves more than one object in the answer. The clay horse is the fireplace. The typical Indian cooking hearth consists of a clay, U-shaped, three-walled structure, open at the front. The saddle which sits on the horse is a round iron griddle, used for baking flat, unleavened bread. The rough Pathān (a Pathān is a Pashto-speaking native of the hilly area between Peshawar, West Pakistan, and Kabul, Afghanistan) is the bread, usually made of whole-wheat flour or other grains and similar to the Mexican tortilla. Most Indians regard the Pathān in stereotypic terms as a rough and ready character. According to a popular joke, if a Pathān robber shoots and kills a man, only to find his victim penniless, his only regret would be that he had wasted a bullet.

18. *Muktāmaṇi.* In this 25-*mātrā* meter the breakdown is into 13 and 12 *mātrās* (13, 12). A rhetorical pause, or *yati,* occurs after thirteenth *mātrā.* Here is one clear-cut case where a caesura demarcates a key *mātrā* division within the *pada.* In *muktāmaṇi* meter the *pada* must end with two long vowels (S S).

cār	ṭāg	ik	sīs	hai,	ek	ṭāg	kī	nārī
S|	S|	||	S|	S ,	S|	S|	S	S S
four	legs	one	head	is	one	leg	of	woman

syām	varṇ	tāmas	bharī,	karo	bhaiyo	vicārī
S |	|||	S ||	| S,	| S	|| S	| S S
black	color	darkness	filled	do	brothers	thinking

"A woman with four legs and one head is a single leg. It is black and full of darkness, brothers, ponder it."

—lõg
—clove

In this interesting riddle, the characteristic four sepals of the dried clove are visualized as legs, while the bulbous bud is depicted as a head. Then the stem is also described as a leg, and the whole clove as a woman. The word *tāmas* means "darkness", but its implications here cannot be fully understood without reference to a whole system of native categories. Folklore in general, and riddles in particular, represent prime source material for the discovery, identification, and study of native conceptual categories. Such categories are both implicit and explicit in folklore. In this case, there is a tripartite categorical scheme involved: *satva, rajas,* and *tamas.* According to the terms of this important Indic philosophical system, *satva,* which means "essence", refers to the highest qualities of mind and to those materials which lead to the attainment of higher spiritual levels. *Rajas* refers to balanced sexual pleasure and the enjoyment of life. *Tamas* refers to the lowest level of existence, which includes ignorance, intoxication, and overt sensual pleasure. Foods are classified in Indian thought in a number of different ways (e.g., as to whether they are "hot" or "cold" foods), and one of these ways is according to this tripartite scheme just outlined. According to this scheme, all spices are classified as *tamas,* leading to increased sensual craving (beyond the balanced *rajas* desire). Spices, for example, red chili peppers, are considered to be "hot" as well, and supposedly affect one's mind adversely, as chili supposedly makes one lose one's temper easily (become "hot-tempered"). The relationship perceived to exist between food type and mental or emotional state is suggested in the following proverb from this region:

jaisā ann
as food

vaisā mann
so mind/heart

Loosely translated, "You are what you eat!"

In the second part of the riddle, the audience is given the clue that the referent is black in color and is in the *tamas* category. Thus one may guess that the object sought is a black food of the tamas type and that the word for it is in the feminine gender.[25]

19. *Dvipathaka.* In this 26-*mātrā* meter there is a *yatī* after the sixteenth *mātrā*. The basic subdivision is into sixteen *mātrās* and ten *mātrās* (16, 10). Within these subdivisions the following rules obtain. The 16-*mātrā* group breaks down into three 4-*mātrā* clusters followed by two long vowels. The 10-*mātrā* group consists of two 4-*mātrā* clusters plus one long vowel.

itt gadelī utt gadelī, bicõ
S| |i̲SS S| | SS, | S
on this side pit on that side pit middle

bic havelī
|| | SS
middle mansion

yā kāṇī kā arath batāde, tujhe dugā dhelī
S S S S | | | |i̲S S, | S | S SS
this riddle of meaning tell to you I will give half-pice

"A pit on either side and in the middle a mansion. Guess this riddle and I will give you half a pice!"

—beland
—rolling pin

From the perspective gained from the center of the rolling pin,

25. For further discussion of the *tamas* category, see Radha Krishnan, *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western,* Vol. I (London 1957), p. 249.

the two handles represent sudden drops in height ("pits"). The description is confusing principally because a fine house would not be likely to be flanked by pits. A man wealthy enough to afford a "mansion" would in all likelihood have such pits filled and levelled. A "pice" is an older Indian coin, about the size of a British penny. It was worth about 1/64th of a rupee. A half-pice was about the size of a British halfpenny.

20. *Sarasī.* This is a 27-*mātrā* meter with a sixteen and eleven *mātrā* breakdown (16, 11). A *yati* occurs after the sixteenth *mātrā*. In *sarasī* meter each *pada* must end with a short vowel preceded by a long vowel (S |).

ek	pitā	ke	do	laṛke	hai,	roz	dikhāte	khel
S|	| S	S	S	|| S	S,	S|	| S S	S|
one	father	of	two	boys	are	daily	show	game/show

kadhī	na	unko	laṛte	dekhā,	aisā	un	mẽ	mel
| S	|	|| S	|| S	S S,	S S	||	S	S|
ever	not	them	fighting	saw	such	them	between	unity

"Two brothers are seen playing every day. No one has ever seen them fighting, so harmonious is their relationship."

—sūraj aur cād
—sun and moon

As was explained in riddle 3, above, the sun and moon are considered brothers. This is definitely a didactic riddle, intended to remind the young males of a family (including cousins as well as siblings) that they should not fight with one another.

21. *Sār.* This is a 28-*mātrā* meter with a breakdown of sixteen and twelve *mātrās* (16, 12). A *yati* occurs after the sixteenth *mātrā*. Each *pada* ends with a sequence of two long vowels (S S).

ek	sakhī		do	lāhgā	pahire,	chai	laṭkāvai	nāre
S|	| S		S	|| |S	| |||S,	|S	|| S S	S S
one	female	friend	two	skirts	wears	six	hang	drawstrings

yā	kānī	kā	arath	batāde,	tum	jīte	ham	hāre
S	S S	S	| | |	| S S,	| |	S S	| |	S S
this	riddle	of	meaning	tell	you	have won	we	have lost

"A lady wears two skirts with six drawstrings. If you answer this riddle, you win and I lose."

—tarājū
—balance scale

The typical balance scale is made of two identical round and slightly concave containers, suspended from each end of a horizontal, cylindrical bar on three cords. These cords are made of cotton and are similar in material to that used for the drawstrings of a woman's skirt. In terms of the riddle metaphor, the balance scale is the woman, the skirts have each three drawstrings instead of the usual one.

22. *Tāṭanka.* This is a 30-*mātrā* meter with a sixteen and fourteen *mātrā* breakdown (16, 14). A *yati* occurs after the sixteenth *mātrā*. Each *pada* ends with three consecutive long vowels (S S S).

ek	peṛ	jangal	mẽ	ṭhādā,	ṭhādā	moj	uṛāne	ko
S|	S|	|| ||	S	S S,	S S	S|	| S S	S
one	tree	woods	in	stood	stood	enjoyment	flying	for

hāth	pāy	ke	kole	karkai,	camṛā	calā	bikāne	ko
S|	S|	S	S S	|| S ,	|| S	| S	| S S	S
arms	legs	of	coals	having made	skin	set out	selling	for

"A tree stands in the woods enjoying itself. Then its arms and legs are burnt to coals and its skin is put up for sale."

