

HARIKATHĀ—A STUDY IN COMMUNICATION

By

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Acknowledgement

In an earlier note on Harikathā¹, the present author had suggested that an empirical study of the present position of Harikathā be made. It became possible for the author to make a field study of Harikathā in Mahārāshtra due to the generous grant made by the Anthropology Department, Chicago University, U.S.A. for carrying out the field investigation. I take this opportunity to express my gratefulness to late Prof. Robert REDFIELD and to Prof. Milton SINGER for enabling me to get the grant for the purpose.

The present paper really forms a preliminary report on the study. Bare facts are mainly presented in the report, reserving theoretical and technical discussions for the monograph under preparation.

1. Y. B. DAMLE: 'A Note on Harikathā', Bulletin, D. C. P. R. I., Vol. XVII No. 1, pp. 15-19.

I

Introduction

The aim of every social organisation is to effectively socialise its members so that they may conform to the accepted norms and ideals of behaviour, conduct and interrelationships—personal and group. To attain this goal, every society works out suitable institutionalised procedures. Amongst such procedures, institutionlisation of communication occupies a very significant place, for it facilitates transmission of ideas, values and culture and thus enables structural continuity.

Harikathā in Mahārāshtra is a case in point. The fact of Harikathā being rooted in devotion and therefore being a means of salvation has lent it special prestige. In fact it would be quite correct to say that transmission of culture was only a latent function of Harikathā in its initial stages. Only later on it came to be its manifest function. Devotion to the almighty God, philosophical expounding, emphasis on spiritualism and other-worldliness were regarded as the corner-stones of Harikathā. Yet, ever since we can speak of Harikathā as a well-systematized form of communication, matters pertaining to social and public affairs and social and political ethics, educating public opinion and in a general sense what may be called moulding of character have formed an essential part of Harikathā in Mahārāshtra.

As has been already pointed out in an earlier note on the topic, in Mahārāshtra Harikathā came to be systematized during the early Muslim rule. Harikathā became a welding force for the Hindu social structure torn by the inequities of caste differences. The marginal elements were sought to be pacified by throwing open the path of devotion as a means of salvation. Moreover, the avowedly religious garb of Harikathā made it less suspect by the Muslim rulers. The convention of performing Harikathā in the precincts of a temple and that too at night may be logically ascribed to the same fact. Once Harikathā could develop a forum for a critical appraisal of mundane things and affairs, it could take cognisance of the various problems right from day-to-day conduct of persons to political and moral issues. The well-developed Harikathā came in as a very handy agency to keep up the morale of the people during the British rule. It became a potent agency for encouraging people to stand up against any manner of injustice. Of course it also facilitated regaining of confidence in the traditional culture.

Harikathā in its systematized form was obviously an urban development. Yet it carried or helped carry the torch of the 'Great Tradition' to folk societies through the travelling Kathākārs. Even today the villagers look upon the performance of Harikathā as a great event and persons from neighbouring villages congregate in huge numbers. Otherwise as a recurrent and routine feature, Harikathā is performed in bigger towns and cities.

It is against this background that the present study was made during 1956-1957. Major part of the field-work was done in cities like Poona and Bombay and towns like Pandharpur and Wai, though a few performances in villages were also studied. The mode of attack was three-pronged. Thus the three elements viz., the performance of Harikathā, the performers of Harikathā i.e. the Kathākārs and the audience at the performances of Harikathā were studied in order to analyse the present position of Harikathā as an agency of communication.

In all about fifty performances were attended and studied. Care was taken to see that various types of Harikathā, viz. the Nāradiya or the Hardāsi, the Wārkarī and the Nationalist types of Harikathā, were studied. Then again performances of Kathākārs of varying reputation were studied so as to represent the various grades of Kathākārs and therefore those of performances too. Detailed notes were made as regards the content of the performances. Notes were also made about the season, occasion, time and location of the performances and also about the nature of the audience. It was felt that even with the same Kathākār, the content might differ with due regard to the factors mentioned above. For this purpose a few performances were attended of a particular Kathākār, while other factors varied. The Kathākārs were interviewed. Problems such as their views about the place of Harikathā in the social structure, its present position, the role it is expected to play, response of the audience and the society at large and the attitude of the state towards Harikathā and Kathākārs, the status of Kathākārs in society, their problems regarding making a living as a Kathākār and their views as to whether Harikathā be looked upon as a source of living etc. Thus the social organisation of the Kathākārs was studied. The content of the performances reflected the prevailing ideas about the ethical, social and political norms in the context of the traditional culture. The purpose of Harikathā and related ideas about the proper elements of Harikathā were also abundantly reflected in the content. Thus the study of the content more or less provided the inner criteria for judging the performances and the performers. Finally, the responses of the audience furnished the external criteria for the same. The audience were asked to fill a Schedule that contained questions relating to I—personal back-

ground, II—what induced them to attend Harikathā, how often and since how long they have been attending performances of Harikathā, III—the features of Harikathā which impressed them, IV—expectations regarding essential features of Harikathā and the qualities a Kathākār should possess, V—preference scale for different Kathākārs and reasons thereof, VI—whether the audience had any impact on the Kathākārs in the determination of the content of Harikathā, VII—views regarding the place of Harikathā and suggestions to revitalise it, VIII—facts and views about the attendance by the younger generation and if the respondents took their children to attend Harikathā, IX—contact with a Kathākār and the nature and frequency of such contacts. In short an attempt has been made to analyse the response of the audience with reference to the actual performances attended and the performers thereof, the impact of modern forces such as technology and new ideas in the field of science and social relationships on Harikathā as an agency of communication, the necessity of changing Harikathā etc. The audience were chosen for interview not on a random sampling basis, since that was impossible. Nevertheless, due regard was given to factors such as age, caste, education, place of residence and occupation of the respondents while choosing them at each performance.

The interaction of the three elements viz., the Kathākārs, the performances of Harikathā and the audience has been studied

II

Social Organisation of the Kathākārs

The following discussion relating to the Social Organisation of the Kathākārs is primarily restricted to the Kathākārs whose performance was actually attended and who were also interviewed by the author. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of the methodology employed, the author had personally discussed with the Kathākārs their attitudes and points of view relating to Harikathā as a medium of communication, the status accorded to them by society, their economic condition, the present social set-up and its reaction to both Harikathā and Kathākārs and last but not the least their social background, education, training, relationship to the audience etc., at some length. Actually here the analysis is presented, starting with the last item first.

The present analysis is divided into three main sections according to the particular sects the Kathākārs belong to. Though the main basis of Harikathā is *bhakti* (devotion), there are three well recognised methods of performing Harikathā. Of course originally there were only two

broad divisions of Harikathā, viz. (1) the Nāradya and (2) the Nirūpaṇa Kīrtan. These two divisions are based on the distinction relating to the form, content, the audience and the types of Kathākār regarded to be suitable for the performance of the respective type of Harikathā. As regards the Nāradya-type Harikathā the following description holds good. The performance starts with the singing of a śloka (Stanza) from either of the epics—the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata or the scriptures and then follows community Bhajan (Prayer). An attempt is made to comment and philosophise on the stanza by the Kathākār. Of course a good many quotations are offered in the process of elucidation. A good amount of singing, of course devotional songs only, goes on simultaneously. Then there is a brief pause during which the Kathākār is garlanded and *bukkā* is applied to his forehead and then to the audience. In the latter half a set theme is selected, which has a close bearing on the stanza sung in the beginning. The theme relates to the life or an incident in the life of either of the *avatāras* (incarnations) or that of the devotees of one of the *avatāras*. Elaborate details might be given, yet at the end an attempt is made to link all that meaningfully to the stanza sung in the beginning.

Though the slant is on devotional singing and the elucidation of certain philosophical principles underlying devotion as a means of salvation, entertainment of the audience is not altogether neglected. Actually it would be more correct to say that this aspect is well taken care of. Naturally this necessitates a particular set of abilities on the part of the Kathākār. Thus the Kathākār should be a fair singer. In addition he must have a sense of humour, presence of mind and ready-wittedness. In short he should never allow the interest of the audience to flag. A certain tempo has to be maintained. The essential prerequisites of a Kathākār, viz. sound learning and knowledge, the requisite mental attitude i.e. firm belief in devotion as a path of salvation, adherence to cultural traditions, some measure of other-worldliness, sound moral character, simplicity of living etc., must of course be present. But the additional capacity to entertain is also looked upon as quite essential to the Kathākār. The audience is supposed to be comprised of laymen. And the skill of the Kathākār lies as it were in inducing such an audience to adopt the devotional path of salvation.

The second type of Harikathā viz. Nirūpaṇa primarily consists of philosophical expounding of a stanza from the works of either of the five saint-poets i.e. Dayānandāra, Nāmdēo, Tukārām, Dknāth, Nīlobhā. In fact according to the strict convention the Kathākār is not even supposed to mention any other person than those mentioned here and also not to quote from any other works. And in so far as any Kathākār happens to do so, it detracts his value as a "real Wārkarī". There is no set theme

in this sort of Harikathā, though sometimes the playful acts and deeds of Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa are described. But greater emphasis is on the importance of *bhakti* as a path to salvation. The performance is every now and then interspersed with community prayer. In fact it begins as such. There is a brief pause at the middle of the performance and the same routine is followed as regards applying of *bukkā*, garlanding the Kathākār etc., as in the case of Harikathā of the Nāradiya type. As already alluded to, the Kathākār must necessarily belong to the Wārkarī sect. The audience is also more interested in the tenets of the Wārkarī cult. More often than not such performances are primarily attended by adherents to the sect. On the whole it can be said that this type of Harikathā is primarily by the Wārkarī, of the Wārkarī, and for the Wārkarī. It hardly has any 'entertainment value'. Of course there is a good measure of singing. Naturally the qualities required of the Kathākār are also of a different nature.

There is still another type of Harikathā viz. the Nationalist Harikathā. This is a Harikathā with a purposive and systematic propaganda. There is a procedural similarity between this type of Harikathā and that of the Nāradiya type. But there is only a difference in the themes and also in the philosophical expounding. There is a marked emphasis on pragmatism in this type of performance. It can be properly called only as an offshoot of the Nāradiya Harikathā. The emergence of the Nationalist Harikathā can be traced to the movement to dislodge the British. Even though traditional themes such as that of Kṛṣṇa and Kāṁsa or Jarāsandha and Bhīma etc. were utilised, the purpose was to pinpoint the misdeeds of the British rulers to spread discontent amongst the audience and to goad them into suitable action. It is reported that Lokamānya TILAK, 'the father of Indian unrest', once expressed that had he not been a political worker, he would have been a Kathākār. The Nationalist Kathākārs, some of them say, owe their inspiration to him. That Harikathā was a potent agency of communication for the aforesaid purpose is vouchsafed by the fact that the British rulers put behind the bars some of the Kathākārs for spreading discontent. Even today some of the performances are scrutinized by the police officials. A verbatim reporting is done of some of the performances that are suspected to agitate people over the 'secular policies of the State' or the Linguistic States etc. This is not to suggest that the purpose of such Harikathās is restricted only to the political sphere. In fact 'social education' in the broadest sense of the term is sought to be imparted to the audience. Anyway the distinguishing feature is the purposive propaganda. To put it rather bluntly it may be said that the form of Harikathā is used not to propagate the cult of devotion but to propagate ideas and policies which have an immediate bearing on concrete practical issues.

