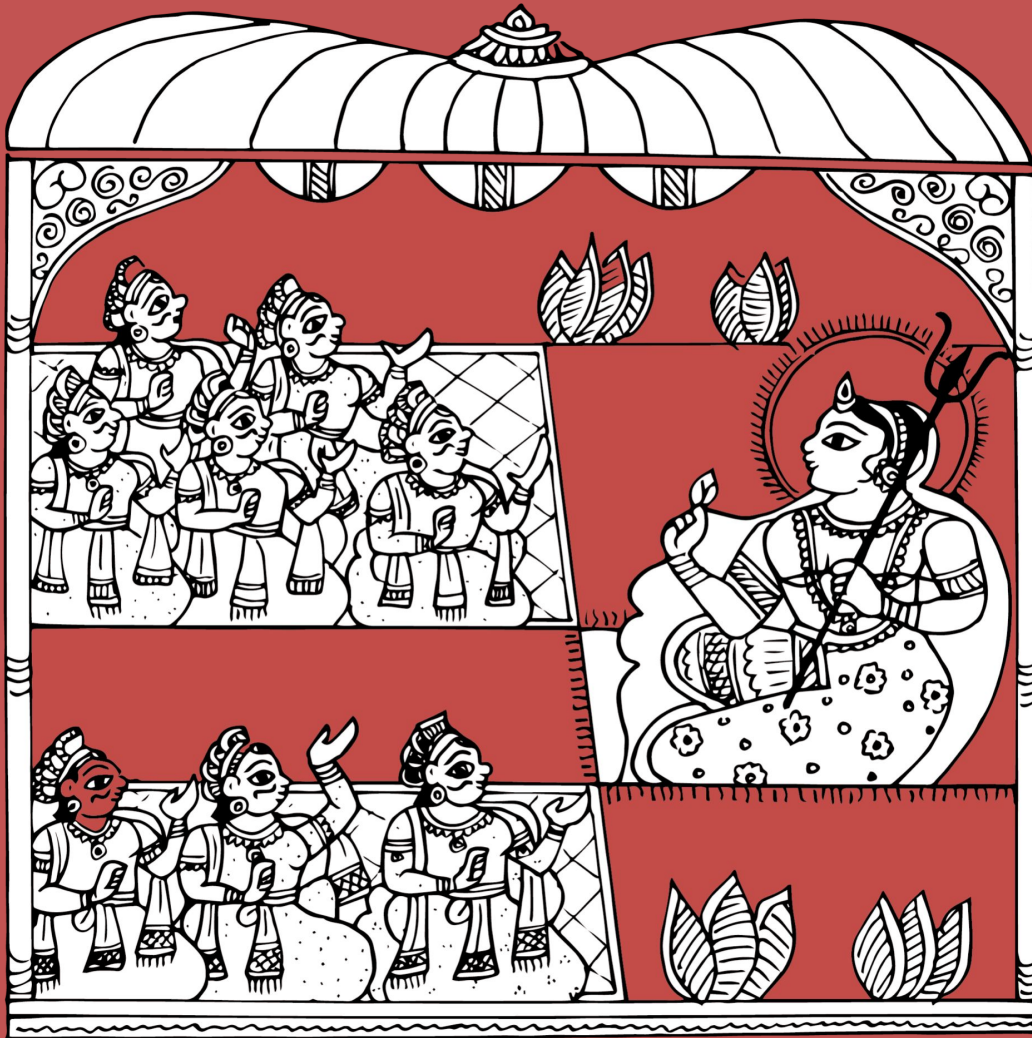


Many of you may already know the story
of Pabuji, the folk Deity, but let me tell
you a slightly different story.

A Charan woman named Deval lived alone with her cattle near the village of Kolu in Rajasthan. One day, Pabuji's friend Chando visits her assembly and calls out to her. Upon inquiry, Deval is informed that Pabuji will not marry without Saffron. The wise Deval possessed all the rare knowledge in the world using which She informs Chando of the fields of Saffron in Lakkhu Pathans Kingdom.