—san
—flax plant[26]

After the useful stem fibers have been removed, the remaining portions of the flax plant may be used for fuel. Striking in

26. For parallels to this riddle, see Archer Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition, op. cit.*, p. 294.

this riddle is the sharp contrast between the original beauty of nature and the ugliness of man's despoliation of that nature for his various needs. The word *hāth* is an interesting example of folk anatomy. The way in which the human body is perceived and subdivided varies from culture to culture. Here, *hāth* can refer to the hand, as when one is told to wash one's hands (cf. riddle 14, above). The word also refers to a Hindi unit of measure, the distance from the fingertips to the elbow. And it can in addition, as here in this riddle, refer to what in English would be the hand plus the arm. Similarly, *pāy* may refer to the foot alone or to the whole leg. The phrase *hāth pāy* in idiomatic Hindi connotes the whole body, furthermore, and thus in this riddle context the total destruction of the flax plant's "body" is described.

23. *Kukubh.* In this 30-*mātrā* meter there is a sixteen-fourteen breakdown, with the *yati* after the sixteenth *mātrā* (16, 14). Each *pada* ends with a 5-*mātrā* sequence of a short vowel followed by two long vowels (| S S).

cād	sā	mu	hai	sab	tan	jar	kā,	bin	pāvõ
S|	S	|	S	||	||	||	S,	||	S S
moon	like	face	is	whole	body	silver	of	without	feet

vo	caltā	hai
S	|S	S

sab	kā	pyārā	rājadulārā,			sāl	sāl	mẽ	baṛhtā		hai
||	S	S S	S |	| S S,		S|	S|	S	||	S	S
all	of	beloved	king's	dear	child	year	year	in	increasing		is

"Its face is like the moon, its body made of silver. It walks without feet. It is like a beloved child to all; it grows year by year."

—rupayā
—rupee

In this description of the basic coin in Indian currency, one finds the comparison of a person's face with the moon, one of the most popular similes in Hindi poetry. It signifies great beauty. The year-by-year growth refers to the ever-increasing

number of coins in circulation, caused by the cumulative result of annual mintings. Texturally noteworthy is an occurrence of internal rhyme: *sabkā pyārā rājadulārā.*

24. *Lāvanī.* In this 30-*mātrā* meter one finds a sixteen-fourteen breakdown, as was the case in the *ṭāṭanka* and *kukubh* meters (riddles 22 and 23). Predictably, a *yati* occurs after the sixteenth *mātrā.* However, this meter is less restrictive (and more popular) than the other 30-*mātrā* meters, in that there are no terminal bound-*mātrā* slots. *Lāvanī* meter does not require that *padas* end with the *ṭāṭanka* pattern of three consecutive long vowels or with a short and two long vowels as in the *kukubh* meter.

The fact that the caesural *yati* occurs after the sixteenth *mātrā* (as in all the meters of twenty-six or more *mātrās*—at least those represented in the present riddle corpus) suggests a definite poetic penchant or pattern. The preference for groupings of sixteen *mātrās* is also evident in the great number and popularity of 16-*mātrā* meters (see riddles 11, 12, and 13). A grouping by eights is also clearly manifested in the structuring of internal rhyme. In riddle 11 the first line consists of two units of eight *mātrās* which rhyme with each other. In the first line of riddle 13 one finds a similar rhyming scheme. In riddle 16 one finds an internal rhyme between the portions preceding the eighth and twentieth *mātrās* (*byāli . . . jālī*). Another internal rhyme is found in riddle 19, with *gaḍeli* at the eighth and sixteenth *mātrās, havelī* at the end of the first *pada,* and *dhelī* at the end of the second. In the internal rhyme in riddle twenty-three, the rhymes also end at the eighth and sixteenth *mātrās.* In connection with this general pattern, one may remark that the basic range of linear *mātrā* counts, as noted previously in the calculation of the more than nine million theoretically possible vowel combinations, extends up to thirty-two. (Actually, the practical range may be considered to be from eight—see riddle 1—to thirty-two). The preeminence of eight and other multiples of four seems to be a consistent feature in Hindi riddle metrics.

sām bhaī sannāvan lāgo, kūd paṛo kāu nagar mē
S| |S || S || S S S| | S S| | || S
evening became buzzing began jumped fell some city in

rājā kāṭ kacairin kāṭī, rānī kāṭī mandar mē
S S S| |S || SS, S S S S || || S
king having bitten court bit queen bit palace in

sāp jāy bābī mē kāṭo, nāhar kāṭo jangal mē
S| S| S S S S S, S || S S || || S
snake having gone anthill in bit lion bit forest in

dass hāt hāthī se laṛkai, rahtā sāt samandar mē
||| S| S S S || S, || S S| | || || S
ten hands elephant with having fought lives seven seas in

"As evening fell, it began buzzing and descended upon the city. It bit the king, it bit the court, it bit the queen in the palace. It bit the snake in the anthill, it bit the lion in the jungle, and it fought with an elephant ten hands in height. It lives on the seven seas."

—macchar
—mosquito

This extended description of the mosquito appears to be related to the popular European and African riddle of the fly who comes uninvited to the king's table.[27] The Hindi word *kāṭ* means both "cut" and "bite", and the metaphor is thus more ambiguous in Hindi than the English translation would at first suggest.

II. Riddles in *Ardha-sama mātrika*

25. *Vidyullatā.* In this meter there are, in principle, four *padas* grouped in such a way that the first and third *padas* each have a *mātrā* count of eleven, while the second and fourth *padas* each have a *mātrā* count of ten. Generally speaking, in *ardha-sama mātrika* meters, one assumes that there are four *padas* in which the first and third have equal numbers of *mātrās* and the second and fourth have equal numbers of *mātrās,* but

27. Cf. *ibid.,* p. 266.

in which the *mātrā* count of the latter is different from that of *padas* one and three. Normally, also, *padas* two and four rhyme. In theory, it would be possible to group the four *padas* into two-line units which, having the same total *mātrā* count and rhyming, could logically be construed as exemplifying *sama-mātrika*. However, both literary and oral tradition indicates that there are four rather than two *padas* involved. There are, for instance, four distinct terminal junctures, rather than two terminal (after lines two and four) and two medial pauses or caesurae (after lines 1 and 3).[28]

kitek sī sūtarī
| S| S S | S
how big like thread (woman)

kitek jār bār
| S| S| S|
how big lover door

kitak duniyā mar gai
| | | | |S | | | |
how much world has died

kitek honhār
| S| S| S|
how much to become

"What a thread-like (thin) woman, and what a big lover at her door! How much of the world has already died, and how much more is to be conceived!"

—kumhār kī dorī aur cāk
—potter of thread & wheel
—potter's thread and wheel

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28. The problem is analogous to the vexing question in the study of English and Scottish ballads as to whether one has four lines, the first and third with four stresses, the second and fourth with three, *or* two lines, each with seven stresses. Again, the actual oral performance provides the only clearcut criteria for metrical distinctions. Writing or printing conventions are too often *a priori*. See Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Ballad of Tradition* (New York 1957), pp. 124–125.

In this pretended obscene riddle the process of making pottery is described. After the newly formed pot has been shaped on the wheel, it is removed by passing a strong cotton thread between the wheel and the base of the pot. Thus the rapprochement of the thread-woman and her lover, the wheel, produces a newborn pot. The second part of the riddle is a philosophical commentary, no doubt alluding to the common Indic motif of God the Creator as a potter. The potter's wheel is the world (both revolve) and to leave the potter's wheel is a metaphor for death. Here is an excellent example of how riddle texts can provide insights into world view, in this instance into the folk concept of the lifespan. Clearly, the riddle suggests that the lifespan of man is short. To be born is to die. The moment of creation is also the time one is forced to leave the wheel. On the other hand, the outlook is not one of pure pessimism. There inevitably remains much more clay to be molded into pots through new (pro) creative acts. "How much of the world is already dead", refers to all the pots which have ever been made: "how much more to be conceived", refers to all those which will be made in the future.