The Kathākār in this case must possess different qualities. Thus in the first place he must be fired by a 'sense of mission'. He must be steeped in social and political history and must be well informed about current affairs and day-to-day events. Of course the rest of the qualities essential for a Nārādiya Kathākār he must possess in good measure with special emphasis on oratory.

The audience too has special expectations of such a performance. Thus greater emphasis is laid on the discussion of social and political issues. Devotion is relegated to a secondary position. Social and political issues constitute the 'meat' of such a performance, while devotion may be only an excuse. A critical appraisal of such issues is desired by the audience more for its information value. On the other hand the Kathākār feels that he can provide guide lines for 'action'. He exhorts the audience to act on his suggestions. In some instances he even rings out promises to the effect from the audience. In certain others certain routine activities are made compulsory, e.g. the use of Swadeshi goods, by cajoling and ridiculing as the need may be.

Social Background, Education, Economic Status etc. of the Kathākārs

A. Nārādiya Kathākārs

All the Nārādiya Kathākārs under study were Brahmin by caste, amongst whom there were seven Chitpavan Brahmins and nine Deśastha Brahmins. The total number of the Kathākārs was sixteen. Amongst these Kathākārs there was only one female Kathākār. She had received training in Harikathā in an institution, run for the purpose, in Poona. She was a professional Kathākār and accepted remuneration for her performance. During the General Elections campaign she gave performance on behalf of the Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti in towns and villages of the Poona District.

The age-wise distribution is as follows: One was between 20-25; five between 26-41; three between 41-50; five between 51-60; two between 61-70. As regards formal education, five of the Kathākārs had matriculated and some of them had even higher training e.g. one of them was an *ayurveda-pārangata*, while another held a diploma in teacher's training; two had studied upto matric; one had studied in a high school; all the rest had studied between 4th to 7th standard vernacular. Of course as regards their training preparatory for Harikathā, all of them had

worked with a preceptor so that a minimum acquaintance with Sanskrit tradition, scriptures and lores could be ensured.

Nine of the Kathākārs were residents of Poona; three of Bombay, of whom one really belonged to Konkan (Ratnagiri District) but stayed in Bombay during the *cāturmāsa* as he had been engaged to give performance of Harikathā everyday throughout the season at a certain temple in Bombay; one each of Satara, Karhad, Wai and Pali.

In the case of seven of the Kathākārs there had been a tradition in the family of the performance of Harikathā of which only in one case the father of the present Kathākār and himself were amateurs. In one case amongst these the tradition went as far back as six generations.

There were only two amongst these Kathākārs who styled themselves as amateurs—of which one, who worked as a post-master in a town, accepted remuneration, while the other said that he did it for the 'love' of it. All the rest declared themselves as professional Kathākārs. Yet one of these, who worked as a professor in an Ayurveda College, did not accept any remuneration for his performance. All the rest accepted remuneration. In fact Harikathā was an avocation with them and source of livelihood. Six Kathākārs declared that their only source of income was the remuneration for the performance of Harikathā. Only three said that they held property. One of them declared business as a source of income. One was also a musician and earned income by his musical performance. One of the Kathākārs worked as a teacher in a school. Another taught in a *Gītā Pāthśālā*. As mentioned earlier one of them worked as a professor in an Ayurveda College.

The economic status of the Kathākārs can be easily judged by the facts mentioned above. In addition, by home visiting and discussions about their economic status the following conclusions were drawn. Only four of the Kathākārs could be described as well-to-do; five as belonging to the middle class and seven as belonging to lower-middle class. Four of these in fact suggested that the earnings were so low as to just about make the two ends meet.

The ideas of the Kathākārs about the purpose of Harikathā, are given below. The major purpose of Harikathā, according to the consensus of opinion amongst them, was to inculcate devotion, knowledge and non-attachment amongst the audience. Transmission of culture was another purpose. Harikathā was looked upon as a useful agency for character-formation in society by emphasising virtues. It was looked upon as a very suitable agency for the propagation of the cherished values of life.

Ethical advancement of the people was thought to be one of the aims of Harikathā. As such it was felt that a critical appraisal of the prevalent tendencies in Society was absolutely essential so as to guide the audience in proper direction. Greatest emphasis was placed on devotion to the almighty God.

These ideas about the purpose of Harikathā are further reflected in their ideas about the content of Harikathā. Major emphasis should be on content that will serve the above mentioned purposes. Political discussion should be kept at its minimum, in case it cannot be avoided altogether. Likewise wits and jokes should be in good taste. Romantic accounts should be eschewed. In any case such accounts should be so given as not to jeopardise the major aim of Harikathā.

The following qualities were regarded to be essential for a Kathākār by the Kathākārs. A Kathākār should possess knowledge and learning — both traditional and modern, an awareness of modern affairs, events and trends in attitudes and opinions, suitable physique and age, powers of oratory, force of character, piety, presence of mind, a sense of humour, some knowledge of music and singing etc. The Kathākārs seemed to be quite aware of the fact that if the younger generation is to be attracted to Harikathā certain things will have to be eschewed by the Kathākār. Thus the Kathākār should refrain from criticising external appearance such as dress. In fact an attempt must be made to synthesise the modern and the old ways of thinking and living by the Kathākār. So also a Kathākār should be able to strike a balanced attitude and must not be a partisan in the discussion of various issues. Towards this end, it was suggested that a Kathākār should not be a member of any political organisation.

There seemed to be a divided opinion on the question — whether the younger generation was interested in Harikathā. A few of them answered in the affirmative (a fact corroborated by my observation), and further remarked that they had something of interest to convey to the young people and hence the latter attended their performances. There was a note of confidence and suggestion underlying their response to this query. On the other hand some others felt that the younger generation was apathetic to Harikathā. Actually one of the Kathākārs remarked that 'it was no use performing Kathā as the younger generation wouldn't attend and the older generation that attended was not of much use in the sense that it had lost its powers of receptivity to new ideas. Further, the older generation also attended Kathā since it was the cheapest type of entertainment available'. Another Kathākār even complained that Kathākārs were being jeered at for their dress, orthodox way of life etc. by the younger

generation. On the whole the impression seemed to be that a great deal depended on the quality and content of the performance. Evidently the Kathākārs seemed to be aware of the necessity of modifications in the system of performance.

By and large the Kathākārs felt that the earnings from the performance were adequate for a living. A couple of them felt that it was not so. A Kathākār reported that 'an average Kathākār' was paid Rs. 25/- for a performance.

The general view about the status accorded to the Kathākārs by the society at large seemed to depend on two factors—one, personal reputation, and two, general attitude towards Harikathā. As already alluded to, some felt that it was as a result of their personal qualities that they were respected by the people. This implicitly meant that those devoid of 'such' qualities were neglected by society. In this context it was even suggested that Harikathā should not be looked upon as a mere avocation by the Kathākārs. A Kathākār suggested that performance of Harikathā should constitute only a supplementary source of income. Otherwise the level of performance is likely to be affected. It was felt by quite a few that as a consequence of the operation of many other factors like the secular policy of the state, a general sense of lack of devotion to God, influence of the press and the film as agencies of communication, dwindling role of the family as a unit in the transmission of traditional culture etc. people no longer looked upon with enthusiasm and favour on Harikathā and as such the Kathākārs as a 'class' also went down in public estimation. Some of the Kathākārs suggested that Harikathā, an agency of cultural transmission, cannot flourish without adequate support from the public and the state. Yet quite a few of them also added that they wouldn't accept an assignment from the state for a performance in view of the accompanying heterodox conditions such as compulsion to accept food from lower castes, to propagate certain policies, to omit certain personalities because of their caste etc.

On the whole the Kathākārs were quite communicative and seemed to be aware of the various factors which affected Harikathā and Kathākārs.

B. Wārkarī Kathākārs

The castewise composition of the Wārkarī Kathākārs was as follows: three Brahmins, one Mali and one Kunbi, the last mentioned Kathākār being a descendant of the late Tukārām Mahārāj. All these Kathākārs

were devout Wārkaris². Naturally they had to follow a particular method of performance.

The agewise distribution of the Kathākārs was as follows: one between twenty-six and forty, one between forty-one and fifty, two between fifty-one and sixty and one between sixty-one and seventy.

As regards formal education, three were trained between fourth and seventh standards vernacular, one had entered a high school and one was an M.A. All of them had derived their knowledge of traditional Shāstrās and lores from a preceptor. One of the Kathākārs was the preceptor of two of the Kathākārs mentioned here. All the three Brahmin Kathākārs stated that they were able to enhance their knowledge by direct reference to the source materials, while the non-Brahmin Kathākārs stated that they depended solely on their preceptors and the oral tradition.

Two of the Kathākārs were residents of Poona, one of Pandharpur and Degnur, one of Nevase and one of Dehu (the place of Tukārām Mahārāj).

Only two of the Kathākārs said that they had family traditions of Kathākārs over three generations. Out of these two, one — a Brahmin — belonged to a famous family of Kathākārs and the other was a descendant of Tukārām Mahārāj. As mentioned earlier, one of the Kathākārs was looked upon by other two as their *guru* and as such they claimed to follow his tradition. In fact as one listened to the performance of these two self-avowed disciples one could be convinced of the impress of their *guru's* tradition. Yet, it must also be added that at best it was a case of imitation of style and not that of assimilation of substance.

All these Kathākārs stated that they were professional Kathākārs, but they would not accept any remuneration for the performance.

All of these Kathākārs had an independent source of income. One of them was a professor in a College. Two of them had property as a source of income. Amongst these two — one was still doing business. Another looked after a temple in Nevase. One had Jagir lands.

Three amongst the Kathākārs were well-to-do and the other two belonged to the lower-middle-class.

2. For a short and authentic summary of the history and development of the Wārkarī Sect see S. V. Dāndekar's pamphlet on the subject.

In general it can be said that all the Kathākār had the same notions as to the items that should be eschewed by a Kathākār. Thus it was unanimously suggested that propaganda of any type be eschewed by a Kathākār. Discussion of political matters was naturally a taboo. Harikathā should not be looked upon as an entertainment. A Kathākār should not be after money.

As regards the positive objectives of Harikathā, it was expressed by the Kathākār that Social Education of the people was one of the purposes. The pride of place was given to devotion and knowledge of self. It was also felt that Harikathā would ennoble the performer himself.

The qualities desired of a Kathākār followed from the views mentioned above. The first and foremost quality necessary was a deep sense of devotion to God. The Kathākār should be steeped in the traditional literature of the Wārkarī Sect. In fact a Kathākār should be a very faithful follower of the sect. Then of course he should have a fair amount of acquaintance with the Hindu Shāstrās and lores.

The general impression seemed to be that the younger generation was apathetic to Harikathā, owing to the prevailing corrupting influences. Except in the case of the performance given by the Kathākār who was a professor, this impression was confirmed by my observation of the audience at their performance.

It was felt that the status of a Kathākār was mainly a function of his qualities. Thus a Kathākār who was after money and 'cheap popularity' would be but naturally despised. Tukārām Mahārāj was quoted with approval in this context. In any case Harikathā should not be looked upon as an avocation.

