

Documenting the Oral Folk History of Rajasthan: A Study of Komal Kothari's Indigenous Method of Preserving and Perpetuating Folklore

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<i>Jisko jo chahiye</i>	You are an explorer,
<i>Idhar se udhar se, satyon ko</i>	Collector of truths,
<i>Bator, anveshi tum</i>	Meeting the requirements
<i>Jiska jo prapya hai</i>	Of those around you
<i>Use wahi bhejte ho.</i>	Provider of people's wants,
<i>Deep ki tarah</i>	desires and needs.
<i>Prakash hi nahi phailaate</i>	Not only do you
<i>Aganita deep jalaate ho</i>	Shine forth like a beacon,
<i>Prakaash se prakaash jod kar</i>	You also light innumerable
<i>Andh timir ko</i>	little lamps
<i>Divya banaate ho.</i>	By yoking light with light
	Thereby illuminating
	The dark night. ¹

-- From "Komal," featuring in the poetry collection *Aas Paas* by
Marudhar Mridul²

Sadhna Naithani examines, with shock, how colonial folklorists and collectors of Indian folklore in different linguistic and geographical regions of India, homogenized the variations in oral traditions, resulting in the emergence of "A Folktale Called India . . . a beautiful land with rich and ancient folklore, inhabited by 'superstitious, rude and unlearned'" (2006). After India got independence, many historians have put together a history and later, a nationalist historiography in their bid to create and perpetuate an official nationalist discourse. However, Indian folklore and oral traditions, a rich repertoire of which exist in India, also played a

¹ My translation.

² Mridul (2004, April-June).

significant role in the “reconstitution of tradition in the nationalist discourse in India” (Chatterji, 2005, April). One must be reminded, however, that folklore in India was a “contested source of historical reconstruction” (Chatterji, 2005, April).

The Renaissance in Rajasthani: From Hindi to Rajasthani

After the colonial rule ended, the written word assumed a dominant role in the manner in which “the civil society engaged with itself and with the state” (Deo & Chandra, n.d.). Born and brought up in Rajasthan, Komal Kothari and Vijay Dan Detha, who had themselves participated in the freedom struggle, laid a heavy premium on “documentation and writing as a means of historical inquiry” (Deo & Chandra, n.d.). Both Kothari and Detha were graduates of Hindi literature, and did not really have a penchant towards Rajasthani, to begin with.

However, in 1952-53, Kothari decided to organize a performance of Rajasthani folk songs in ‘Anand Cinema’ and was pleased to note the effect that the performance had on the spellbound audience. This was the dawn of a new era, recalls Marudhar Mridul, in Rajasthani language, and folksongs, folktales and folk arts in Rajasthani—the renaissance of Rajasthani culture (Mridul, 2004, April-June). Though Rajasthani was not constitutionally recognized, it was a distinct, independent language. Kothari was a firm believer that language leads to recognition. Exemplifying “one of the greatest intellectual partnerships of post-Independence India,” Kothari and Detha decided to encourage the documentation of and the creation of new compositions, both written and oral, in Rajasthani (Deo & Chandra, n.d.).

Very soon, Kothari and Detha faced their first roadblock: although there was abundant historical material, manuscripts and writings from the 7th century, but no documentation of the oral Rajasthani language that was spoken every day. So, they decided to transcribe folktales and folk narratives, which led to the 15-volume set *Bataan ri phulwari* in Rajasthani, spanning 1500 pages (Ranade, 1998, August-September).

The Emergence of a Nationalist Ethnography in response to Colonial Ethnography: The Shift from Writing to Orality

Komal da, in an interview with Ashok Ranade, admits how he went from prohibiting the singing of wedding songs at his own wedding in 1947—because he considered them to be useless and meaningless—to someone who went about collecting folk songs for his

newspaper *Prerna* in 1953 and quarterly newspaper *Parampara* in 1958.³ It is in the course of collecting folk songs for *Parampara* that he discovered that numerous folksongs in Rajasthan were about the changes brought about by the British Raj or in protest of the British Raj (Ranade, 1998, August-September).