26. *Atibaravai.* This meter entails two segments, each of which has twenty-one *mātrās.* Each segment consists of two *padas,* the *padas* separated by a *yati.* The first *pada* has twelve *mātrās,* the second has nine. An additional requirement is that the second and fourth padas end with a *jagana* (| S |).

kāre kāre bãigan
S S S S S ||
black black eggplants

sitāre bhare jāy
| S | | | S|
stars filled go

rājā jī māgē, to
S S S S S S
king sir asks then

diye	bhī	na	jāy
| S	S	|	S|
given	even	not	go

"The black eggplants are full of stars; my husband desires them, but I cannot even give them to him."

—ākhē
—eyes

The eggplant is black and egg-shaped, and inside it are small, round seeds ("stars"). The eyes also have an oval shape and are dark in color. The word *sitāre* means both stars and the pupils of the eyes.

27. *Bhramaravilāsa.* In this meter the first and third *padas* have fourteen *mātrās,* the second and fourth *padas* have eleven *mātrās* each.

baṛ	dāt	lambī	pūch	hai
||	S|	| | S	S|	S
big	teeth	long	tail	is

lank	pahāṛin	dhāy
S|	| S ||	S|
Lanka	mountains	breaks

rāmāyaṇ	mẽ	dhūdo	mat
S S ||	S	S S	||
Rāmāyaṇa	in	search	not

hanūmān	hai	nāy
| S S|	S	S|
Hanūmāna	is	not

"It has big teeth and a long tail, and it breaks the Lanka mountains. Do not search in the Rāmāyana, because it is not Hanūmāna.

—jelī
—pitchfork

The apparent referent in this riddle is a character in the celebrated Sanskrit epic, Rāmāyaṇa. Hanūmāna is supposed to be

a monkey god, with a long tail and large teeth. The last part of the epic, in which Hanūmāna has a major role, takes place in Ceylon, the native term for which is Lanka. However, the correct answer to the riddle is the farmer's pitchfork. The handle is the long tail, the prongs are the big teeth. The pitchfork is used to separate the wheat from the chaff by throwing forkfulls up into the air. The initial pile of wheat mixed with chaff is the "mountain" broken by the pitchfork.

28. *Dohā.* This meter is not only the most popular *ardha-sama mātrika* meter, but probably the most popular meter of all those found in this oral tradition. It is one of the relatively few meter names which is widely known among the folk. In *dohā* meter, the first and third *padas* have thirteen *mātrās,* the second and fourth have eleven. (There is a related reverse form of this meter in which the first and third *padas* have eleven *mātrās,* while the second and fourth have thirteen. This meter, known as *soraṭhā,* is found in Hindi literature, but rarely if ever in oral poetry.) There are a number of other rules for the ideal *dohā* meter. Within the *padas* the internal breakdowns are as follows: in the first and third *padas* there should be six, four, and three *mātrās;* in the second and fourth *padas* there should be six, four and one. The second and fourth *padas* each ends with a long vowel followed by a short vowel (S |), and these *padas* rhyme. One negative rule for *dohā* meter is that the first and third *padas* may not begin with the specific sequence of a short vowel, long vowel, and short vowel (| S |).[29]

Because of the great importance of *dohā* meter in Hindi riddles and folk poetry, it might be worthwhile to examine examples of it in some detail. First of all, an attempt will be made to see how closely the folk specimens of *dohā* meter—as found in Hindi riddles—follow the canons of ideal *dohā* form as described above. Literary purists, unfamiliar with the beauty

29. For a representative discussion of *dohā* meter see S. N. Ghosal, "Dr. M. Jacobi's Introduction to the *Sanatkumaracaritam,* II Metre," *Journal of the Oriental Institute, M. S. University of Baroda* 7, no. 1–2 (September-December 1957), pp. 41–43. And Bholā Shankar Vyas, *Prākrita Paingalam,* Vol. II (Varanasi 1962), pp. 140–547.

and sophistication of oral poetry, sometimes tend to demean the composition and quality of such materials. In this case, some nineteen *dohā* riddle texts will be presented and examined in the light of the standard literary definition of *dohā* meter. An additional analysis will be made of the actual permutations of *mātrā* combinations within the six-, four- and three-*mātrā* clusters.

janani jano nā bhū paṛo
| | | | S S S | S
mother bore not earth fell

paṛo na har kī driṣṭi
| S | || S S |
fell nor God of sight

sakal jagat ko khāt hai
| || | || S S| S
whole world to eating is

jānat hai sab sriṣṭi
S || S || S |
knowing is all creation

"No mother bore him, nor did he fall to the earth, nor did the glance of God fall upon him; yet he eats the whole world and knows everything in creation."

—kal
—death

In this interesting philosophical riddle, death is depicted as being without beginning and without end. *Kāl* actually means both "death" and "time". The reference to not falling on the earth has to do with a childbirth custom. Except among westernized Hindus, the mother to be delivered of a child lies on her back on the ground. A birth is conceived of as entailing the falling of a body-soul down from its original home in the heavens to the earth. Thus, since Death was not born, he (in the sense of his body-soul identity) did not fall to the earth. Death is further imagined to be without form and for this

reason cannot be seen, even by God. Death eats everyone and every living thing. Whatever is born will die. Death, as Time, knows when an object has fulfilled its purpose and when it must be destroyed or removed.[30]

29. (This and all following riddles through number 46 are in the *dohā* meter just described)

piū	pitā	ke	peṭ	mē
|S	| S	S	S|	S
lover	father	of	stomach	in

sutā	rahī	akulāy
| S	| S	| | S|
daughter	remains	tormented

pitā	marai	to	piu	milai
| S	| S	S	||	| S
father	dies	then	lover	meets

sutā	bhasam	ho	jāy
| S	| ||	S	S|
daughter	ashes	becomes	

"Her lover is in her father's stomach, the girl is tormented. Only if her father dies can she meet her lover, but then she would turn into ashes."

—devayānī, sukrācārya aur kacamana
—Devayānī, Sukracārya and Kacamana

This type of riddle seems to be analogous to what Archer Taylor calls "special knowledge riddles".[31] However, whereas special knowledge riddles in English normally require a knowledge of Biblical history and the like, this one depends upon a familiarity with the Mahābhārata. The event in question concerns the

30. For a discussion of the conception of time in Indian philosophy, see Stanislaw Shayer, *Contributions to the Problem of Time in Indian Philosophy* (Krakow 1938). For other Indic riddles dealing with death see Durga Bhagwat, "The Riddles of Death", *Man in India* 23 (1943), pp. 342–346.

31. "The Varieties of Riddles", *op. cit.*, p. 6. See also, Laurits Bodker, *op. cit.*, p. 72, for a discussion of "lehrhaftes Rätsel".

struggle between the *suras* (gods) and the *asuras* (demons). The demons were aided by the fact that their mentor, Sukrācārya, possessed the secret of *sanjīvini,* a wondrous drug which could restore life to the dead. The *suras* sent a youth, Kacamana, to Sukrācārya to try to learn this secret. Sukrācārya's beautiful daughter, Devayānī, was attracted to her father's new pupil. The demons, fearing that Kacamana would succeed in learning the secret of *sanjīvini,* attempted to assessinate Kacamana. Twice they failed as Sukrācārya, in response to his daughter's pleading, brought the youth back to life. The third time the *asuras* burned the boy and mixed his ashes in wine, which was then given to Sukrācārya to drink. Thus when the boy was brought back to life he found himself lodged in Sukrācārya's stomach. Devayānī was in despair. If she did not have her lover, she would die of grief. On the other hand, her lover could only escape if her father died. If her father died, then she could not bear to live. (To "turn into ashes" means "to die", inasmuch as the Hindus practice cremation.) The solution to the dilemma came when Sukrācārya entrusted the secret of *sanjīvini* to Kacamana. Then the old man died in order to release the young man, who returned the favor by immediately reviving the former. However, in a startling dénouement, Kacamana refused to marry Devayānī, arguing that inasmuch as he was "born" from out of Sukrācārya's body, he was her brother. The riddle is used to teach children the mythical content of the epics.