C. Nationalist Kathākār

Though the Kathākār listed and discussed under this section primarily styled themselves (and were also regarded by the people at large as such) as Nationalist Kathākār they followed mostly the same form as that of Nārādīya Harikathā. In fact four of them made a special mention to the effect, while another of them pointed out that he followed the form of the Wārkarī Harikathā. Actually it was observed that either the Nārādīya form of Harikathā or the Wārkarī form was employed by all the Kathākār. The common factor basically was the purposiveness of such performers. The medium of Harikathā was utilised by them primarily because of its acceptability to every section and layer of the

population and the weight of cultural tradition behind Harikathā. It was felt by these Kathākārs that Harikathā would provide the requisite platform for them to propound, preach and propagate to the people at large some of their ideas of social reconstruction. All the Kathākārs were imbued with the idea of imparting education to people, i.e., of helping people to change their attitudes and to supply the relevant knowledge and information to the people. Every one of them looked upon Harikathā as an excellent agency of social education.

There were five Kathākārs who were Brahmin by caste. One was a Maratha; others a Parit, a Šimpi and a Kaikādi each. It is curious to note that the majority of the Kathākārs in this group were Brahmins. But in view of the reported emergence of the Nationalist group of Kathākārs, viz., that it was encouraged by political leaders who were highly educated Brahmins like the late Lokamānya TILAK and S. M. PARANJPE, the keenness on the part of the educated Brahmin youth to enter this fold becomes readily explicable. In fact all the Brahmin Kathākārs alluded to the inspiration they owed to the personalities mentioned above. The rest took to this career as a very powerful vehicle for mass awakening and the improvement of the social and economic conditions of the masses. In fact all of them were engaged actively in work for the uplift of the masses. Excepting one of them who also actively propagated for Samyukta Mahārāshtra and another who propagated primarily for the All-India Organisation of Saints, all others worked for a particular mission established for the uplift of the masses. Thus, broadly speaking, it may be said that the two sections (castewise) of the Kathākārs catered to the educated (generally high caste people) classes and to the illiterate masses, though there tended to be quite some overlapping between the two.

Five of the Kathākārs belonged to the age group twenty - six to forty - one; one to forty-one to fifty; one to fifty-one to sixty; one to sixty-one to seventy and one died in 1957 at the age of eighty-two.

Amongst the Brahmin Kathākārs, excepting one who had very little education in English, all the rest had University education. One of them had left college education to participate in the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1921. All the non-Brahmin Kathākārs had very little, if any, schooling. They were simply able to read and write. Of these one was very keen on learning English and had made the necessary arrangements for imparting training in English for his son. Excepting three Kathākārs of this sub-group all the Kathākārs had learnt from a preceptor as well as studied the Shāstras and lores by themselves. The three non-Brahmin Kathākārs had only studied with a preceptor.

Three of the Kathākārs had no fixed residence. Three of them stayed in Poona; one in Otur (District Satara); one in Dombivli (a suburb of Bombay); one in Pandharpur. All those who worked for the uplift of the masses were not stationed in any particular place but moved from one place to another.

Two of the Brahmin Kathākārs stated that they had family tradition of Harikathā for three generations and above. In the case of all other Kathākārs there was no family tradition.

Amongst the Brahmin Kathākārs four styled themselves as professional Kathākārs. Of these two reported that they did not accept any remuneration. One who described himself as an amateur Kathākār, accepted remuneration. Amongst those who said that they accepted remuneration, one reported that he charged Rs. 125/- per performance. He also said that his maximum earning in a given month was Rs. 1,800/-. All the non-Brahmin Kathākārs, though professional, mentioned that they did not accept any remuneration.

The amateur Kathākār worked as a clerk in the railways. Two other Brahmin Kathākārs carried on religious propaganda and received emoluments for the same. Another was a proprietor of a school for the training of Kathākārs and also held property. Only one amongst the Brahmin Kathākārs depended on his performance of Harikathā for his living. All others had different sources of income. Amongst the non-Brahmin Kathākārs, all worked for one mission or other for their livelihood. There was no other source of income.

As regards their economic position, two amongst the Brahmin Kathākārs were well-to-do; two belonged to the middle class and one to the lower middle class. All the non-Brahmin Kathākārs excepting one who was well-to-do belonged to the lower middle class 'by choice'. (I have advisedly used the expression 'by choice' since I could see for myself that had these Kathākārs cared to amass money they could have lived in luxury -- but they chose to lead a very simple life.)

As noted earlier, the Nationalist Kathākārs had invested Harikathā with a special function, viz., propounding, propagating and preaching with a view to effect change in the desired direction, i.e., instilling the educated classes and illiterate masses to overcome the various social and economic problems faced by them. As such the major purpose of Harikathā, as expressed by the Nārāyaṇ Kathākārs, viz., inculcation of devotion, knowledge and learning and non-attachment was only accorded a secondary place, if at all, by these Kathākārs. Each one of them was

very clear in his mind that Harikathā was a very useful agency—almost an excuse—for propagating ideas oriented to certain action. One of them even suggested that to harp on the earlier function of Harikathā was a sign of weakness and a result of a lack of confidence. True, they felt, that Harikathā was a very potent agency of directing change owing to its cultural and spiritual status. Educational aspect of Harikathā was emphasised upon by the Kathākārs. The entertainment aspect was not neglected or played down. This was revealed by their views regarding the essential qualities a Kathākār should possess.

Consequently these Kathākārs stressed the importance of attracting the younger generation to their performance. For this it was suggested that a 'proper synthesis' be worked out between the old world ideals and the aspirations of the younger element. Quite a few of them realised the importance of the ability to convince the young by suitable argument. It was suggested that undue emphasis on orthodox way of life be given up. Suitable themes be selected and the interest of the younger people be maintained by introducing the nine moods.

It was suggested that in the first place the Kathākār should be imbued with a spirit of mission and dedication to the cause of change. Apart from being well-versed in the traditional literature he must be very well informed about the current trends of thought, men and affairs. The requisite knowledge of music, a sense of humour, presence of mind, etc., must be present. Powers of eloquence and dramatisation were thought to be very essential. Not other-worldliness and spiritualism but a very matter-of-fact positive attitude was regarded to be absolutely essential for a Kathākār.

All the Kathākārs agreed that remuneration be accepted for the performance of Harikathā. Yet it was equally stressed that it was not an 'ordinary avocation'. A Kathākār should be satisfied if he were to make enough for a simple living.

The Kathākārs stated that the audience at their performances comprised of the younger generation too and felt that the younger generation was neither apathetic nor averse to Harikathā. In fact they seemed to be quite confident of their ability to draw the younger generation to their performances.

As regards the status of the profession as such, it was felt that it was 'all right' and that much depended on the abilities of the Kathākār to meet the demands of changing times.

III

Content of Harikathā

The present section merely lists the ideas expressed in the performances of the three types of Harikathā. As before the ideas are described according to the type of Harikathā. Only a general presentation is attempted here without trying to correlate the ideas with either the Kathākār or the audience or the special occasions on which the performances were given.

A. Nārāyaṇa or Traditional, i.e., Hardāsi Kathā

It needs to be mentioned that most of the performances attended were during the Cāturmās, i.e., the sacred four months. Such performances were usually given by a Kathākār at least for a period of one month, if not for all the four months. Of course there were a few performances for special occasions like the birthday of Śrīkṛṣṇa given by a particular Kathākār only once.

No attempt is made here to present the ideas frequencywise. Only some order has been introduced in the presentation of ideas in the sense that to start with ideas relating to the nature of Harikathā and its purpose are presented.

The content of Harikathā should be such as to emphasize the Trinity of devotion, knowledge and learning, and non-attachment. The purpose of Harikathā is to ennoble the audience and not to entertain. In fact Harikathā provides solace to the minds of people. It is, broadly conceived, an excellent medium of social education, e.g., the late Tukārām Mahārāj used it as such with great effect. Performance of Harikathā should not be looked upon as a mere avocation. It should not be the only source of income, but it should be regarded only as a supplementary source. Moreover, the Kathākārs should not bargain about the remuneration. They should be content with whatever amount is offered them.

A saint is one who is devoted to a noble mind, is disinterested in worldly gains and has attained peace of mind. Saints offer proper advice for social reconstruction after carefully observing a society and its ills. We owe our cultural heritage to saints.

Advice should be tendered to people with due regard for their capacities. Thus has been worked out the fourfold path of salvation. The

path of devotion can be followed by all and sundry. Comprehension of higher principles and reality is facilitated by idol-worship.

Perception is clouded by ignorance. Therefore it is very essential to acquire knowledge. It can be acquired either by one's own effort or with the gracious help of a preceptor (*guru*). Hence it is regarded that Heavens can be attained through his good and kindly offices.

The six enemies, viz., desire, anger, covetousness, arrogance, temptation and envy and jealousy, have to be subdued. Then alone a person can attain the requisite tranquillity of mind. Human body should be regarded only as an instrument for the attainment of the highest goal of existence, viz., other-worldliness and liberation from the cycle of life and death. Fervent prayer to God is very helpful towards this. Worldly pleasures are after all perishable. To resolve the dichotomous riddle is to attain godhood and therefore liberation too.

The householder's stage is to be eulogized because it offers shelter to guests, helpless persons, etc. Service is the keynote of the householder's stage. The four ends of human existence, viz., satisfaction of desire, worldly goods, duty and religious life and liberation, are far from inconsistent. There exists an essential harmony amongst the four aims.

Laws are the fiat of rulers. It is really the responsibility of the rulers to rule evenly and without any discrimination. Reference was made to bribery and corruption in the State and also to coercive fasts by rulers. Discontent of society causes the wrath of God. God has to take human shape in order to mete out justice to everyone. Injustice cannot be suppressed for good.

Contentment renders even poverty palatable. It is the supreme duty of women to serve their husbands dutifully.

B. Wārkarī Type of Harikathā

As one might expect there was a much greater emphasis on Devotion. In fact it was pronounced by a very eminent Kathākār that the essence of the Vedas was devotion. Only those who had the 'right kind' of inclinations were keen to learn the same. The Trinity of devotion, knowledge and learning and non-attachment was no doubt mentioned as constituting the core of Harikathā. It was stressed that both knowledge and learning and renunciation were inadequate without devotion.

A hierarchy of knowledge was worked out. Thus the knowledge and learning of other-worldliness was stated to be the highest kind of

knowledge and learning. Worldly desires were rooted in the ignorance of such knowledge and learning. The exertion, pains and suffering caused by humdrum life can be alleviated only by acquiring such knowledge and learning. It renders a person very modest. Utility is not its purpose. Even the attainment of Heavens is not to be its aim. It is significant for its own sake.

Attainment of Heavens is only a lure offered to people so that they can behave with restraint. In fact the four stages of life have been specially designed for the common run of persons who cannot control their sense organs. Renunciation can be attained progressively. It is futile to enact laws so that people might renounce. In this context reference was made to enactments to enforce morality such as prohibition, anti-bigamy act, etc.

Advice regarding the path to be followed must bear a necessary relationship to the capacity of the person who has to follow it. The path of devotion can be pursued by all and sundry. Through idol-worship people can attain the knowledge of the highest principles. The conception of God is fashioned after an idealized human being—a perfect human being—a human being without any blemish, i.e., without any desires. Hence devotion to God is very helpful in attaining liberation.