Hence, for the second edition of the quarterly *Parampara*, Komal da collected folk songs composed between 1800-1900 and were sung against the colonial regime. The second edition of the quarterly ran into 300 pages, and was titled *Gora hatt ja* (O white-skinned monsters, go back). The title was derived from a folk song titled *angrez aye - gora hatt ja* (Britishers have invaded – O white-skinned monsters, go back) popularly sung in the Bharatpur region (Ranade, 1998, August-September). This is how Komal da got drawn to a collection and compilation of folk songs.

In order to facilitate his collection of folk songs, Komal da accepted the position of Secretary at the Rajasthan Sangeet Natak Akademi in 1958. In his new role, Komal da started work on the Manganiyars and Langas, and established a museum of the folk musical instruments. However, he quit the position very soon, as he could not be chained down by the requirements of a government job.⁴ His passion was elsewhere: he wanted to travel through the remote villages of Rajasthan and document the folk life and arts of the people of Rajasthan at his own pace.

After resigning from the Akademi, Komal da, along with his friend and fellow-seeker, Vijay Dan Detha, established the Rupayan Sansthan in Borunda (later, shifted to Jodhpur) in 1963-64. What started as an enterprise to collect folktales, soon transformed into a keen interest to collect folksongs, musical instruments, folk epics, and information on folk deities and other aspects of folk life. While Detha was fascinated by folk narratives and stories, folk music remained the mainstay of Komal da's inquiry, which eventually led him to a study of "musicological principles" (Ranade, 1998, August-September). He wrote, "We wanted to identify ourselves as much as we possibly could with the daily life of the people. We wanted our institution, Rupayan Sansthan, to be wholly 'saturated' with the oral tradition of the inhabitants" (Kothari, n.d.). A study of the folk culture and heritage of Rajasthan was Komal da's *karmayoga*. (Kothari, G., 2004, April-June).

³ Henceforth, Komal Kothari will be referred to as Komal da, as he was fondly called.

⁴ During his brief stint at Rajasthan Sangeet Natak Akademi, Komal da spent the office hours talking ad infinitum to anyone who came to meet him. It is only after office hours ended that people would stop pouring in, and Komal da took to office work, which would go on till 8pm or 9 pm. Sudha Rajhans recalls that his colleagues in the Akademi would joke that the Sangeet Natak Akademi should actually be renamed as "Jan-Sampark Karyalaya," or, Public Contacts Office, and Sudha herself would refer to Komal da's office as "Hamdard Shafakhana" or, Empathy Clinic (Rajhans, 2004, April-June).

The Inextricability of Folk Life from Folk Arts: An Indigenous, Emic Perspective

It was the keen interest for the preservation and perpetuation of Rajasthani language that led Komal da to folk songs and folk music, and further into the different aspects of and everyday lives of the people speaking Rajasthani (Ranade, 1998, August-September). Komal da soon realized that all aspects of folk life are intrinsically connected to folk music, and often, hold no meaning and sometimes, even cease to exist without their musical counterparts (Ranade, 1998, August-September). Folk music, according to Komal da, is the aesthetic application of the musical tradition, which in turn is an expression of organic practice, popular emotional currents and social life of its times (Kothari, 1999).

Once the aforementioned realization dawned upon Komal da, there was no looking back, but only a tireless journey into the folk life of different communities in Rajasthan that he undertook with full vigour. Komal da was of the firm belief that folk culture can be understood in two ways: “*ek, sangeet se jivan ko samajhne ki koshish aur doosra, jivan se sangeet ko dekhne ki koshish*” (Either you can attempt to understand life in terms of music, or music in terms of life). Komal da chose music as the entry-point into folk life. He could “relate every aspect of the folk life with music” (Srinivasan, 2004, June). Viewing different aspects of lives in this manner, Komal da proclaims that folk knowledge is that which does not come down to us in a structured manner (Ranade, 1998, August-September). The Condolence Resolution of the SNA, refers to how Komal da’s work “in diverse fields was focused on ‘how a given society derives knowledge without any structural format through practice and experience’. It covered all aspects of human life, ‘from religion to social organisation, family to society, agriculture to crafts’. To him, folklore was a ‘window to visualise the complexities of human existence based on wisdom and practical life’” (Srinivasan, 2004, June).