30.

pānī	mẽ	nisdin	rahe
S S	S	|| ||	| S
water	in	night and day	lives

jāke	had	na	mās
S S	S|	|	S|
to whom	bone	no	flesh

kām	kare	talvār	kā	
S|	| S	|| S|	S	
job	does	sword	of	

phir pānī mẽ bās
|| S S S S|
again water in living

"It lives in water night and day; it has neither bones nor flesh. It does the job of a sword and then lives in the water again."

—kumhār kā dorā
—potter of threād
—"potter's thread"

The potter's thread is normally kept in a bowl of water. It is, of course, taken out of the water when it is used to sever the clay pot from the potter's wheel (cf. the explanation of riddle 25, above). After "serving as a sword" the thread returns to its watery home.

31.

ik curail har ghar basai
|| | S | || || | S
one witch every home lives

jāy lakhāi dar lāg
S| | S || S|
who sees fear sticks

haddī kā ras cūs kai
S S S || S| S
bone of juice having sucked

muh se ugle āg
|| S || S S|
mouth from pours out fire

"A witch lives in every home. Whoever sees her is frightened. She sucks the juice out of the bone and fire pours from her mouth."

—diyāsalāī
—match

The *curail,* or witch, is often depicted as wearing a necklace of bones and eating flesh. Children under roughly eight years of age are normally not cremated when they die, but are buried

instead. To prevent witches from robbing their graves for 'food', branches of thorny bushes or trees are placed on the grave. For the same reason, oil lamps may be placed on the grace, since witches do not like light. Witches are not typically found inside homes, and thus the initial portion of the riddle statement poses an implicit contradiction. The sucking of the juice out of the bone refers to the striking of the match and probably more specifically to the implosive effect caused by the initial flickering of a newly lighted safety-match.

32.

jal	hī	mē	paidā	bhaī
||	S	S	S S	|S
water	right	in	born	became

jalai	dekh	mar	jāi
| S	S |	||	S|
water	seeing	dies	

caliyo	panco	phūk	dē
||S	S S	S|	S
let's go	judges/people	burn	let

pher	amar	ho	jāi
S|	| ||	S	S|
then	immortal	becomes	

"It was born right in the water, but seeing the water it dies. Brothers, let's go and cremate it; then it will be immortal."

—īṭ
—brick

Brick-making in India begins with taking mud out of a village pond. The mud is placed in a hollow rectangular wooden frame. After smoothing the top, the frame is removed and the brick-to-be is left to dry in the sun. Village homes are typically made of such sun-dried brick. Unfortunately, if rain falls on such a brick, it will dissolve. Thus, though the brick is "born in water", it may die upon coming into contact with water again. There is, however, a way of preventing this catastrophe. By "cremating", or baking the mud brick one renders

it resistant to water and thus immortal. The suggestion that cremation ensures immortality is contrary to general eschatological theory inasmuch as everyone who dies becomes immortal. There is thus a philosophical contradiction in the second portion of the riddle statement. And even empirically there is a contradiction between an object's being cremated and thus utterly destroyed and that object's being made 'immortal' in the sense of existing and withstanding destructive forces.

33.

mātā	ke	nõ	hat	nahī
S S	S	S	||	| S
mother	of	nails	hands	not

beṭā	ke	nõ	bīs
S S	S	S	S|
son	of	nails	twenty

dharampitā		se	laṛ	rahe
| | | | S		S	||	| S
father		with	is	fighting

dekh	rahe	jagdīs	
S|	| S	|| S|	
is	seeing	Lord	

"Mother has no hands or (finger-) nails; the son has twenty (finger-) nails. He is fighting with his father, while the Lord looks on."

—Fighting in the presence of Lord Rāma between Hanumān and his son Makardhvāj, who was born from a fish.

This is another special knowledge riddle (cf. riddle 29), which in this case depends upon familiarity with the Rāmāyaṇa. In the Rāmāyaṇa, Makardhvāj is the son of the monkey-god Hanūmāna's union with a fish. The fish lived in the lowest of the seven hierarchical levels of the world, the level called Patal. The act of conception was accidental, inasmuch as it occurred when Hanūmāna was jumping over the waters and his sweat and seed entered a passing fish. Makardhvāj, not knowing that his father was Hanūmāna, later engaged him in battle in the presence of Lord Rāma. The fight ended in a draw after the

relationship of the principals was miraculously revealed, and reconciliation followed.[32]

34.

calat	calat	būdhe	bhaye
| ||	| ||	S S	| S
going	going	old	became

calahu	na	ekahu	kos	
| | |	|	S | |	S|	
went	not	even one	*kos*	(length of two miles)

unke	sut	aise	bhaye
|| S	||	S S	| S
his	sons	such	became

cale	hazārõ	kos
| S	| S S	S|
went	thousands	*kos*

"Running, he became old, but he did not go even two miles. His sons were such that they went thousands of miles."

—kumhār	kā	cāk	
—potter	of	wheel	
potter's wheel			

The potter's wheel rotates endlessly, but it does not move from its place. On the other hand, its products (the pots) may circulate all around the country. Apparently there is a consistent metaphor in which the potter's wheel is depicted as a masculine Creator (cf. riddle 25). Since the potter's wheel may also metaphorically-speaking be the world, it is significant that the world is perceived as a masculine creative force rather than a feminine one. This may be meaning-fully correlated with the prevailing patrilineal social organization. Note also in this riddle the weakness of the father as opposed to the strength

32. This father-son combat is similar to those in European tradition. For a psychological interpretation of the significance of the pattern, see Alan Dundes, "The Father, the Son, and the Holy Grail", *Literature and Psychology* 12 (1962), pp. 101–112.

of the sons, a possible Oedipal theme in no way inconsistent with the overt father-son conflict in riddle 33.

35.

lāl	mūṛh	murgā	nahī
S|	S|	| | S	| S
red	head	cock	not

sabz	pāy	nahi	mor
S |	S|	| |	S|
green	feet	not	peacock

lambī	pūch	lāgūr	nahi
S S	S |	| S|	| |
long	tail	langur	not

cār	pāy	nahī	dhor
S|	S|	| |	S|
four	legs	not	beast

"It has a red head, but it is not a rooster. It has green feet, but it is not a peacock. It has a long tail, but it is not a langur monkey. It has four legs, but it is not an animal."

—karkāitā
—chameleon

Of stylistic interest are the negative constructions which eliminate possible answers (cf. also riddle 27).[33]

36.

maṭṭī	te	paidā	bhaī
S S	S	S S	|S
dust/clay	from	born	became

maṭṭī	mẽ	mil	jāy
S S	S	||	S|
dust/clay	in	will	mingle

33. For a parallel to this riddle, see the Indian folklorist Sarat Chandra Mitra's "Riddles Current in Bihar", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 70, pt. III (1901), p. 36.

devakuvar mo phūk de
S | | || S S S
son of God me cremate

umar baṛī ho jāy
| || | S S S|
age big will become

"I was born in clay and will one day merge with the clay. Oh man, burn me and my life will be greatly lengthened."