The special contribution of Mahārāshtra lies in the synthesis of humdrum life and other-worldliness. Special credit is due to the Mahārāshtrian saints for the remarkable synthesis effected by them. The householder's stage should thus not be looked down upon. On the contrary it needs to be eulogized. One who shirks the responsibilities of householder's stage should be pronounced as timid rather than brave. Only he who has lived through the householder's stage successfully, i.e., without involvement and with a spirit of detachment, is to be credited with bravery.

Real test of religion is its operational character. Likewise saintliness is not a matter of ascription. It is not a matter of passing a resolution to the effect. Pointed reference was made to the title of saint conferred on the President of India. A saint is one who has done away with instrumentalities, i.e., who can do without the media used by ordinary persons for the inculcation of the highest principles. The saints and the knowledgeable and the learned persons owe a special type of obligation to guide the lay and the ignorant. Of course saints in Mahārāshtra, as elsewhere, have always fulfilled this task by guiding society along the 'right path'. Obviously the implication was that persons belonging to the other category haven't quite done so.

Indecision about the final aims and ends characterises humdrum life, while decisive final aims and ends—characterises other-worldliness.

The former connotes a disparity between ends and means, while the latter connotes a harmony between ends and means. In order to attain tranquillity of mind and happiness that cannot be disturbed, it is necessary to develop the faculty and habit of introspection.

C. *Nationalist Type of Harikathā*

As in the earlier section an order is followed in the presentation of the ideas as propounded by the Kathākārs.

It was felt that though Harikathā should be mainly educative in nature, yet it must be rooted in devotion to God. Even by listening to the performance of Harikathā a person would acquire merit. It was categorically stated that Harikathā wasn't meant to entertain people. Harikathā was regarded as a potent agency for providing advice on matters pertaining to religion and was regarded as a potent agency for the propagation of religion. Another purpose of Harikathā was to awaken the rulers and the ruled in respect of their respective duties and obligations. To rouse people against any manner of injustice was a very legitimate purpose of Harikathā.

Certain suggestions to the Harikathākārs emanated from the ideas expressed above such as that romance and its description be eschewed and that they must be fearless and frank in telling the truth.

References were made to the spirit of service and sacrifice in Mahārāshtra and to the immense contribution made by the saints towards maintaining traditional culture. By virtue of their keen observation of social processes, the saints can be regarded as keen sociologists. Tributes were paid to the services rendered by the Mahārāshtrian saints towards rekindling of religious sentiments amongst people, for the services rendered by them to village-folk and for the excellent synthesis of worldly affairs, social service and other-worldliness effected by them. In the same breath the present-day saints were exhorted to keep the torch alive, with special emphasis on the task of enlightening the masses in the village and improvement of villages.

Attempts were made to diagnose the ills of the body socio-politique. As one would expect, prescriptive remedies were offered too. The present age was characterized as one of romance and enjoyment and not as one of a sense of duty and obligations, the implication obviously being that no wonder that it was beset with so many ills and problems. The current overemphasis on material pleasures of life was regarded as a major source of suffering. It was felt that under the present conditions the insistence on the principle 'one man one vote' wouldn't work due

to the backwardness of the people at large. The political unrest, with special reference to the issue of Samyukta Mahārāshtra, was due to unjust rule of the government. The 'secular' policies of the state and its 'pandering' to Muslims were regarded as being instrumental in the political chaos. The deterioration in the institutions of learning and education was mentioned as a contributory cause and the futility of the present system of education was stressed upon. The Bania, the landlord, the moneylenders and the pleader were dubbed as 'parasites', and the impoverishment of people was ascribed to them. It was also mentioned, in this context, that unless people were industrious the nation could record no progress. Certain policies of the Bombay State like the tenancy legislation, the educational policies, particularly the measure taken by the State to stop the learning of English in the middle schools, and prohibition were regarded as seriously detrimental to the interests of the masses. The police firings in Bombay and Ahmedabad in connection with the issue of the bilingual State were severely criticized.

A suitable action programme was suggested ranging from purely personal to political action to overcome the present ills of society. Importance of restraint was stressed. Character building and the importance of proper company in the impressionable period of one's life, i.e., childhood, were stressed. It was felt that education would be meaningless without good thoughts and correct impulses. People should not hanker after popularity. For good action would necessarily ensure popularity in the long run. Vanity must not be given any quarter. There was no other merit apart from decent behaviour. Pilgrimage was no guarantee of merit, but proper action and behaviour alone would ensure merit.

Prayers to God were to be offered every day and not only during emergencies and calamities. The vital importance of a preceptor as a guide and mentor was stressed. People were exhorted to serve the preceptor with devotion. It was felt that life would be meaningless and futile without a preceptor.

People were exhorted to be legitimately proud of Hindu cultural traditions. The stages of life and the *varṇa* and the caste scheme should be followed by the people. The greatness of these schemes of social organisation was eulogized. The masses were advised to emulate the Brahmanic way of life in respect of certain values cherished and practised by Brahmans such as education, cleanliness, thrift, discipline, etc. The masses in particular were urged to give up eating meat, drinking liquor, observance of caste differences and discriminatory practices and untouchability, etc. In this context values of corporate and co-operative living in Japan were pointed out as worthy of emulation.

The duties and responsibilities of persons in charge of newspapers were mentioned. Thus it was pointed out that sensational news be eschewed. In the choice of a leader—political and administrative—greatest emphasis should be placed on the strength of character. The requirements of a worthy leader were listed to be moral soundness, exceptional intelligence and abilities, diplomacy, etc. By way of illustration it was pointed out that the crying need of the hour was a personality of the eminence of Lord Śrīkrṣṇa. A leader who was desirous of power and used the power of the state for this end should be removed. A ruler who was oppressive should be unseated. The obvious reference was to the Congress rulers particularly in the Bombay State and the opportunity that had come way of the people to dislodge them by the forthcoming (1957) General Elections in the country. Apart from arguing the case of Samyukta Mahārāshtra with Bombay, Nipani, Belgaum and Karwar, it was stressed that the attainment of this aim alone would guarantee or rather regain the greatly needed association and the confluence of the saints of Mahārāshtra. The need for shifting the emphasis from its political aspect to social and religious were stressed in respect of the Ganpati festival, revived by the late Lokamānya Tilak, 'the father of Indian unrest'.

IV

Response of the Audience

Certain limitations relating to the choice of the respondents for canvassing the questionnaire have already been noted, e.g., the exclusion of the female population altogether. In an approximate total number of 37,055 total audience that listened to the performances of Harikathā under study, there were 14,620 female members of the audience. From amongst the male audience a little more than one per cent sample has been chosen for study.

Before describing the sample it would be useful to say something about the nature of the audience. As in the earlier section, the audience are described with reference to the type of Harikathā. Two other variables have also to be introduced here, viz., the caste of the Kathākār and his social status or reputation and the locality in which a particular performance was given.

A. Nāradya or Traditional Hardāsi Kathā

It has been already noted that all the Hardāsi Kathākārs were Brahmin by caste. Barring five performances, in all other cases the audience was

primarily composed of high caste Hindus—Brahmins, Chandrasen Kayasth Prabhu, etc., in the main and a few Marathas.

In one case the performance was attended by persons of higher and lower castes, amongst whom the females were in a majority—actually two and a half times the number that of males. This performance was given by a mediocre Kathākār on a monthly basis in the Institute for the training of Kathākārs. In the second case, though the Kathākār had a high reputation, the performance was given in a temple that is usually frequented by the Wārkaris of lower caste. In fact the Kathākār announced at the very commencement of his performance that it was specially meant for 'such audience'. Moreover the temple is situated in a locality where there is a predominance of lesser business community, e.g., the Šimpis, and the population is composed of lower castes. In the third case, the Kathākār was none too famous and gave a performance on a monthly basis in a temple situated in similar circumstances as the above. In the fourth case, though the Kathākārs had a fair reputation, the performance was given on a monthly basis in a temple that was owned by a person of a lower caste and also frequented by persons belonging to lower castes. In the fifth case the performance was given by a mediocre lady Kathākār, exclusively for the ladies, in the temple as described in the second case.

B. *Wārkarī Kathā*

Amongst the Kathākārs three were Brahmin, one a Mali and another—a Kunbi by caste. One of the Brahmin Kathākārs had a reputation over and above that of a Kathākār. Yet even his performances were attended primarily by Wārkaris who were illiterate and mainly belonged to lower castes. In one case this Kathākār was specially invited to give performance on the occasion of Lokamānya Tilak Anniversary in a temple situated in a predominantly Brahmin and high caste locality. This performance was therefore attended by persons predominantly of the Brahmin and the higher castes, who were also well educated. In another instance too this Kathākār was specially invited by Brahmins to give his performance in a temple in a suburb of Bombay. On this occasion the audience was composed of Brahmins, Wārkaris and others of lower castes. On all other occasions his performances were attended primarily by Wārkaris of lower castes and by others belonging to lower castes, even though the audience he drew tended to be very large in number. In Bombay for instance the total audience was in the neighbourhood of 3,000. In the case of every other Kathākār, the audience was composed mainly of the Wārkaris and persons of lower castes who had little education to speak of.

It is true that the performances were of the sect, by (those of) the sect, and for the sect. As has been noted earlier the performances of Wārkarī Kathākārs are highly structured. Therefore the nature of the audience is also more or less pre-determined. Excepting certain special personalities this observation holds good for the Wārkarī Kathākārs.

C. Nationalist Kathākār

There were five Brahmins, one Parit, a Śimpi and a Maratha amongst the Nationalist Kathākārs whose performances have been studied. The performances of the Brahmin Kathākārs were mainly held in temples situated in a predominantly Brahmin and higher castes locality. Only in one instance (in Bombay) it was given in a temple situated in a mixed locality. And in this case the audience was composed half and half of higher and lower castes. In all other instances the audience was composed primarily of higher castes who were also educated.

As for the performances given by non-Brahmin Kathākārs, two of them were given in Pandharpur at the time of Wāri (Annual pilgrimage) before the Wārkaris and illiterate masses. As noted earlier this fact had consequence for the content and the method of these performances. In the case of the third Kathākār these performances were given in one instance in the vegetable market, Poona on the occasion of the Ganpati festival at the invitation of vegetable dealers and in other two instances in small villages on behalf of the Samyukta Mahārāshtra Samiti on the eve of the General Elections 1957. In the case of all these performances the audience was composed of the Marathas (uneducated) and the lower castes (mostly illiterate).

Description of the Sample and Its Response

In describing the response of the audience it is not possible to resort to the sectionwise division adhered to here before. It should be mentioned that in the case of three performances schedules were not available—of which one was of the Wārkarī type and other two of the Nationalist type. Of course, in the case of the latter two, though schedules could not be filled, the response of the audience was elicited, with special reference to the performance. This will be described at the end of this section.

The castewise distribution of the sample was as follows: 147 Brahmins, 7 C. K. Ps., 12 Marwari, Jain, Gujar, and Tambat, 53 Marathas,

26 Shimpis, Sutar, Mali, Gaoli, Koshti, Nhavi and Teli, 4 Vanjari, 1 Harijan and 1 Brahmosamajist.

The agewise distribution was : 11-15 : 2, 16-20 : 18, 21-25 : 34, 26-30 : 24, 31-35 : 17, 36-40 : 26, 41-45 : 21, 46-50 : 26, 51-55 : 29, 56-60 : 29, 61 and above : 31. Thus 78 respondents were below the age of thirty-one. Thus younger people also attended the performances of Harikathā.