Inspired by the writings of Claude Lévi-Strauss, upon separating the “realistic, such as geography, agrarian zones and climate” from the “fantastical elements” of oral traditions, Komal da arrived at a deeper understanding of the folk context he had been studying for at least a decade, a somewhat rational understanding of the folk culture of Rajasthan (Deo and Chandra, n.d.). One can take, for instance, his interest in the relationship of food and folk life. He divided Rajasthan into three distinct agrarian and food zones and saw deep connect to

other aspects of folk life. Komal da found the prevalence of Rama worship in the bajra zone, Krishna worship in the jowar zone and Shiva and Shakti worship in the maize zone.

Ashok Vajpayi underscores how though Komal da was not an artist himself, he had a great talent of yoking things together: a quality through which he could connect folk festivals, social set-up, crops, cultural relations etc, which sure gave him a joy unimaginable and a pulsation quite unique. Owing to his work, people started viewing folk arts with the gravity that was otherwise amiss, since folklore was typically viewed as being too crude and rustic, possibly not worthy of any attention (2004, April-June).

After years of spending time with the rural folk communities of Rajasthan, Komal da could speak for hours on the inter-linkages between geography, staple food and musical instruments: he claimed that the ethnogeographic regions afforded an accurate lens through which to study different aspects of folk life, even music. Komal da noticed that folk instruments and music are more prolifically found in the pastoral, cowherd and shepherd communities as compared to communities which are largely connected to agriculture (Bohra, 2006, October-December). He also discovered that the folk instruments of a region have deep bearings to the crops grown there (Vajpayi, 2004, April-June). For instance, the musical instrument *kamaycha* is used in areas where *sevana* grass grows. Interestingly, this grass also grows in parts of Gujarat and Pakistan, and hence the *kamaycha* can also be found in use in Gujarat, Pakistan and parts of Sindh (Ranade, 1998, August-September). Another instance of an off-beat anecdote that Komal da typically narrated was the real use of the Heer-Ranjha song, which, for Komal da, resided in its time-tested use by cowherds for curing foot-and-mouth disease in cows and buffaloes (Bharucha, 2004, April-June).

Along with the folk musical traditions, Komal da was deeply conversant with the myriad shades of folk life. He could speak non-stop, for hours, on ancient garments and folk musical instruments as well as subjects deeply connected to folk life such as soil, land, water and traditional farming methods etc. (Thanvi, 2004, April-June). Drawing upon his area-based studies of different folk communities, Komal da wrote, “Every genre of the area’s literary and musical heritage helped us to understand the rural ‘man’ in his totality” (Kothari, n.d.). Komal da was one of those rare folklorists who could claim “total identification . . . with the folk culture and traditions of Rajasthan as a perceptive insider” (Srinivasan, 2004, June). This emic perspective of an insider aided his unique method of collecting, compiling and documenting the folk culture of Rajasthan.

Komal da's Methodology of Collecting Folk: Perspectives and Challenges in the Creation of an Alternate Oral Nationalist Historiography

The uniqueness of Komal da's method in documenting folk is his approach and clarity towards the significance of folk lore as a contribution towards the creation of an alternate nationalist historiography. Komal da, claims Bharucha, "has no difficulties in marginalizing the over-represented Rajput hagiography surrounding royal families and warriors. The Langas and Manganiyars, Bhambhis and Meghwals, among other communities from the downtrodden sections of society, matter[ed] a lot more to him. . ." (2003)

Acharya writes: "*Komal da lokkala-marmagya hi nahi, balki lok-chitta ke anveshak the*" Komal da was not merely a connoisseur of folklore, he was a seeker of the very essence/soul of folk (2004, April-June). Not only was he a seeker, collector and protector of folk arts, was conversant with their minute nuances, but he had the singular talent of viewing folk as historical, with the ability to connect folk to a greater social vision (Acharya, 2004, April-June). In this context, Bharucha notes that "if we go by the rules of theoretical correctness today, a lot of Komal da's narrative would not pass as history. . . However, there are other readings and writings of history that need to be taken into account" (2003).