Deval left for Kolu with Chando to help Pabuji. On arrival at Kolu, Deval entered Pabujis assembly and told him that she would obtain loads and loads of Saffron for him. The fearless Deval took the trident of Mother Karni in her hand and set out to Lakkhu Pathan's Kingdom.

When Deval reached her destination, she entered Lakkhu Pathan's crowded assembly room and paid her respects. She requested him to help Pabuji by providing Saffron for his wedding processions. Her request made Lakkhu pathan angry but his harsh behaviour did not affect Deval. She requested once again very politely and it made Lakkhu Pathan angrier. Seeing his arrogance Deval decided to return to Kolu.





She informed Pabuji and his courtiers of Lakkhu Pathan's behavior. Pabuji immediately left to fight Lakkhu Pathan with his mare Kesar Kalami. As Pabuji prepared to leave Kolu to fight Lakkhu Pathan, Deval informed Pabuji that Kesar Kalami would help in the time of need.

As soon as Pabuji reached Lakkhu Pathan's village, the battle started and Pabuji was surrounded by a lot of spears. Pabuji was unaware of Lakkhu Pathan's powers and did not know how to defeat him. Desperately in need of help, Pabuji remembered Deval's wise words and he asked Kesar Kalami for help.

Kesar Kalami helped Pabuji to break the spell and capture Lakkhu Pathan. Later, Pabuji took loads and loads of Saffron from Lakkhu pathans gardens. Pabuji returned to Kolu and thanked Deval for saving his life. Everyone dyed their clothes with Saffron and Pabuji became a bridegroom. Deval helped the people of Kolu and was called a charan goddess by the people of Kolu.



Deval is not the main character of the story.

The tale of Saffron is originally about Pabuji and his heroic deeds but I narrated a version that highlighted Deval's actions.



Deval is not the main character of the story.

The tale of Saffron is originally about Pabuji and his heroic deeds but I just narrated a version that highlighted Deval's actions.

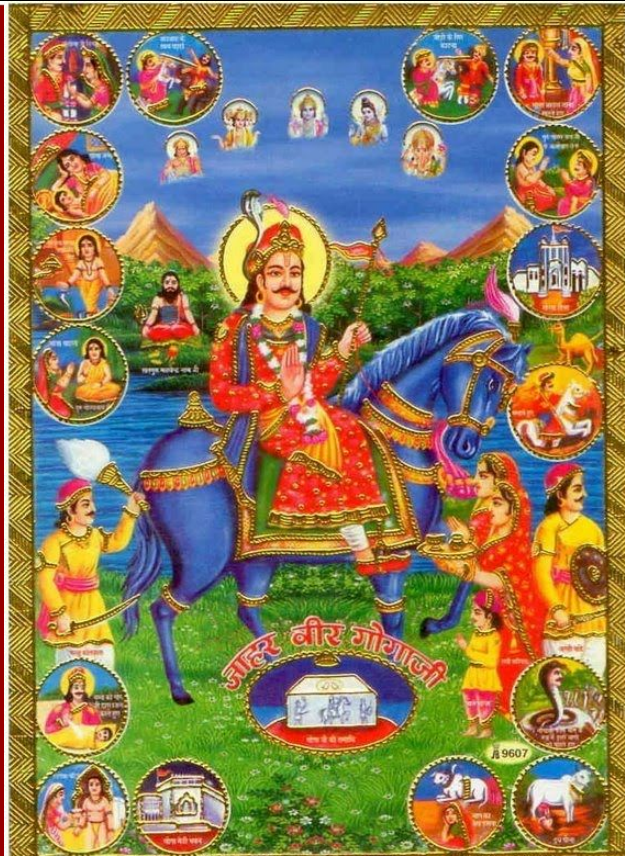
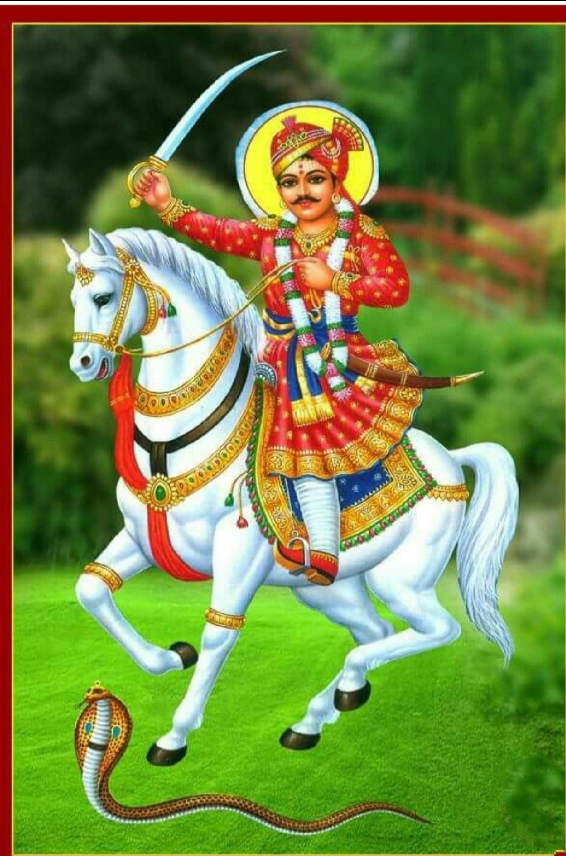