—īṭ
—brick

For a description of the brickmaking process and a similar play upon burning and longevity, see the commentary on riddle 32.

37. it se āī jāṭnī
|| S SS S| S
this side from came Jāṭ woman

ut se āyā jāṭ
|| S S S S|
that side from came Jāṭ

donō aise mil gaye
S S S S || | S
both so joined together

cākī ke se pāṭ
S S S S S|
gristmill of like stones

"From this side came the Jāt woman, from that side came the Jāt man. Both met in the way that the stones of a gristmill meet."

—kivār
—French doors

In this pretended obscene riddle, the protagonists are a man and woman of the Jāṭ caste. In terms of the four *varṇa* system of traditional Hindu society, the Jāṭs consider themselves of the warrior (Ksatriyā) *varṇa*. They are stereotypically con-

sidered as being obstreperous and rather coarse. When one Jāṭ meets another, it is said that there is likely to be violence and noise. The riddle suggests that the Jāṭ man and woman come together roughly. The rubbing of the stones of a hand gristmill, one against the other, is a common metaphor for sexual intercourse (cf. in English, the use of "grinds" in the phrase "bumps and grinds" used to describe the erotic body movements made by striptease and exotic dancers). The grindstones' movement is a somewhat misleading metaphor in terms of the riddle answer, inasmuch as the top-bottom positioning of the stones deceptively conceals the answer of the vertically positioned sections of the French doors.

38.

bel	parī	darmyān	mē
S|	| S	|| S|	S
ivy	lay	middle	in

phūl	rahā	laharāy
S|	| S	| | S|
flower	remained	waving (with happiness)

ek	acambhā	māi	kahū
S|	| | | S	S	| S
one	wonder	I	tell

phūl	bel	ko	khāy
S|	S|	S	S|
flower	ivy	to	ate

"From this side came the Jāt woman, from that side came the Jāt man. Both met in the way that the stones of a gristmill meet."

—diyā
—oil lamp

In this unusual riddle the ivy is the cotton wick of the oil lamp, while the flower is that portion of the wick which is burning. The burning or flaming is depicted as the blossoming of a flower. The flickering of the flame is seen as analogous to the gentle swaying of a flower in the breeze. The catachrestic reference to the flower eating the ivy, alludes to the flame's burning of

the wick. The riddle involves a play on words, in that the word *phūl* in Hindi means both flower and the burning portion of the lamp wick.

39.

pīrī pīrī tīharī
SS SS S | S
yellow yellow woman

kesar ke so rang
S || S S S|
saffron of like color

gyārah devar choṛke
S|| S || S| S
eleven husband's younger brother having left

gaī jeṭh ke sang
|S S| S S |
went husband's elder brother of company

"A yellowish woman of saffron color, ran away with her husband's elder brother, having rejected the eleven younger brothers of her husband."

—arhar
—a kind of lentil,
citis cajan

This superb riddle is the kind of evidence which should be cited to those who fail to see the value of analysing folklore. No doubt there are still many who think that riddles are little more than jocular trivialities. What a pity such unthinking critics could not have the pleasure of examining this riddle and seeing how much vital cultural data is packed into it. First and foremost, the riddle contains a remarkable play on the word *jeṭh*. A woman's *jeṭh* is any one of her husband's elder brothers. Normally a woman observes *pardā* when in the presence of this relative, covering her face with her veil or shawl. Other characteristics of this avoidance behavior pattern include the rule that the woman never addresses her *jeṭh* and therefore cannot develop intimacy with him. In contrast, the *devar* is

any of a woman's husband's younger brothers. A woman enjoys a joking relationship with her *devars*. The overt contradiction in the riddle comes from the woman's "avoiding" (rejecting the advances of) her *devars* and eloping with her *jeṭh*. (In other versions of this riddle there is a further addition to the text: "If a woman is pure enough to reject the overtures of her *devars*, how can she be so shameless as to run away with her *jeṭh?*") Note that if one were unfamiliar with the absolutely crucial kinship difference between a husband's older and younger brothers, one would have been able to discover it from this one riddle alone!

The play on words comes because the word *jeṭh* is also the name of the third of the twelve months of the Hindu calender. The type of yellow lentil described in this riddle is planted in the *fourth* month of the year and harvested in the *second* month of the following year. The lentil then might figuratively and in a sense literally be said to be letting eleven months go by before going off in (with) the twelfth, that is, the third month, *jeṭh*. Thus this ingenious riddle not only displays a critical kinship distinction, but also describes the actual planting and harvesting details of the referent lentil.

The clever pun on the words for one of the months and for the elder brother-in-law is also utilized in a proverb employed primarily by women. The proverb, like the riddle, emphasizes the great social distance between a woman and her husband's older brother, as well as underscoring the necessity for deference behavior:

jeṭh	kī	saram	to	haraṛ	nai	bī	karī
jeth	of	shyness	(emph.)	lentil	——	even	did

(*to* is an emphatic particle, modifying the preceding noun phrase. *nai* is a nominative indicator, used in the past tense, which signals that the preceding word, *haraṛ*, is the actor in the sentence)

In a free translation this proverb might be rendered: "Even the lentil is shy with her *jeṭh*". Literally, the proverb refers to the fact that because of the planting and harvesting schedule for the lentil, it is never seen in the presence of *jeṭh*

(the third month). Metaphorically, the proverb suggests that if even so insignificant an item as the lowly lentil must be shy of its *jeṭh,* how much more important is it that this custom be followed by a grown woman.

40.

mēh	paṛā	thā	rāt	ko
S|	| S	S	S|	S
rain	fallen	was	night	at

sab	jag	diyā	dubāy
||	||	| S	| S|
whole	world	gave	sunk

ghaṛā	bharā	nahi	nīr	se
| S	| S	| |	S|	S
jug	filled	not	water	with

panchī	pyāsā	jāy
S S	S S	S|
bird	thirsty	goes

"It rained at night and the whole world was drowned, but the jug was not filled with water and the bird remained thirsty."

—os
—dew

This is a more literal description of dew than the "garden of jewels" metaphor in riddle 3. Still there is an apparent contradiction between heavy rainfall and insufficient water to fill a jug or quench a bird's thirst.

41.

mēh	paṛā	thā	rāt	ko
S|	| S	S	S|	S
rain	fallen	was	night	at

sab	jag	diyā	dubāy
||	||	| S	| S|
whole	world	gave	drowned

peṛan pānī caṛh gayo
S || S S | | | S
trees water climbed went

ghoṛā mal mal nhāy
S S || || S|
horse rubbing rubbing bathed

"It rained at night and the whole world was drowned. The water climbed way up on the trees, but the horse was enjoying a bath."

—os
—dew

This riddle is obviously a variant of the preceding one (riddle 40). In this case, the state of inundation is not denied by an empty jug or a thirsty bird, but is affirmed by the image of water rising to the tops of the trees. Despite the apparent flood, the horse is enjoying a bath. A Hindu bath consists of first pouring water over one's body and then rubbing the body briskly with the hands. The horse, covered with dew, uses his tail as a kind of washcloth to rub his body.

42.

pān saṛā ghorā haṭā
S| | S S S | S
betel leaf rotted horse regressed

vidyā niṣphal jāy
S S || S|
knowledge fruitless went

cūlhe mē roṭī jalai
S S S SS | S
fireplace in bread burns

celā arth lagāy
S S S | | S|
pupil meaning attached

"The betel leaf rotted, the horse was no longer in condition, learning became fruitless, and the bread burned in the fireplace, while the

pupil figured out the meaning of all this."