When Komal da and Vijay Dan Detha set out to collect folk narratives in the early years of the 1960s, they decided to start from Detha's village, Borunda. The task seemed daunting at the outset. It was difficult for the people to narrate a tale without any context. However, Komal da notes that "[as] a rule, the village folk relate a story in order to exemplify a principle or a social value. It always stems from a 'situation.' They find it hard to recollect a tale, just for the sake of a story" (Kothari, n.d.).

Komal da and Detha were overwhelmed after they ended up collecting 20,000 folktales, 17,000 folksongs and approximately 13000 proverbs from Borunda alone. However, they soon realized that many of these folk narratives collected in the geographical vicinity of Borunda actually belonged to women from different villages married and settled in Borunda, and also to wandering minstrels belonging to migrant *jaati*-s or movement groups such as *jogis*, *kaalbelia*-s (Kothari, 2004a, April-June).

Komal da's primary method of collecting folklore was to first spend a few days with the folk community, interact without the intervention of recording equipment, let the people get a glimpse of the nature of work he was doing and only then start the recording (Kothari, 2004a, April-June). However, he did not apply the same method in all cases. While Komal da was busy collecting the folk songs and understanding the musical instruments of the Langas and the Manganiyars, he came in contact with Gulabnath, the *panch* of the Kalbelia-s, a

nomadic community of Rajasthan. Komal da decided to experiment by offering a portion of his fallow land to Gulabnath, who agreed and settled on the land for 3 years. During this time, Komal da and his staff members would spend time with the *panch*—who was often surrounded by people of his community—but not pose any questions to him. Based purely on the observation of the way the Kaalbelia-s lived their lives, an attempt to understand them was made. However, Komal da does not propose this method as the standard method to study a folk group or movement group (Kothari, 2004a, April-June). The different elements of folk life have to be dealt with differently. There cannot be a uniform, standardized approach. (Kothari, n.d.)

Recalling the difficulties faced in recording folk musicians in the early 1960s, Sudha Rajhans narrates how folk singers would run away at the sight of a microphone, as they believed their voice would be imprisoned by the machine, and they would lose their voice forever: ‘*machine awaz ko kheech leti hai*’ (The machine pulls out the voice forever!), said Ramzan Khan Hammu, the first Manganiyar Komal da attempted to record. One must be reminded here that singing for their *jajmans* was the only source of income for these folk singers back in the day. The fear really was, if they lost their voice, they would lose their livelihood! In fact, to remedy this unfounded fear, Komal da and his teammates recorded their own voices to present before the Manganiyars (Rajhans, 2004, April-June)

In addition to recording folk music, Komal da also documented the *kathputis* (puppets), jewellery, garments and folk deities of the different communities. He was more interested in documenting the oral history of Rajasthan, legends, geography, land and irrigation, livestock, crops and rituals related to crop production, faith and beliefs, folk deities, their priests, bards, modes of worship, cultural practices of different *jaati*-s, songs related to ritual observances, instruments related to songs, makers of musical instruments, players of musical instruments, their folk art and practice, their *jajman*-s (patrons), their livelihood, genealogies, rituals, trances etc. He could penetrate innumerable layers of each of these topics and their interconnectedness (Bohra, 2004, April-June).

Komal da led to the nationalisation as well as internationalisation of Rajasthani folk music and ensured that these folk musicians get to display their talent in front of a larger audience in concerts all over the world. He taught folk singers to take pride in their art and traditions, and encouraged them to stay connected to their rural roots after they came back from performing in different parts of the world.

Shail Mayaram notes that “Komal da carved out his own universe and understanding,” and all the while remained “[u]ndeterred and uninspired by academic fashions” (2004, July).