The place of residence and caste of the audience seemed to bear correlation with each other. In Poona for instance there was a concentration of the Brahmins and C.K.Ps. in a given locality, of the Marathas in another, of the artisan castes in still another and so on. The only Harijan member from the sample, lived in the traditional locality for the Harijans in Poona. In Wāi, amongst the fourteen persons interviewed, excepting one Maratha young man, who was a student, all the rest were Brahmin by caste.

Likewise there seemed to be a correlation between caste and occupation. All those who belonged to the higher professions and the higher salaried groups were Brahmin by caste. Amongst the Government employees and teachers there was a preponderance of the Brahmins and the C.K.Ps., though there were a few Marathas and persons belonging to artisan castes too. As for craftsmen, though there were a couple of Brahmins, the majority was composed of non-Brahmin and artisan castes. There were a couple of Brahmins who worked as peons or as labourers in a mill. Yet here too the majority was constituted by the lower castes. As regards priestly functions and Kathākārs there were ten Brahmins, a Maratha and a Vanjari. On the other hand in respect of farming, there was a preponderance of the Marathas, though there were a few Brahmins and persons belonging to other castes. Similar feature seemed to obtain in respect of business and trade. As one might expect, there were ten Brahmins who were either unemployed or only looked after the household affairs, two Marwaris and Gujars, four Marathas and three belonged to the artisan castes. Amongst the students there were fifteen Brahmins, a C.K.P., a Marwari or Gujar, eleven Marathas and a person belonging to the artisan castes.

As for the educational level the figures below give us a good idea. Illiterates 11 ; Literates 43 ; Vernacular Std. I to III 3 ; Vern. Std. IV to VII 21 ; Vern. Final to Second Year Trained 14 ; Vern. VIII to X 24 ; Matric and First Year Examination in a college 60 ; Intermediate 21 ; Graduates 26 ; Post-graduates 16 ; Technical Diploma or Degree, etc., 3. (In the case of five schedules this item had not been answered.) Thus, a little more than fifty per cent of the audience had modern education.

In order to find out as to how the audience acquired interest in attending Harikathā, it was asked of them if their parents, guardians or other members of the family were interested in Harikathā and attended the performances of Harikathā. The replies were as follows: 188 respondents said that their parents and family members were interested in Harikathā and attended the performances; six of them replied that only some of their family members were so interested; seventeen said that their family members evinced some interest in Harikathā; four persons did not answer this query. Seventy-one of the respondents replied that the first time they ever attended the performance of Harikathā was with either of their parents (35 with mother and 36 with father); fourteen with both the parents; fourteen with grandparents; twenty-nine with other members of the family; one with his wife; fifty-one with their friends; nine with others (possibly neighbours); thirty-one by themselves; twenty-one didn't answer. The influence of family members and friends in creating interest in Harikathā in the minds of the respondents is thus very obvious.

There were sixty-two respondents who stated that they attended the performance of Harikathā every now and then; sixteen, everyday during the sacred four months and otherwise intermittently; thirty-three, once or twice a month; twenty-eight, three to seven times a month; six, eight to ten times a month; forty-six said that they made it a point to attend the performance of a 'good' Kathākār; eight, intermittently; sixteen, not every now and then; five, whenever there was a performance in the town (meaning that performances were few and far between); only one person didn't answer this question. Thus, a large majority of the respondents attended the performance of Harikathā quite frequently.

Seventy-three of the respondents mentioned that they have been attending the performances of Harikathā since their childhood. A large majority of the respondents have been attending Harikathā for over ten years. This reflects the sustained interest on their part in Harikathā.

The following material describes the reaction of the audience to questions such as—the items that impressed them in the content of the last performance they listened to, whether the performance is in any way dependent on the inclination of the audience, expectations of Harikathā, features of Harikathā that find favour with the audience, the qualities deemed as essential for a Kathākār, the preference in favour of certain Kathākārs and the reasons thereof, the impact of Harikathā, etc.

Fifty-one respondents stated that they liked the particular theme discussed in the performance; twenty-three, inculcation of devotion;

eighteen, philosophy ; eighteen, ethics and moral principles ; sixteen, devotional songs and music, style and method of discussion of the Kathākār ; fourteen, the greatness of saints ; fourteen, critique of political situation ; nine, criticism of social affairs and reform, wits and humour ; four, religious education ; seven, nothing whatsoever ; and forty-nine respondents didn't answer at all.

Seventy-five respondents felt that the performance was mainly a matter of the inclinations of the Kathākār while other forty-two felt that the inclinations of the audience had an impact on the performance. Twenty-seven respondents felt that though it was primarily a matter of the inclinations of the Kathākār, yet the performances were such that the audience could, without difficulty, grasp the purport thereof. Twenty-three felt that it all depended on the personality of the Kathākār in question. Eight felt that the inclinations of the audience were given due regard. Eight felt that it all depended on the nature of the audience. Eight felt that it was according to the sect. Six felt that a compromise was effected by giving due regard to the inclinations of the audience as for the latter half of the performance, while the first half, i.e., the philosophical expounding, was left to the inclinations of the Kathākār. Seven felt that neither of these had any impact on the performance. Twenty-six did not answer.

Twenty-eight expected that Harikathā should bring about societal improvement (possibly meaning thereby that new ideas can set the ball rolling). Nineteen expected Harikathā to contribute towards character-building and improvement. Seventeen wanted Harikathā to inculcate the virtue of devotion to the Almighty God. Seventeen expected philosophical discussions. Fifteen looked upon Harikathā as a suitable mechanism for reviving and rekindling interest in religion amongst people. Nine felt that 'improvement' should be the result. Seven expected enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. Six felt that spirit of nationalism be fostered. Six expected the State to take greater interest in Harikathā and give financial aid. Four expected that devotional prayers be melodious. One hundred and seventeen respondents didn't answer.

Bearing in mind that since a large majority of the audience were Brahmin by caste, yet certain relationship seemed to exist between the peoples' caste and their expectations. Thus amongst the seventeen respondents who expected philosophical expounding, there were thirteen Brahmins, three Marathias and only one person belonged to the intermediate castes. The only Harijan respondent expected, as one might well expect, societal reform. As for those who stressed the devotional aspect there were quite a few non-Brahmins. Five Brahmins and a

Maratha mentioned inculcation of the spirit of nationalism. There was a preponderance of Brahmins over others amongst those who looked upon Harikathā as an agency to build up and reform character. On the other hand non-Brahmins seemed to bank more on Harikathā in respect of enhancement of knowledge and wisdom.

The younger respondents seemed to be more keen on societal reform and improvement (a young student between eleven to fifteen, being included amongst these). In respect of enhancement of knowledge and wisdom, the younger respondents were eight in number while there was only one respondent who belonged to the age-group forty-six to fifty. A similar feature was discerned in respect of inculcation of the spirit of nationalism (the same young student being included amongst these). The balance swung in favour of the relatively older people in respect of philosophical expounding, inculcation of devotion, character-building, general improvements, etc.

Those who had education upto matriculation and beyond that, were in preponderance amongst those who expected Harikathā to help build and reform character. The same trend was noted in respect of enhancement of knowledge and wisdom. They seemed to be in a majority amongst those who expected Harikathā to bring about societal improvement and reform; in respect of inculcation of the spirit of nationalism and also in respect of philosophical expounding. On the other hand there was a majority of those who ranged from illiteracy to vernacular eighth standard to tenth standard amongst those who expected Harikathā to inculcate a sense of devotion and to revive and rekindle interest in religion. It may be worth noting that amongst the six illiterate respondents (who answered this part of the query) one expected societal improvement and reform; two, inculcation of a sense of devotion; and two, general improvement. Obviously they seemed to reflect their personal problems in their reaction to this question.

A division of the features of Harikathā, that found favour with the audience, into main and subsidiary was made so as to find out the interests of the audience and also to assess the audience itself. The latter aspect is discussed below. The association of the features presented below gives an idea about the nature of the features. Philosophical expounding, ethics and moral principles, devotional singing and reciting the name of God, and combinations thereof were regarded as main and music, theme, style and nationalist aspect of Harikathā, wits, humour, entertainment value of Harikathā and combinations thereof were regarded as subsidiary for this analysis. Amongst those who mentioned philosophical expounding as a feature of Harikathā that was appreciated by them, were also some

who mentioned that music, or theme, style, etc., or wits and humour or all of these were appreciated by them. Only seven amongst these didn't mention any other feature. Sixteen didn't mention any other feature amongst those who had mentioned devotional singing recitation as features of interest to them. Likewise there were ten amongst those who favoured a combination of ethics, and moral principles and devotional singing and recitation of God's name, who didn't mention any other feature. There were about a hundred respondents who appreciated both the main and the subsidiary features and the combinations thereof mentioned above.

The respondents were asked to state the qualities they regarded as essential for a Kathākār to possess. Here again a division into main and subsidiary qualities was made. Qualities regarded as main were—moral character, knowledge, learning and ability to recite, being well-versed in many fields of learning, modern knowledge, devotion to Almighty, a sense of mission and spirit of resignation and denial, interest and participation in societal affairs—that means the ability and the desire to be 'good' and 'useful' to society and the various combinations thereof. Music and ability to sing, style, ready-wittedness, presence of mind, a sense of humour, personality and dignified appearance and oratory and combinations of these have been regarded as subsidiary qualities. The figures below give us an idea about the thinking of the respondents on this matter. Sixty regarded moral character as the main quality a Kathākār should possess; one hundred and thirty-nine — knowledge, learning and ability to recite; twenty — being well versed in many areas of knowledge and learning and modern knowledge; thirty-eight — devotion to Almighty; twelve — a sense of mission and the spirit of resignation and denial; fourteen — interest and participation in social affairs etc. Amongst those who regarded the above-mentioned qualities as main, there were many who also felt that style and oratory, though listed as a subsidiary quality, were quite useful qualities for a Kathākār and particularly the former quality was thought to be quite important. Amongst those who regarded the main qualities as essential for a Kathākār, there were fifty-two respondents who didn't mention any subsidiary quality at all. On the other hand there were sixty-five persons who regarded subsidiary quality — music and ability to sing — as essential; ninety-five — style; twenty-five — ready-wittedness, presence of mind, sense of humour and jokes; twenty-seven — personality and dignified appearance; sixty-eight — oratory. Amongst those there were thirty-seven respondents who didn't mention any of the main qualities.

In terms of the preference expressed by the respondents for the various Kathākārs, it is possible to infer something about their preference

for the different types of Harikathā. Seventy-nine respondents expressed their first preference for Hardāsi Kathā. Amongst these, there were forty-five who gave second or third preference also to Hardāsi Kathā; twelve to Nationalist Kathā; twelve to Wārkarī Kathā. There were seventy respondents who gave first preference to Wārkarī Kathā. Amongst these, there were thirty-one persons who gave second or third preference to Wārkarī Kathā; twenty-three to Hardāsi and only nine to Nationalist Kathā. There were seventy-nine respondents who gave first preference to Nationalist Kathā. Amongst these there were forty-five persons who gave second or third preference to Nationalist Kathā; seventeen to Hardāsi Kathā and seven to Wārkarī Kathā. A continuum of the types of Harikathā can be thus postulated — with the Wārkarī type and the Nationalist type being at the two ends and the Hardāsi type lying somewhere in between. Those at the two ends had hardly anything in common, the Hardāsi type acting as the common element.