—pherā	nā	thā
—rolled/exercised/reviewed/turned	not	was

The betel leaf was not rolled, the horse was not exercised, the lesson was not reviewed, and the bread was not turned over.

This riddling question, like riddle number 4, has a multiple-meaning answer. The four distinct, though related, meanings of *pherā* are used in the answer: (1) rolled. Betel leaf, chewed on numerous social occasions, is stored in a damp cloth to keep it fresh. It is rolled so that it will stay moist longer. If it is left flat the moisture would evaporate more quickly. Several rolls of betel leaves are placed in the same damp cloth. Failure to roll the leaf would increase the chances of dry rot. (2) exercised, or taken around. A horse which is not taken out to be exercised soon gets out of shape. (3) reviewed. One cannot remember and put to use what one learns unless one reviews it again and again. (4) turned, or rotated. The typical bread, round and flat and unleavened (cf. riddle number 17), must be slowly turned or rotated on the griddle so that all sides are baked evenly, and must be turned over to bake both sides.

43.

gharrāṭā	kartā huā			
S S S	|| S |S			
noise	making			
jātā	kos	hazār		
S S	S|	| S|		
goes	two miles	thousand		
gire	to	caknācūr		ho
| S	S	| S S|		S
falls	then	broken into pieces		becomes
kyā	yah	kaho	vicār	
S	||	| S	| S|	
what	this	tell	having pondered	

"It goes thousands of miles making a great noise. If it falls, it will be shattered to pieces. Tell me after pondering what it is."

—havāi jahāz
—air plane

In this riddle the onomatapoeic word *gharrāṭā* signifies the sound of a motor (i.e., that of an automobile or airplane).

44.

tīn netra chai caraṇ hãi
S| S | S | || S
three eyes six feet are

do mukh jibbhyā ek
S || S S S|
two mouths tongue one

yā ko arath lagāy kai
S S | | | | S| S
this to meaning having attached

pandit kahiyo dekh
S || | | S S|
learned man tell having seen

"There are three eyes but six feet, two mouths but one tongue. Having pondered it, oh learned man, tell me what it means."

—kāṇe shukrācārya medhak kī savārī par
one-eyed Shukrācārya frog of riding on
—one-eyed Shukrācārya riding on his frog

This is another special knowledge riddle, depending upon familiarity with the Mahābhārata. Shukrācārya is an important character in that epic (cf. riddle number 29), and his principal distinguishing features are his one eye and his traditional means of transportation, a frog.

45.

ulṭī se sīdhī karī
|| S S S S | S
upside-down from right-side-up made

diye	masosā	cār
| S	S	S|
gave	knee-blows	four

apno	kām	banāy	kai
||	S|	| S|	S
own	work	having	made

bhāgī	lāhagā	jhār
S S	| | S	S|
ran	skirt	shaken

"It was righted from its upside-down position and given several blows. The lady (who did it) fulfilled her task (using it) and ran away shaking her skirt."

—kaṭhautā
—a large, shallow,
wooden tub

This appears to be a pretended obscene riddle for the vagina. The word *ulṭī* means lying face down. The word *kām* means both "work" and "sexual desire" (cf. the *Kāma Sutra of Vatsyayana*). The answer is a large oval-shaped wooden tub in which laundry is washed. The tub is normally kept face-down on the ground when not in use. A woman wishing to launder her clothes would first turn the tub right side-up and dump the clothes in. After pouring in enough water to wet the clothes and soaping them with a bar of laundry soap, she would literally beat the clothes in the tub with her fists to remove the dirt. This is done in a kneeling or sitting position. After several more rinsings and beatings the clothes are adjudged clean and the woman rises to return home. Since her skirt has been in contact with the ground, she shakes it to remove any dirt or grass.

46.

bābī	vākī	jal	bharī
S S	S S	||	| S
anthill	his	water	filled

ūpar	bārī	āg
S ||	S S	S|
on top	lit	fire
jabai	bajāī	bāsurī
| ||	| SS	S | S
whenever	played	flute
nikaīā	kālā	nāg
| | S	S S	S|
came out	black	snake

"His anthill is full of water, a fire is burning on top of it, (and still) whenever the flute is played, the black snake comes out."

—hukkā
—hookah ("hubble-bubble")

In this very popular riddle, the anthill is the container in which the water for cooling the smoke is placed. This container, like the anthill, is round at the base, rising to a single peak. Above it is a hollow pipe (of cane or bamboo), and above this is the *chilam,* a funnel-shaped container in which the tobacco is burned. Thus a fire is burning on top of an anthill full of water. From the hollow pipe leading from the water container runs another pipe. This one is somewhat longer, and it is through this pipe that the smoker inhales the smoke. The inhalation causes the water to bubble and the black smoke to appear. Thus "playing the flute" makes the "black snake" come out.

According to Archer Taylor, an earlier reported Hindi version of this widespread riddle has the pipe as the black snake. Clearly, however, it is the smoke which is referred to as the snake. A clever feature of this snake-charmer riddle is the fact that anthills are believed to be the abode of snakes. Flute-playing is a traditional means of enticing snakes, not only domesticated snakes in street shows, but also to capture untamed snakes at large in the woods.[34]

Nineteen riddles in *dohā* meter have been presented; each

34. For parallels to this riddle, see Archer Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition, op. cit.,* p. 595–598.

has four *padas,* thus a total of seventy-six *padas* have been shown. As previously mentioned (see riddle 28), the first and third *padas* in *dohā* meter have *mātrā gaṇa* breakdowns of six, four, and three. In the nineteen riddles presented, all of the first and third *padas* (thirty-eight lines in all) have this prescribed pattern. The second and fourth *padas* in *dohā* meter are supposed to have a six, four, one breakdown. Sixteen of the nineteen riddles (thirty-two lines) conform to this rule. In riddles 40, 41, and 43 there is some deviation from this in one *pada.* Here the total is the "correct" eleven *mātrās,* but the prescribed breakdown is absent. In riddles 40 and 41 (which are actually two versions of the same riddle) the initial *gaṇa* of the second *pada* does not end with the sixth *mātrā* as it should. Instead, it ends with the seventh *mātrā.* In riddle 43 the same descrepancy occurs in the fourth *pada.* In these three riddles it is only one pada which differs from the ideal *dohā* form. The other *padas* in these riddles conform perfectly. Certainly the fact that 73 out of a total of 76 riddle *padas* follow perfect *dohā* form is a remarkable indication of the stability of this meter. The folk do not consciously count in *gaṇas* or *mātrās,* but apparently the metrical structure is culturally binding all the same.

The question of the relationship between possible combinations of *mātrās* and actual combinations of *mātrās* cannot be answered with any degree of accuracy. However, even this small corpus of nineteen *dohā* riddles is sufficient to indicate several trends. The possible combinations of *mātrās* in *gaṇas* of six, four, and three *mātrās* will be listed below, followed by the number of times the particular combination actually occurred in the nineteen riddle corpus. In addition, the frequency of occurrence will be compared to a similar statistical count of *dohā mātrā-gaṇa* combinations made in written as opposed to oral tradition. Bhola Shanker Vyas, in his edition of the Prakrit treatise on metrics, *Prakrita-Paingalam*[35] noted all the verses in *dohā* meter in the treatise (used to describe meters, *dohā* and others) and counted the frequency of occurrence of

35. 2 Vols. (Varanasi 1959, 1962), Vol. II, pp. 541–542.

mātrā-gaṇa in them. Certain combinations of *mātrās* within *gaṇa* divisions appear to be more popular than others. For example, in the six-*mātrā gaṇas*, thirty-two out of seventy-three examples begin and end with long vowels (SSS, S||S). This may be compared to ten out of seventy-three which begin and end with short vowels. Forty-four begin with a long vowel, while twenty-nine begin with a short vowel. Fifty-one end with a long vowel, while twenty-two end with a short vowel. From similar data in the four-*mātrā gaṇas*, it would appear that ending a four or six-*mātrā gaṇa* with a long vowel is more popular than ending it with a short vowel. The three-*mātrā gaṇas* abundantly confirm this tendency, with thirty-six out of thirty-eight examples ending with a long vowel. Of course, the other thirty-eight *padas* (the second and fourth *padas* of each riddle) end with a short vowel as dictated by the requirements of *dohā* meter (6, 4, 1).