A Tale of Survival of *Jaati-s*: Komal da's Work on Hereditary Folk Musicians and Janashrit Art Forms

Komal da studied and recorded numerous hereditary folk musician communities such as the Langas, the Manganiyars, Dholis, Mirasis, Kalavants, Dhadhis, Jogis, Hudkalas, Kamads, Phaladis, Bhils, Meenas, Garasiyaas, Raikes, Rabaris, Mewatis, among others. In addition to recording their music, taking notations of their songs and documenting their instruments, he also documented their tales, narratives, epics, drama, dance etc. (Bohra, 2004, April-June). Writing about the Langas, Komal da explained that “[as] a caste, the main profession of the Langas is to sing for the families of their patrons, the Sindh Sipahis . . . [who] are cattle-owners or herdsman, and they pay the Langas in cash or kind. The Langas, as a matter of duty, attend all the ceremonies held in the homes of their patrons. . . Both the Langas and the Sindh Sipahis are Muslims, but many of their rites and festivals have their origins in Hindu customs” (Kothari, n.d.). Kothari documented many such traditions and revealed “how these bonds were determined by birth, and might come under stress if the patron did not honour the customary dues owing to the *kasbin*” (Deo & Chandra, n.d.)

Komal da launched new debates about the relationship of *kalakar* (artists) and their *jajman* (patrons) in the postcolonial worldview. Deo & Chandra point out that “[m]ost of the musical traditions in Rajasthan are sustained through strong networks of patronage” (n.d.). Komal da held the view that post-independence, only those folk artists survived, and, in fact, flourished and got consolidated post-independence, who were patronized by famers and common folk, owing to the participatory framework of folk relations and the artist-patron relationship that existed among caste musicians and their *jajman-s* in Rajasthan. The hereditary musician groups who were dependent on feudal lords or higher power-structures did not survive, since the relationship was not participatory, but conservational (Acharya, 2004, April-June).

Quoting an interview given to Uday Prakash, Acharya underlines how Komal da emphatically proclaimed that ‘*Jab art forms ki baat karein to aap samajh sakte hai ki aaj ki taarikh me vahi art forms hume surakshit milte hai jo janashrit the, rajyashrit nahi*’ (When we talk about art forms, remember that only those art forms have survived today that were dependent on folk, not state) (Acharya, 2004, April-June). Hereditary musician communities, asserts Komal da, “whose base of support was broader, continued to receive patronage, and thus survived the abrupt political and economic changes in the society. The Manganiyars, as

well as the Dhadhis, Dholis, Langas and Nats, all belong to this . . . category of musicians whose support came not from kings or *jagirdars*, but from the common people” (Kothari, 1994). Komal da seems to echo Coomaraswamy, who also believed that though both the aristocratic and folk art are embedded in the sacred tradition, “it was only the folk who still survived and managed to preserve this tradition in modern India” (Chatterji, 2005, April).

Komal da is possibly the first to view folk culture as distinct from feudal set-up or power structures. In fact, he viewed folk culture as running parallel to feudal structures. He remarked that folk-music is, in fact, the “musical history of our social relations” (Acharya, 2004, April-June). Komal da often cited the example of Tansen, who he believed was admitted to the court because he was excellent in his art form. He also prophetically proclaimed that only those art forms will survive that are related to and dependent on the common folk, and not on royal patronage (Kothari, 2004a, April-June).

There are approximately 80 *jaati*-s in Rajasthan. Komal da devised a mechanism to classify *jaati*-s from non-*jaati*-s. For anyone claiming he belonged to a particular *jaati*, Komal da would pose three questions: Who is your *pujari* (priest), who is your *bhat* (bard) and who is your *gaanewala* (folk singer)? Anyone who fails to answer even one of these questions does not belong to a distinct *jaati*. Every *jaati* has a specific musical instrument, and every once in a while, the folk singer improvises his singing to appeal to the critical listening skills of his audience (Ranade, 1998, August-September).