A marked preference was expressed for the Hardāsi type of Harikathā by Brahmins, though the same held in respect certain Nationalist Kathākār who were Brahmin by caste. Thus amongst those who recorded first preference for Hardāsi Harikathā, there were fifty-nine Brahmins, seven advanced castes, seven Marathas and seven intermediate castes. Amongst those who gave first preference for Wārkarī type of Harikathā there were thirty-one Brahmins, four advanced castes, twenty-one Marathas, twelve intermediate castes and two belonged to other castes. Forty Brahmins recorded their first preference for Nationalist type of Harikathā; six advanced castes; twenty-three Marathas; seven intermediate castes and three belonged to other castes. Similar trend was revealed in the second and third preference orders. As for the factor of age it had a marked impact on preference. Thus the younger group below thirty-five showed marked preference for the Nationalist type of Harikathā whether it was a matter of first or second or third preference. Age didn't seem to have much significance in respect of the Hardāsi and Wārkarī Harikathā, though the balance did seem to tilt a little in favour of those above thirty-five.

The preference for different Kathākār stated below includes only those for whom there was higher frequency. An interesting feature to be noted about this is that almost the entire list of the Kathākār as per first, second and third preference orders hardly varied, except for a couple of names, from each other. Mr. D., a Wārkarī Kathākār, had the highest frequency in three preference orders, irrespective of the caste and place of residence of the respondents. The same could be said in this case in respect of factors such as age-groups and educational groups. Next stood Mr. A., a Nationalist Kathākār, who had more or less the next highest

frequency in the three preference orders, irrespective of the caste, place of residence, age and education of the respondents. He was preferred by the youngest as well as the oldest respondents. Next to him was Mr. N., a Hardāsi Kathākār, who had a higher frequency in the first preference order than in the other two orders. He was preferred almost exclusively by the Brahmin respondents. Other factors did not have any effect. Mr. G., another Nationalist Kathākār, was mentioned only in the first preference order—primarily by Marathas and lower castes, though there was a Brahmin respondent too who had given him the first preference. Other factors were of no significance. Two Nationalist Kathākārs—Messrs K. & K.—had a consistent frequency in all the preference orders, primarily from the Brahmin respondents. Here too other factors were not significant. Mr. S., a Hardāsi Kathākār, was put only in the second preference order, mainly by the Brahmin respondents. Mr. S., a Nationalist Kathākār, was included only in the second preference order—primarily by Marathas and by those who didn't have advanced education. Mr. T., a Nationalist Kathākār, was also included in the second preference order only—was primarily preferred by Non-Brahmins. Yet there were two Brahmin respondents. Mr. K., a Hardāsi Kathākār, was included only in the third preference order—primarily by Brahmin respondents.

The respondents were asked to give the *raison d'être* of their preferences. As before, here too the discussion is restricted to only those Kathākārs who had the highest frequency. The discussion follows as per preference order.

Mr. D. : Those who placed him in the first preference order presumably did so for his qualities such as high moral character (only one respondent mentioned this), and other qualities which have been listed as essential qualities and combinations thereof. The same qualities were attributed to him also by those respondents who put him in the second and third preference orders.

Mr. A. was put in the three preference orders mainly because of his attributed ability to revive and rekindle interest in Hindu religion, Nationalist fervour and his method of narration, ability to sing Bhajans etc.

Mr. N. was put in the three preference orders mainly for the essential qualities of a Kathākār attributed to him.

Mr. G. was placed in the first preference order mainly due to his method of narration.

Messrs K. & K. were placed in the three preference orders due to their reviving interest in Hindu religion, learning and knowledge and method of narration.

Mr. S. who was put in the second preference order, was attributed qualities such as high moral character, learning and ability to recite, adherence to the sect and other essential qualities and combinations thereof.

Mr. S. was placed in the second preference order for his ability to revive and rekindle interest in Hindu religion and the method of narration mainly.

Mr. T. was put in the second preference order for his philosophical expounding, ability to revive and rekindle interest in Hindu religion, method of narration and devotion.

There was thus no ranking of Kathākār into the various preference orders on account of differential qualities. On the other hand, there was a marked consistency in the qualities attributed to the Kathākār whether they were placed in the first place or the second or the third preference orders.

Impact of Harikathā on the Minds of the Audience

The respondents were asked to state if any of the features of Harikathā had made any impact on their minds. The following were the replies:—

Fifty-two—faith, religious feeling, faith in the existence of God, devotion to God, *bhajans*, mythological tales etc; seventeen—ethical principles; sixteen—ethical principles, philosophical expounding, political critique etc.; fifteen—moral character and faith; fourteen—discussion of politics, training in the political principles and inculcation of suitable sentiments, historical anecdotes, social reform; fourteen—moral character, inclination towards a good deed and self-purification; ten—the educative role of the saints; eight—actually joined the Wārkarī sect due to the listening to Harikathā. There were a few who said that they were impressed by the entertainment aspect of Harikathā, or developed interest in the performance of Harikathā as a vocation, or looked upon Harikathā as a solace or an escape from the worries of life, or developed interest in music, wits and humour and other arts.

It was felt that there may be some correlation between the features of Harikathā preferred and the qualities desired of a Kathākār. The two-way tables brought out such relationship. Thus those who preferred main features of Harikathā such as high moral character, ethical principles etc., also desired that the Kathākār should possess qualities like high moral character, learning and ability to recite, devotion to God, being

well-versed, possessing modern knowledge, social affairs etc. In all there were eighty-eight respondents in this category. Their castewise composition was as follows: — Brahmins 53; Maratha 17; Shimpi, Sutar 9; C.K.P. 5; Marwari, Sonar etc., 3; Harijan 1. The respondents belonged to all the age-groups. Majority of them were matriculates and above. Likewise quite a few of them were either teachers or government servants, higher professions, students, priests, Kathākārs etc.

As regards those who mentioned faith, devotion and certain combinations there were one hundred and sixteen respondents. In this group premium seemed to be placed upon qualities such as high moral character and learning, though devotion and social affairs were mentioned. Though the Brahmins were a little more than half the number of the respondents, there were many Marathas, Shimpi, Sutar etc. There were a couple of Vanjaris too. A large majority of the respondents belonged to the age-group above thirty. In respect of education, a little more than a majority belonged to the group that had education upto tenth vernacular standard. Yet there was no effect of occupation.

There were fifty-one respondents who had mentioned philosophical expounding, spiritualism and other-worldliness and their combinations. This group emphasized qualities such as learning and knowledge, high moral character, devotion, spirit of sacrifice, interest in societal affairs, etc. Brahmins were more than a half, a sizeable Marathas, a few Shimpi, Sutar, etc., and a couple of C.K.Ps. All the age-groups were represented — curiously enough there were six respondents from the age-group sixteen to twenty. More than a majority of this group had education upto matriculation and beyond, there being fourteen persons who were at least graduates (not a single illiterate). The higher professions, the teachers, government servants, quite a few who had retired, quite a few students and a few persons who held lower posts including that of a mill labourer, were represented in this group. Curiously enough, there was no respondent from the group of priests and Kathākārs.

There were twenty-eight respondents who mentioned political and social affairs and their combinations. This group emphasized qualities such as learning and knowledge, devotion, interest in societal affairs and high moral character. Of the group there were seventeen Brahmins, six — Shimpi, Sutar, etc., two Harijans, a Maratha, a Marwari or Sonar and a Vanjari. A little more than a majority belonged to the younger age-group, i.e., upto thirty. Here too the majority was constituted by those who had education upto matriculation and beyond, not a single illiterate. Teachers and government servants, professions, priests, Kathākārs, students, retired persons, land-holders, traders, etc., were represented, though the largest number was that of teachers and government servants.

There were only sixteen respondents who had mentioned that they looked upon Harikathā as a solace to their mind and were impressed by its entertainment value. They emphasised qualities such as style, personality and dignified appearance, ability to sing, oratory, etc. The Brahmins formed fifty per cent of this group; there were four Marathas and four Shimpī, Sutar, etc. There were quite a few who belonged to the age-group sixteen to twenty-five. There were eight persons who had education upto Matriculation and beyond. Amongst this group there were six students, three each from lower services, mill-labourers, etc., and those who had retired, two landholders and one each from traders and those who either looked after the household property or were unemployed.

There were nine respondents who looked upon Harikathā as a 'better sort of entertainment'. Of these three emphasised style and one emphasised personality and dignified appearance as essential qualities for a Kathākār. Five didn't answer this part of the query. There were four Brahmins, two Marathas and three Shimpī, Sutar, etc. All the age-group—sixteen to twenty—all the rest being above forty. Likewise the different educational layers were represented. Occupation-wise distribution was as follows: three tailors, etc., two who had retired, two students, one trader, one land-holder.

There were ten respondents who declared that Harikathā had made no impact on them whatsoever. Of these only four mentioned style, personality, ability to sing and oratory as qualities essential for a Kathākār. Six of them were silent about it. There were three Brahmins, six Marathas and a Brahmosamajist. More or less all the age-groups were represented. Likewise the various educational layers were represented. Teachers and government servants, unemployed, students, landholders were represented.

Gradation of the Audience

Even as the Kathākārs were graded, the audience too have been graded in terms of their responses such as the features of Harikathā that have impressed them, the features they regarded as main or secondary, the qualities that were regarded by them as being essential for a Kathākār, etc. Working on this basis, five grades of the audience have been established. Thus the first grade is constituted of those who emphasised philosophical expounding, spiritualism and other-worldliness; the second grade—of those who emphasised philosophical expounding in addition to societal and political affairs; the third grade—societal and political

affairs, etc.; the fourth grade—societal and political affairs and the entertainment value of the Harikathā etc.; the fifth grade—mainly the entertainment value of Harikathā.

There were one hundred and twenty-seven respondents who were placed as per the scheme of gradation mentioned above, in the first grade. The distribution as per place of residence was as follows: Poona, sixty-two; Bombay, twenty-five; places other than Bombay or Poona, forty. Amongst these there were seventy-two Brahmins and Prabhus, fifty-three Marwari, Wani, Gujar, Maratha, Shimpi, Sutar, etc., and two Harijan or Vanjari. There were only thirty-two respondents below the age of thirty-five, while the rest, i.e., ninety-five were about thirty-six. As per level of education, there were forty-four persons who had training upto vernacular fourth standard (obviously enough smaller education is no deterrent for the moral and spiritual advancement of people), twenty-nine upto Matriculation, thirty-one upto graduate and twenty-one above graduation.

There were fifty-four respondents in the second grade. Of these thirty-four belonged to Poona, ten to Bombay and ten to other places. There were forty-four Brahmins and C. K. P.s and ten Advanced Hindus, Marathas and Intermediate castes. Twenty-one respondents were below the age of thirty-five, while thirty-two were above thirty-six. In this case there were only three respondents who had training upto the Fourth Vernacular Standard, all the rest being trained upto Matriculation and above.