As for the comparison of folk with literary distribution of *mātrā-gaṇa* combinations, it is interesting that the two most popular folk combinations in the four- and six-*mātrā gaṇas* were the same. The absence of a particular combination is just a obvious. Thus in the four-*mātrā* combinations the sequence of a short vowel, long vowel, and short vowel (|S|) did not occur in the riddle corpus and occurred rarely in the

Possible Combinations of Six *Mātrās*	Times Used in Riddle Corpus	Times Used in Prakrit
SSS	18	22
||SS	8	13
|S|S	6	0
S||S	14	44
||||S	5	19
|SS|	3	1
S|S|	5	19
|||S|	1	10
SS||	3	16
||S||	2	17
|S|||	2	0
S||||	4	12
||||||	2	15
Total	73	188

Possible Combinations of Four *Mātrās*	Times Used in Riddle Corpus	Times Use in Prakrit
SS	39	34
||S	24	117
|S|	0	1
S||	8	16
||||	2	12
Total	73	180
Combinations of Three *Mātrās* in the Odd *Padas*		
S|	0	0
|S	36	13
|||	2	77
Total	38	90

Final vowel in all second and fourth *padas* it short.

literary sample. The principal difference between the folk and literary utilization of possible *mātrā* combinations concerns extensive use of sequences of short vowels. The folk do not appear to use such sequences, whereas literary authors do.

Another salient characteristic of *dohā* meter, as defined by literary metricists, concerns the number of short vowels used in the total of forty-eight *mātrās* in the four *padas*. In essence, the fewer the short vowels, the better the *dohā*. Since folk poetry is frequently denigrated by students of written literature on the basis of such literary features as meter (often without actually examining folk materials), it may be of interest to see how well or how poorly the oral riddles in *dohā* meter fare when measured by such standards. If the total of short vowels is twelve or less, the *dohā* verse qualifies as *brāhmaṇī dohā*; if the total is between thirteen and twenty-two, inclusive, it is called *ksatriyā;* between twenty-three and thirty-two the verse is *vaisyā*; and verses with over thirty-three short vowels are considered *sūdrā*. The parallel between the names for the hierarchy of quality in meter construction and the *varṇa* names for the traditional four ranked orders of society is an interesting example of the extension of principles of social

organization into literary aesthetics. There is even a poetic analogue for the "outcaste" or "untouchable" social category, *cāṇḍālanī*. If any of the four-*mātrā gaṇas* contains the sequence short-long-short (|S|), the *dohā* verse is called *cāndālanī*, which is to say that it falls outside the range of desirable form. According to this classification the riddles in this corpus are:

Riddle Number	Number of Long Vowels	Number Short Vowels	Name	Category
1.	13	22	madakala	ksatriyā
2.	15	18	nara	,,
3.	16	16	karabha	,,
4.	13	22	madakala	,,
5.	16	16	karabha	,,
6.	16	16	karabha	,,
7.	13	22	madakala	,,
8.	14	20	marālā	,,
9.	17	14	markaṭa	,,
10.	19	10	syena	brāhmaṇī
11.	15	18	nara	ksatriyā
12.	18	12	maṇḍūka	brāhmaṇī
13.	16	16	krabha	ksatriyā
14.	14	20	marāla	,,
15.	19	10	syena	brāhmaṇī
16.	17	14	markaṭa	ksatriyā
17.	15	18	nara	,,
18.	17	14	markaṭa	,,
19.	17	14	markaṭa	,,

Total: *brāhmanī doha,* 3
ksatriyā doha, 16
No examples of *vaisyā, sūdrā,* or *cāndālanī*

It should be clear then that even by the somewhat artificial standards for good *dohā* meter, the meter of these folk riddles rates as excellent. Only examples of *dohā* or high *varṇa* are present in this corpus.

III. Riddles in *viṣama* meter.

In *viṣama* meters the four *padas* do not have equal weight (as in *sama-mātrika* meters), nor are there any first-third or second-fourth *pada* pairs (as in *ardha-sama-mātrika*). In *viṣama,* or unequal-weight meters, each *pada* can in theory have its own *mātrā* count. However, more commonly there is some consistency among *padas.* For example, three lines may have one weight, while the final line has another (cf. riddle number 49). Strictly speaking, if two *padas* in a verse exemplify one *sama-mātrika* meter and the other two *padas* exemplify a different *sama-mātrika* meter, the complete four-line verse would be considered *viṣama,* not *sama-mātrika.* This would be the case, for example, with riddle number 14, which is technically in the *viṣama* category.

47. *Karimakarabhuja* and *caupāī.* For descriptions of these two *sama-mātrika* meters, see riddles 1 and 12 above. One might want to consider this riddle as simply an example of caupāī in which the first half of the first *pada* is missing.

			cha	pāy chapkī
			|	S| || S
			six	leg lizard
ghar	kan	khāy	parosan	lapkī
||	||	S|	| S ||	|| S
home	of	eaten	neighbor	dashes

"A six-legged lizard, having eaten the members of its family, dashed to the neighbors."

—tarājū

—scale (balance)

The six-legged lizard refers to the balance scale, the legs being the cords suspending the scales from the bar (cf. riddle 21). Balance scales are in great demand, especially in those areas where barter in kind is commonly practiced. Not all families possess a scale of their own; furthermore, these scales come

in a variety of sizes, appropriate for a variety of goods, and few families in any case own scales of all sizes. For this reason, these scales are frequently being borrowed and lent from one household to another. Naturally, the scale would be used by the owner before he allowed it to leave his premises. He would "feed" the scale by placing on it the goods to be weighed—commonly a quantity of grain (which makes the metaphor of "eating" most appropriate). Then he may lend it to other households.

48. *Sarasī* and *dohā*. For a description of these meters, see riddles 20 and 28.

goy mararkai, sāp sararkai, nāhariyā dakrāy
S| || | S S| | || S S | | S || S|
ray breaks under pressure snake glides tigress cries

suniyo rājā bhoj yah, kon jināvar jāy
| | S S S S| || S| | S || S|
listen King Bhoj this, which animal goes

"The ray breaks under the pressure, the snake glides and the tigress roars. Listen, oh King Bhoj, what animal is this?"

—*caras*

—leather bucket (used to draw water for irrigation)

This riddle is based upon an important agricultural technique. It concerns drawing water from a well into adjacent irrigation ditches. A leather bucket full of water is pulled to the top of the well by a team of bullocks. When the bucket is at the top, a man tips it towards him and then places his right foot on top of the bucket to help push it over. Emptied, the bucket collapses. Here, the bucket is the ray which breaks under the (foot's) pressure. The rope, which is tied at one end to the bucket and at the other to the bullock's yoke, is the snake. When the bucket is being emptied, the man emptying it may signal to his companion handling the bullock team, directing him to release his end of the rope. The emptied bucket is then thrown down the well again, its weight causing the rope to come sliding along the ground towards the well (the "gliding" of the snake). After the release of the rope from the yoke,

the man in charge of the bullocks may whip the team to head them back towards the well, in order to harness them again for raising another bucket of water. This whipping may result in a bellow or two from the bullocks, thus the "roar" of the "tigress" in the riddle.