Lok-Kala ka Tatva Jnana: Lok-Sahridayata at the Core of Komal da’s Approach to Bearers of Folk Traditions

‘To connect people to himself and walk alongside them was a highlight of Komal da’s personality,’ reminisces Rajhans (2004, April-June). Komal da was of the belief that every person is a carrier of her culture (Kothari, G., 2004, April-June). He viewed the giver of information as greater to himself. He considered every villager a specialist, living with a holistic worldview, while an educated urban-dweller as merely existing outside himself (Kothari, G., 2004, April-June).

The most memorable lesson he learnt upon immersing himself in the study of folklife is, in his own words, was: ‘*humko gyana dene wala aadmi hai*’ (the giver of knowledge to us is the common folk). Hence, Komal da would consider the folks imparting knowledge to him as *gurus*. After years of studying folklore, Komal da considered any folk singer, folk artist and bard to be his guru and would happily sit at their feet and learn. The knowledge thus

acquired, he insists, is part of his highest knowledge (Kothari, 2004a, April-June). This worldview often rubbed on to people who worked alongside Komal da, albeit in different degrees. Mayaram, who accompanied Komal da on field visits, writes: “The ordinary, illiterate village musician I now saw was often the bearer of an extraordinary literary and musical tradition as also capable of constant improvisation, change and creativity” (2004, July).

Komal da believed that folk singers carried the weight of our lineage, the legacy of our ancestors and should therefore be respected (Ranade, 1998, August-September). Another aspect of folk studies Komal da highlights, is the idea of partnership, which is foundational to folk culture. Folk music, writes Verma, “[i]n its moment of creation . . . may be the creation of a specially gifted individual but its true parent is the society, which also nurtures, preserves and transmits it” (2004). “The essence of folk-art lies in its capacity to absorb, assimilate and reflect the artistic experiences of the whole community as distinct from one individual belonging to that community,” writes Upreti (1967, March-April). There is no distinct consumer or audience of folk culture, since everyone participates in, and has a role to play in the folk cultural-social milieu (Acharya, 2004, April-June). Vijay Verma writes: “The audience merges with the artiste just as the art blends with life. Even when there is a professional performer he is less of an outside entertainer and more of a designated alter-ego, giving expression to his audience’s thoughts, voice to its songs” (2004).

Komal da also emphasized the avoidance of a buyer-seller relationship between a folk-artist and a researcher. If such a relationship is not avoided, the researcher will not be able to give back to the society. Hence, Komal da decided not to hold any exhibition of folk music at Rupayan Sansthan (Kothari, 2004a, April-June). Instead of making folk knowledge a means to earn riches, he made folk knowledge come alive by comprehending the cultural nuances involved (Bharucha, 2004, April-June).

Preservation and Perpetuation of the Folk Tradition: Rupayan Sansthan, Folk Training Programs and Arna Jharna Museum

Komal da believed in giving back to the folk or community that he drew immensely from. Ashok Vajpayi commends Komal da taking all the findings to the grassroot, and not just leaving them on the intellectual or academic plane (Vajpayi, 2004, April-June). With the joint efforts of Vijay Dan Detha and Komal da, Rupayan Sansthan became quite renowned as the

institute of folk culture all over the world. Folk narratives, folksongs and other aspects of folk culture were frequently discoursed over in seminars and symposia held at the institute.

Komal da, along with the support from Sangeet Natak Akademi, launched and supervised training programs for young hereditary musicians, with a special focus on folk instruments that were falling out of use. For example, Manganiyars were slowly giving up the *kamaycha* and shifting to harmonium. Komal da revived the *kamaycha* among the Manganiyars. After a long and intense search, he could track down the lone maker of the *sindhi sarangi*, the instrument used by the Langas, in the small hamlet of Phalodi in the 1980s (Thanvi, 2004, April-June).

Komal da got the endangered instruments manufactured and distributed them among the successors of the respective folk musical traditions, thereby ensuring their perpetuation. For Komal da, “*kamaichha*’ - is not just a professional tool; it becomes an eloquent symbol of identity and communication of the ethos” (Srinivasan, 2004, June). In Komal da’s understanding, the *kamaichha* “plays an important role in the promotion of the welfare of the singers without ‘uprooting’ them from their environment and vocation and other characteristic features. The measures he had devised included the manufacture and supply of the instrument, training in its production, practice and related services. His pioneering work in this regard was effective and unique” (Srinivasan, 2004, June).