In the third grade there were forty-one respondents, of which twenty-six belonged to Poona, only one to Bombay and thirteen to other places. There were twenty-three Brahmins, fifteen Advanced Hindus, Marathas and Intermediate castes and three were Harijans or Vanjaris. Twenty-nine of them were below thirty-five, while the rest were above thirty-six years. Only four had training upto fourth standard vernacular, while the rest were upto Matriculation and above.

There were fifteen respondents in the fourth grade. Twelve of these belonged to Poona and the rest belonged to other places. Of these eight were Brahmins and the rest belonged to the Advanced Hindus, the Marathas and the Intermediate castes. Nine respondents were below the age of thirty-five, while the rest were above thirty-six. Here again there were only two respondents who were trained upto fourth standard vernacular, while all the rest were upto Matriculation and above.

Eight respondents were placed in the fifth grade, of which six belonged to Poona, one to Bombay and one to other places. There were three

Brahmins and the rest belonged to the next group. Three respondents were below thirty-five, the rest belonging to the age-group thirty-six to fifty-five. Only two were trained upto the fourth vernacular standard, the rest upto Matriculation and above. Thus education seemed to vary inversely with the gradation of the audience.

Contact between the Audience and the Kathākār

Modern developments in theories of Small Groups and influence of small groups have highlighted the importance of personal contact in the entire process of communication. This problem has been tackled from various angles: (1) the qualities regarded by the audience as essential and or desirable in a Kathākār, (2) features regarded as essential from the point of view of the content of Harikathā, (3) preference scale or grading of the various Kathākār by the audience, (4) impact of Harikathā in terms of the actual performances of Harikathā attended, and (5) grading of the audience in terms of their choices regarding the expected features of Harikathā and qualities expected of Kathākār, etc. But obviously enough the variable that has not been explicitly discussed is that of contact between the audience and the Kathākār. This variable is discussed below. Apart from providing the link in the communication process, the variable is also felt to have consequences for the continuities of the process of communication.

The problem is discussed more from the side of the audience in the sense that the audience were asked to say if they had any contact with the Kathākār and if so what was the nature of their contact in terms of the frequency of the contact, ideas or topics discussed with Kathākār, etc. As for the Kathākār, they were merely asked in a general manner to state if they felt their message carried any weight with the audience. Beyond this they were not asked to state if they had any contact with the audience.

The audience were asked if they had any acquaintance with any of the Kathākār and if so to specify the names of the Kathākār, the frequency of contacts, the topics of discussion, etc. There were one hundred twenty-five respondents who said that they had no acquaintance whatsoever with any Kathākār. There were ten respondents who, though they were acquainted with some Kathākār, didn't contact them. There were twenty-seven respondents who said that they knew some Kathākār and met him every now and then. The topics they discussed with the Kathākār were societal, religious, path of devotion, other-worldliness, present state of affairs, biographies of saints, pertaining to studies, music and mythology, welfare of each other, pertaining to Harikathā.

There were sixty-two respondents who knew and contacted frequently more than one Kathākār. There were sixty respondents who knew and contacted a Kathākār or two once in a while. Taking both the divisions of respondents, there were eighteen respondents who discussed other-worldliness, the same number who discussed matters pertaining to Harikathā, sixteen who discussed religious matters, eleven—path of devotion, ten—societal matters, nine—each other's welfare, eight—biographies of saints, five—present state of affairs, and two each—pertaining to studies and music and mythology.

Amongst the total of fifty-three Kathākārs, as mentioned by the respondents, thirty-three Kathākārs were being met frequently by some of the respondents, while the rest were being contacted once in a while. These were thirteen Nationalist Kathākārs, five Wārkarī Kathākārs and all the rest were Nāradiya Kathākārs.

There were only thirteen non-Brahmin Kathākārs amongst those who were contacted by the audience. Amongst the Kathākārs who were frequently contacted by the audience there were twenty-five Brahmin Kathākārs, while the rest were non-Brahmin. Peculiarly enough, the ten respondents who contacted frequently the non-Brahmin Kathākārs were non-Brahmins themselves. This fact goes to establish the exceptional nature of the solitary preference expressed by a Brahmin respondent in favour of a non-Brahmin Kathākār (Reference-section on preference for Kathākārs). Two Marathas, a Wani, a Vanjari, an Ahir Gawli and two C. K. P.s were amongst those who had frequent contacts with Brahmin Kathākārs. In fact it would be correct to lump together Brahmins and C. K. P.s as respondents in view of the commonness of their interests as revealed by the topics discussed by them with Kathākārs. There were twenty-one Brahmin and two C. K. P. respondents who maintained such contact with Brahmin Kathākārs.

The preferences for the various Kathākārs, as discussed in the relevant section, are largely reflected in the frequency of contact by the audience with the various Kathākārs mentioned here. Thus Mr. D., who had the highest frequency in the first preference scale, also had the highest number of respondents in respect of frequency of contact. The same was the case in respect of Mr. A., Mr. N., Messrs. K. and K. etc.

Going into the topics discussed by the audience with the Kathākārs, it was found that (including those who contacted the Kathākārs once in a while) the topics evinced a wide range. Broadly the topics could be listed under the categories—I Devotional, Moral, Educational, Philosophical, Spiritual. II Societal and Political affairs. III Harikathā as an agency of

communication, the possibilities of its utilization for various ends such as the spiritual, the political etc. and the problems with which it was faced or rather the factors that constituted a threat to its continued existence. IV Personal matters. Thus it is evident that from the point of view of the impact and influence of Kathākār the first two categories were extremely significant. The third category was significant for the maintenance of continuity of the traditional communication. The fourth category, helped retain personal touch between the Kathākār and the audience and was indirectly responsible for maintaining the flow of a communication.

By and large there seemed to be a correspondence between the personality and interest of the Kathākār and the topics discussed by the audience with them. To put it more dogmatically, the pattern of communication seemed to be dictated by the personality and the interests of the Kathākār. For instance the topics seemed to bear a positive relationship to the type of Kathākār. Thus political and societal affairs were discussed primarily with a Nationalist Kathākār. Of course there was no evidence to suggest that the interests of the audience were by any chance to the contrary.

Nevertheless there were a few instances wherein the interests of the audience seemed to dominate the pattern of communication. A C. K. P. respondent, irrespective of the type of the Kathākār or his interests, discussed only matters pertaining to education and that also with special reference to the place of Sanskrit. Then there was a Brahmin who was interested in discussing the present state of affairs and the state of Hari-kathā as an agency of communication, irrespective of the type, personality or interests of the Kathākār. A Wani respondent was interested only in other-worldliness. Another Brahmin was interested in the present state of (Hindu) religion and as such discussed only that topic, irrespective of even the capacity of the Kathākār to deliver the goods. There was yet another Brahmin respondent who discussed about the religious sanctions in respect of political affairs under varying conditions. There were a few others who were preoccupied with certain personal problems such as their studies, their relationships with the parents or teachers and as such discussed only these problems with a Kathākār whom they met frequently.

Thus the sort of communication that existed was not only in a single direction that is entirely dependent on the interests of the Kathākār but the *vice versa* was also true in some cases. Thus the process of communication was strengthened. On the other hand, had it been a single-directional flow, it might have been weakened. The relationship, under such circumstances, between the Kathākār and the audience would have been merely that between a distributor and a recipient. The discussions on

various topics, mentioned above, provided the feed-back mechanism and thus helped strengthen both the process and the agency of communication.

As for the Kathākārs, barring a few who felt that the younger generation could no longer be attracted to attend Harikathā and the other generation that attended were too occupied with their own worries and also couldn't take in any new ideas and that therefore Harikathā couldn't have any impact on the audience — there were quite many Kathākārs who felt confident that their message was accepted and respected by the younger generation. The failure on the part of Harikathā to attract the young was ascribed by some of the Kathākārs to the prevailing spirit of agnosticism, policies of the state, rival or rather powerful agencies of entertainment such as the movies, and the general tendency of decrying anything and everything that was old and orthodox. The optimistic element amongst the Kathākārs and which was in a majority, felt that the younger generation could be and was actually attracted to Harikathā. This group ascribed this fact to their capacity to deliver the message in a suitably effective manner by taking due account of the tastes and aptitudes of the younger generation. Thus there were quite a few Kathākārs who felt that their message carried weight with the audience.

Possibilities of the Continuation of Harikathā as an Agency of Communication

There are two approaches necessary to this problem. The first approach is to find out as to how far the present audience helps Harikathā to continue as an agency of communication by creating the requisite interest in the younger generation. The second approach is to elicit the opinion of the audience as to whether the younger generation has retained interest in Harikathā and if there is a loss of interest, the reasons thereof. Both the approaches have been utilised.

The respondents were asked if they attended the performances of Harikathā along with their children. In this context it is necessary to refer to the fact that as for the respondents studied, in a large majority of the cases they developed interest in Harikathā presumably as a result of their accompanying the parents, or grand-parents, or other members of the family. The familial influence seemed to go a long way in creating and sustaining interest in Harikathā. Amongst the respondents there were seventy-five persons who took their children along with them to attend the performances of Harikathā. In the case of seventy-two respondents, as they didn't have any children or if they had any the children were too young to accompany them, this part of the query was inapplicable. There were sixteen respondents who didn't at all answer this

question. There were eighty-four respondents who replied that they didn't take their sons or daughters along with them to attend Harikathā. They were requested to give reasons thereof. Twenty-seven respondents ascribed it to differences of tastes and liking; seventeen — to matters of convenience and the suitability or otherwise of the content of Harikathā for their children; twelve — rarely took their children; nine — to the young age of the children and their consequent incapacity to understand Harikathā; eight — to no particular cause; six — to the preoccupation of their sons and daughters — say with their education or employment; two — to the fact that they themselves didn't regularly attend the performances of Harikathā; two — to the possibilities of disturbance by children which might lessen their own concentration; one — took his sons and daughters only to a Nationalist type of Harikathā.

Next, the respondents were asked if they felt that in the younger generation there was a dwindling in the interest in Harikathā and to state the reasons thereof. There were only eighteen respondents who felt that the younger generation evinced greater interest in Harikathā. There were forty-one respondents who felt that there was no lessening in the interest in Harikathā on the part of the younger generation. One hundred and sixty-six respondents felt that the interest in Harikathā was receding. Thirteen felt that much depended on the abilities of the Kathākār to create and sustain interest in Harikathā amongst the younger generation and suggested that Nationalist Harikathā could do so effectively.

Amongst those who felt that greater interest was being evinced, there were eleven Brahmins and C. K. P.s and seven Advanced castes and Intermediate castes. There was only one respondent who was upto twenty years in age, seven between twenty-one and thirty-five, eight between thirty-six and fifty-five, two beyond fifty-five. Eight of these respondents belonged to Poona, five to Bombay and five to other places. Only two of the respondents were educated upto fourth standard vernacular, while all the rest were trained upto matriculation and above.

Of the forty-one respondents who felt that interest in Harikathā was not receding, there were fifteen Brahmin and C. K. P.s, twenty-four belonged to the Advanced and Intermediate castes and two to the Harijan or Vanjari castes. Only three of the respondents were upto the age of twenty, eight between twenty-one and thirty-five, twenty-one between thirty-six and fifty-five and nine above fifty-five. Eighteen belonged to Poona, four to Bombay and eighteen to other places. Twenty-one were trained upto fourth standard vernacular and all the rest upto Matriculation and above.