King Bhoj is a legendary king, who delighted in visiting his subjects incognito. He disguised himself in order to learn about the welfare of his people. Here in turn, perhaps, the people are disguising something in their life from the king. The man from the royal court, wise as he is, may not be familiar with the mechanics of rural daily life. The name of King Bhoj, along with the names of other legendary kings, frequently appears in riddles and other forms of Hindi folklore.

49. *Mahānubhāvā* and *mangalāvatī.* For a description of the first meter, see riddle number 6. The second meter, *mangalāvatī,* is an eight-*mātrā* meter with a five and three breakdowwn.

yāhu	nāy	vāhu	nāy
S |	S|	S |	S|
here	not	there	not

rājā	ke	des	nāy
S S	S	S|	S|
king	of	country	not

sakal	supārīyā				mē
| ||	|	S	S	S	S
whole	betel-nut				in

guṭhaliyā			nāy
|	|	S	S|
pit			not

"Not here, not there, nor in the king's country. In the whole betel-nut there is no pit."

—olā
—hailstone

The first part of the riddle alludes to the fact that hailstones are not found on the earth. The betel-nut is a round, very hard nut.

From these few examples of *viṣama* riddles, one is tempted to speculate that the slightly over-long first two lines (over-long, that is, with respect to the last two lines) may be the result of achieving internal rhyme. For example, in riddle 48 the *mararkaisararkai* rhyme, and in riddle 49 the rhyme *yāhu nāy-vāhu nāy.*

It should be pointed out that the folk, unlike literary perfectionists in poetic composition, do not always compose riddles of two or four *padas.* There are a number of riddles in this corpus which consist of only one *pada.* Obviously in such cases such an extra-metrical characteristic as rhyme cannot occur.

50. *Caupāī.* For a description of this meter, see riddle 12.

bhãis	bhajādī	gobar	duh	lo
S |	| S S	S ||	||	S
buffalo	chased away	dung	milk	take

"The buffalo is chased away; now milk the dung."

—sahad	kī	makkhī	aur	sahad
honey	of	fly	and	honey

—honey-bee and honey

The water-buffalo, a domesticated animal, is used as a source of milk. Its dung is used for fuel and for fertilizer. Milking dung, however, is clearly a profitless venture. In India, the honey-bee is black, as is the water-buffalo, and the honey is conceived of as the excrement of the bee.[36]

51. *Caupaī.* For a discussion of this meter, see riddle number

tīn	aksar	kā	merā	nām
S|	S ||	S	| S	S|
three	syllable	of	my	name

ulṭā	sīdhā	ek	samān
S S	S S	S|	| S|
reversed	straight	one	equal/alike

ātā	hū	khāne	ke	kām
S S	S	S S	S	S |
coming	am	eating	of	work

36. Cf. Archer Taylor, *English Riddles from Oral Tradition, op. cit.,* p. 138, no. 407.

"My name is a three-syllable word. It is the same whether you read it backwards or forward. I am meant to be eaten."

—dāldā
—Dāldā (a brand of vegetable shortening)

This riddle consists of three padas in *caupaī* meter. Since written Hindi employs a syllabic orthographic system (called *devanāgarī*), rather than a system of letters like English, the first clue is in terms of syllables. The riddle type is, however, analogous to letter riddles in English.[37] The palindrome clue further limits the possibilities to such words as, for example, *jahāj* ("ship"), *rabar* ("rubber"). The final clue concerning the object edibility poses a further limitation. The answer is a popular brand of vegetable shortening used in cooking.

52. *Atibaravai.* For a description of this meter see riddle number 26.

dūdh	kī	nā	mūt	kī
S |	S	S	S|	S
milk	of	nor	urine	of

ṭhādī	cucyāy
S S	|| S|
standing	drips

"It is good neither for milk nor for urine, yet it stands and drips."

—chappar
—thatched-roofed hut

This riddle looks like half of an *ardha-sama-mātrika* riddle. But there are no third or fourth *padas*. A most interesting feature of this riddle is the ingenious use of a proverb within the riddle. The first *pada*, by itself, is a proverb, used in reference to something which is useless (not being good even for urine is meant facetiously). The proverb seems to suggest

37. Taylor, "The Varieties of Riddles", *op. cit.*, p. 2.

the two obvious possible answers (cow or buffalo), but at the same time it eliminates them.

On the basis of the material and analysis we have presented here, we feel justified in claiming that Hindi folk poetry does possess clear-cut metrical patterning. Literary academicians in India have tended to argue that folk poetry lacks systematic metrics. The folk are thought to pay little or no attention to metrical factors in composing poetry. It is not our contention that Hindi riddlers are necessarily conscious of the elaborate and complex metrical features present in their riddles, but only that the metrical features themselves are empirically demonstrable through the kind of analysis we have undertaken and hence are indisputably present in this oral genre. It is indeed doubtful that the folk have any great insight into folk metrics as a systematic science. While some are familiar with the names of certain popular folk meters (which have literary analogue as described herein), they are hardly conversant with the variety and complexities of literary metrics, even though the application of metrical principles is quite evident in the riddles analysed here.

By emphasizing metrical features in these riddles, we have unfortunately been unable to give adequate attention to other textural features of this poetic genre, such as alliteration, assonance, and a whole variety of figures of speech. A full-fleged rhetorical investigation of all of these features of Hindi riddle language would be well worth undertaking, and our study has admittedly a narrow focus from this perspective. On the other hand, the detail required for the examination of just one element of prosody, namely metrics, may give one pause.

It is our hope that our delination of the metrical characteristics of Hindi riddles may encourage studies of the metrics of other genres of Hindi folklore as well. If riddles demonstrate metrical patterning, surely sung genres, such as *holī*,

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38. A collection of 59 *malhor* texts together with a discussion of their metrical pattern may be found in Ved Prakash Vatuk, "*Malhor:* A Type of Work Song in Western Uttar Pradesh, India", *Asian Folklore Studies* 29 (1970), pp. 251–274.

bhajan, malhor, and others could be similarly analysed with profit.[38] One question which must await such research is the relationship, if any, of the Hindi riddle metric patterns to the metrical patterning in other genres. Some of the meters discussed here, for example the *dohā,* are certainly to be found in folksong. It is quite likely that metrical patterns are part of a folk poetic system in a particular language rather than peculiar to a single genre of folk poetry.

Ideally there should also be studies undertaken of comparative metrics across language lines. This is of particular concern as we are dealing in India with folk traditions sharing in common an elite literary tradition with a highly developed and scientific approach toward metrics. Important questions to be asked would be: What are the similarities and differences, if any, between Hindi riddle metrics and the metrics of riddles in other Indo-Aryan languages, on the one hand, and non-Indo-Aryan (e.g. Dravidian, Munda) languages on the other? Are there distinctive North Indian as opposed to South Indian metrical patterns? Or are there certain pan-Indian metrical patterns to be found in folk poetry of the various language families? Answers to these questions must of course await similar analyses of other riddle corpuses in India. Once such detailed studies of particular genres have been made, it will be possible to undertake a truly comparative study of folk metrics. Meillet has tried to show the Indo-European origin of classical Greek meters.[39] In similar fashion it may one day be possible to show historical relationships between apparently disparate folk metrical systems and between these and the literary metrics of Sanskrit and Prakrit poetry. In any case, intensive metrical studies of folklore are bound to illuminate and enhance man's total comprehension of his poetic products.

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39. Antoine Meillet *Les origines indo-européennes des mètres grecs* (Paris 1923).