Komal da had “long envisaged a space to exhibit and bring about public engagement with the folk culture and oral traditions he had spent his life documenting for the archive. The enterprise would be marked by a devotion to the natural and organic resources of Rajasthan, the local communities and their local forms of knowledge, art and culture” (Deo & Chandra, n.d.). It was Komal da’s last dream to establish an ethnic, ethnographic museum, a live museum of folklore. Bharucha recalls that Komal da’s vision for the museum was one that is not made of permanent structures, walls or is even remotely museumesque. Kuldeep Kothari, the son of Komal Kothari, fulfilled his father’s unfinished dream (since Komal da passed away before the museum could be brought to life) by creating a museum that “relates the story of the creative ingenuity of the common folk by tracing the history of tangible cultural objects and the role they play in their daily life” (Kothari, 2004, July). It is a place to display traditional objects and the making of everyday objects (Bharucha, 2004, April-June).

The museum adheres to Kothari’s “vision for a ‘living museum’ that celebrates the desert and local adaption to life in this terrain. . . The museum also represents the antithesis of the palace/fort museums of Rajasthan, replacing galleries showcasing artefacts of princely lifestyle with galleries exhibiting objects of quiet beauty” (Deo & Chandra, n.d.)

Komal da decided to divide the subject areas of the museum on the basis of the agricultural crops grown in Rajasthan, namely the maize zone, the bajra zone and the jowar zone (Kothari, 2004b, April-June). The first of the exhibitions, as per Komal da's wish, was that of brooms. He did not consider brooms to be ordinary everyday objects, but saw them in relation to different labouring *jaati*-s, their connect to various grasses and waste, their link to construction techniques, employment and sustainability etc. On display in a cluster of huts are "many more elements of daily life – pottery, utensils, storage spaces, cooking apparatus. Also on display are aspects of folk culture and indigenous knowledge systems. For instance, a humongous collection of musical instruments used across Rajasthan curated by Komal Kothari himself through his lifetime" (Panda, 2024). Deo & Chandra conclude that "[b]y aligning oral traditions with material culture, Kothari put forward a model for sustainable living and inclusive development alternative to the conflicted developmental practices of modern nation-building" (n.d.).

Srinivasan observes that Komal da's "personal involvement was deep at every stage including identification, data collection, documentation, wider dissemination, formulation and implementation of programmes with a larger perspective in a sustained manner. Everything he did had meaning and integrity" (Srinivasan, 2004, June).

However, there is one aspect where Komal da fell short of giving back to posterity. He was a connoisseur of the oral traditions more than the written word: he himself rarely penned down the vast repertoire of knowledge that he had amassed. He "was not just a researcher of the oral traditions, but himself a representative of the oral traditions," opines Thanvi (my translation, 2004, April-June). Though he did not write any book in his later years, the anthropologist Rustom Bharucha published *Rajasthan: An Oral History* in 2003, which was a culmination of 800 hours of conversations with Komal da over a period of 3 years.

Any researcher on any aspect of Rajasthan takes immense help from the folk resource collection of Komal da and yet, Bharucha notes, with some disappointment, "while verifying, authenticating, correcting, and contributing to the research of others, he himself has not been researched. . . a classic instance . . . in the larger fields of folklore, ethnomusicology, and anthropology, of the 'native informant' being taken for granted" (Bharucha, 2003). The aforementioned paper was an attempt to research the researcher of all researchers in the field of Rajasthani folk studies, especially focussing on his method of creating alterative oral history of Rajasthan through his unique, indigenous methods.

The worldview that Komal da developed while discoursing on the information he gained from folk-life is what sets him apart (Acharya, 2004, April-June). Bharucha identifies Komal da as “neither a seer in the traditional mode, nor a scholar in the academic sense” (2003). However, Bharucha concludes his book by admitting that Komal da was “a one-man institution” (2003).

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