Amongst those who felt that interest in Harikathā was receding amongst the younger generation, there were one hundred and nine Brahmin and C. K. P.s, fifty-four Advanced castes and Intermediate castes and three Harijans or Vanjaris. There were many persons (relatively) who were upto twenty years in age, fifty-three between twenty-one and thirty-five, sixty-eight between thirty-six and fifty-five and thirty-one were above fifty-five. One hundred and eight respondents belonged to Poona, twenty-three to Bombay and thirty-seven to other places. Thirty-two of these were trained upto fourth standard vernacular, thirty-eight upto Matriculation and ninety-three upto graduation and above. Obviously enough, the highly educated respondents felt that prospects of Harikathā were dismal.

Amongst those who felt that a great deal depended on the Kathākār and his abilities, there were ten Brahmins and C. K. P.s and three were Advanced castes or Intermediate castes. Thus prescriptions were suggested primarily by the Brahmins and the C. K. P.s. Only one of these was upto twenty years in age, seven belonged to the age-group between twenty-one and thirty-five and five to the older age-groups. Apparently there was a feeling that if 'proper prescriptions' were administered the interest in Harikathā could be sustained. Six respondents from Poona, three from Bombay and four from other places made this conditional statement. All the respondents were educated upto Matriculation and above.

Analysis of Dwindling of Interest in Harikathā

The respondents were asked to give their own analysis of the factors responsible for the dwindling of the interest in Harikathā amongst the younger generation.

The factors below were mentioned as being responsible for the dwindling of interest in Harikathā in the order of frequency :— Loss of religion and absence of religious instruction, indifference to religion, other forms of entertainment and current fashions, impact of modern system of education, lowering of the status of Kathākārs and the paucity of Kathākārs who can provide the audience with appropriate content, stereotyped nature of the performances of Harikathā and the monotonous content and old themes, lack of faith and agnosticism, lack of adequate entertainment, should have nationalist Harikathās and new themes, domestic difficulties with which the audience are confronted and the lack of availability of spare time to attend Harikathā consequent thereupon, the widespread belief that Harikathā is primarily meant for the older people, lesser possibilities of proper and beneficial ways of impressing the minds of the

younger people, blind faith in religion and tacit acceptance of religion are no longer palatable to the young, different tastes and aptitudes and the fact that many guardians themselves do not attend the performances of Harikathā and thus their children also naturally do not attend.

As one might expect, the Brahmins and the C. K. P.s were most vocal in their analysis of the situation. There were quite a few who belonged to the Advanced castes and Intermediate castes and from the lower castes. Certain factors such as unacceptability of implicit faith in religion to people, differences in tastes and aptitudes, the fact that many guardians themselves do not attend Harikathā were exclusively mentioned by the Brahmins and the C. K. P.s. Factors such as lack of religious instruction and loss of religion, lack of faith and agnosticism, impact of modern education, imitation of the westerners, current fashions and new forms of entertainment, loss of status of the Kathākārs etc. were stressed upon also by those who belonged to the second category amongst the castes. The Harijans and other lower castes merely mentioned factors such as lack of religious instruction and loss of religion, imitation of westerners and current fashions, loss of status of Kathākārs and domestic difficulties.

Those who belonged to cities like Bombay and Poona were naturally more critical. The younger age-group i.e. those below thirty-five exclusively mentioned the factor that implicit faith in religion and such practices were no longer acceptable to the people. As one might expect, there was a large majority of those above thirty-five amongst the respondents who mentioned lack of religious instruction and loss of religion. Likewise the same group was more vocal in stressing the impact of modern education, imitation of the westerners, domestic difficulties etc. The younger group was more vocal in stressing the stereotyped nature of Harikathā, its monotonous content and the loss of status of the Kathākārs etc. Both the younger and the older groups equally asked for a greater element of entertainment in Harikathā and suggested that Nationalist Harikathā would find favour.

Only those who were educated upto graduation stressed that implicit faith in religion and such practices were no longer acceptable to the people. This trend could be seen also amongst those who stressed factors such as stereotyped nature of Harikathā and its monotonous content, imitation of westerners and new forms of entertainment, loss of status of Kathākārs, lack of possibilities of creating proper and beneficial impressions on the minds of the younger people etc. By and large, it can be said that those who had higher education were much more vocal in their analysis than those who had little education to speak of.

Addendum

The responses of the audience who had responded to the questionnaire have already been presented and analysed. But there were a few performances attended by me, wherein the audience did not respond to the questionnaire in its entirety. Actually all the three performances were by the same Kathākār — a nationalist Kathākār about whom details have already been given in the relevant section — in three different villages in the Poona District on the eve of the General Elections 1957. The Kathākār was propagating on behalf of the Samyukta Mahārāshtra Samiti for the candidates put up by the Samiti. It was but natural that the themes chosen by the Kathākār were in keeping with the message to be conveyed. In fine, it can be said that a balance sheet of the deeds and misdeeds of the then ruling party viz. the Congress was presented and it was emphatically pointed out how parasitical elements such as the landlords, the moneylenders, capitalists, bootleggers etc. had flourished at the cost of the masses under the rule and that therefore the masses should not vote in favour of any candidate put up by the Congress, but should vote *en bloc* for the Samiti candidates.

Apart from the feasibility or otherwise of canvassing the entire questionnaire amongst the audience, it was felt advisable to concentrate on the impact of the propaganda. It needs to be mentioned that in all the three villages, to start with, the atmosphere was pro-Congress. In fact it was well nigh difficult to get the local assistance to get the performance started. But once the performance commenced, people poured in even from the neighbouring villages. I interviewed about ten respondents each *per* performance. The audience was fairly homogeneous in its composition. The query made was as to the reaction of the audience to the performance, its content, style and the Kathākār. There was a unanimous reply that they were greatly impressed by the very eloquent way in which the entire case had been advocated by the Kathākār and that majority of the people would vote for the candidates put up by the Samiti. It would be too facile to accept the response at its face value. Yet it needs to be mentioned that in the said constituency, noted for its pro-Congress leanings, the candidates put up by the Samiti were elected with a majority of votes.

V

Concluding Observations

Certain propositions can be made on the basis of the material presented regarding A — the nature and place of Harikathā in Mahārāshtra, B —

the social composition and status of the Kathākārs and their points of view about the purpose of Harikathā and its role under changing conditions, C — Audience, their composition and reaction of Harikathā and Kathākārs, and D — the possibilities of the continuity of Harikathā.

A. The nature of Harikathā and its place in Mahārāshtra

Harikathā in its developed form is essentially an urban phenomenon and it is a carrier of the 'Great Tradition' to folk and peasant societies. Though it may be rooted in devotion, transmission of culture is a manifest function of Harikathā. In a broad sense of the term, social education is another manifest function of Harikathā. Entertainment aspect is by no means neglected, though the proportions of it tend to vary with the type of Harikathā, the personality of the Kathākār, the nature of the audience and the occasion. Harikathā takes up on itself the duty of directing the thought and action of the audience, provided other agencies like the family and the school continue to perform their duties in this respect. Harikathā puts premium on a stable social order and makes a plan that change should be well graduated. It is true that some Kathākārs seemed to be very keen on fairly extensive reforms. Yet even such Kathākārs seemed to pin their faith on traditional and constitutional methods and procedures. It may be said that the basic Hindu social structure was in no way attacked by such Kathākārs. The slant was on accommodation and adjustment.

Harikathā occupies an important place in the life of Mahārāshtra for the reasons already mentioned. Harikathā is by and large a force towards conformity. Of course change is advocated in such a manner that the basic structure would not be affected. Harikathā finds favour with classes as well as with masses. Status in the caste hierarchy, age, education, occupation etc. did not militate against Harikathā. These factors merely influenced the choice of the type of Harikathā and Kathākārs.

B. The social composition and status of the Kathākārs and their points of view about the purpose of Harikathā and its role under changing conditions

Majority of the Kathākārs studied were Brahmin by caste, whether they were professional or otherwise. This fact invests the vocation with prestige. Then again the amount of learning also contributed towards its prestige. Certain skills and abilities and a 'sense of mission' were other factors which helped make the vocation prestigious. There is no doubt that there were a few Kathākārs who felt that they had neither

status nor economic prospects. But by and large the Kathākārs didn't regard themselves as nobodys. From the economic point of view, the Kathākārs belonged to the middle and the lower middle classes. But charismatic factors seemed to compensate them in respect of social status. Of course there were ifs and buts, which were suggested by the Kathākārs themselves.

On the whole the Kathākārs seemed to agree with each other about the purpose of Harikathā. Quite a few of the Kathākārs mentioned the trinity of devotion, knowledge and learning and non-attachment as constituting the major purpose of Harikathā. Yet these very Kathākārs also emphasised its implications for day-to-day conduct and behaviour, social and political relationships — in short mundane affairs. Harikathā was not looked upon as a mere ideational and a liberating force but it was felt that it had implications for practical policy-making too.

The Kathākārs felt that Harikathā had an important role to play in respect of transmission of culture in creating the necessary ethical and moral attitudes and in enthusing people towards right action and conduct and also to initiate change in 'desirable' directions, even under changing conditions. Of course quite a few Kathākārs suggested that 'suitable' modifications be made in Harikathā to accommodate changes in tastes, circumstances etc. On the whole, the Kathākārs felt that Harikathā would continue to hold sway on the minds of the people, provided the necessary modifications are made.

C. The audience, their composition and reaction to Harikathā and Kathākārs

One of the striking features about the composition of the audience was the preponderance of the higher castes, excepting the performances in Pandharupur at the time of Wāri (fair and festival). Another feature to be noted was the almost absence of the untouchables. The feature could be mainly explained in terms of the fact that performances of Harikathā were given mostly in temples. Otherwise persons belonging to various age-groups, educational groups and occupational groups attended the performances of Harikathā. The presumption that the younger generation had lost its interest in Harikathā was believed. There were quite a few students in the audience. There were quite a few highly educated persons in the audience. The reaction of the audience to the content of Harikathā and to the Kathākārs seemed to be influenced by the following factors such as the caste, age, education, occupation, and place of residence of the listeners and caste, education,

sect, personal reputation etc. of the Kathākārs. Those who belonged to high castes and had higher education seemed to be most vocal in making suggestions for modifying some of the features of Harikathā. An inescapable conclusion was that the audience seemed to be convinced about the desirability of the future continuity of Harikathā.

D. The possibilities of the continuity of Harikathā

There were quite a few amongst the audience who took their children along with them to attend the performances of Harikathā. Then there were quite a few who suggested that but for certain difficulties they would like their children to accompany them. So these answers indicate the continuity of Harikathā. The audience in certain cases, suggested certain modifications in the nature and content of Harikathā and in the performance of Kathākārs. But the audience seemed to agree on the desirability of the continuity of Harikathā. The Kathākārs too, by and large, seemed to voice the same feeling. Thus the continuity of Harikathā seems to be pretty well assured, given certain modifications. It also seems to be well assured that by and large Harikathā will be a force for conformity. And any change that might be advocated through Harikathā would be gradual, without disturbing the structural unity of the Hindu social system.