Pabuji is the main character in the mainstream stories.

Deval is a secondary character.



Folk Deities of Rajasthan: Teja, Goga and Pabu



When I talked to my Family...

I got introduced to the religious rituals in Rajasthan, I got introduced to the Oral tradition all over again.

But,

The stories they narrated contained very little detail. Names of the characters and their role was unclear in some cases.



JOHN D SMITH

dh

the epic of
Pabuji



The Epic of Pabuji: A Study, Transcription and Translation.

By John D Smith

His work focuses in detail on this epic tradition. There are chapters on the transmission and performance of the narrative, including the music, iconographic organisation of the paintings and historicity of the hero. There follows a complete transcription of the epic as performed by Parbui Bhopo, a leading bard. Next comes a full English translation, which is illustrated by 100 ink drawings depicting each scene as it appears on the par.

Komal Kothari says....

that like in any story the hero needs a catalyst to undertake a venture, in many Indian folk stories these catalysts are women like Draupadi, Sita, etc. These women are called Sagatis or Shaktis who come from supernatural powers, and who are born to eliminate these gods.

Other Perspectives..

Some of the Epics also talk about how these stories focus a lot on masculinity and perfection and less on femininity and domesticity.

The women in these stories are often portrayed as characters who distract, interfere, and make trouble. There is a tendency to marginalise the women in these stories.

I wanted to recover these
stories.....But,

From different perspectives

Aim and Objective

The aim of the project was to explore these secondary characters and their influence on Pabuji which highlights different sides of the story. I wanted to represent these stories from my point of view, through an illustrated storybook, for the same people who worship these folk deities in Rajasthan.

Only the mainstream summarised version
of the stories are easily available.

Nowadays if you want to learn about these stories you would have easy access to only the mainstream version of the story that does not do justice to the richness of the Oral tradition. The oral epics of Pabuji are sung by the Bhopa community, where they use big painted scrolls called Phad as portable temples and perform in front of it from village to village. In the current times these performances have become very staged.





The popularity of the Hindu bhajan performances have forced these Bhopas to evolve their style of performance. The ballads are usually sung linearly from start to end in shrines, however, because of the shortage of time on the stage, the Bhopas only sing the popular version and perform an overdressed and overblown Bollywood style parody.

This parody version includes beautiful umbrellas, a man dressed as a horse and women doing Kalbelia dance. A lot of different textures have been added to these stories over the years but these stories are no more evolving, they are dying. The oral tradition is slowly dying and with them the folk stories are getting lost and what is left of it is a super summarised version.



These stories are getting lost.....

The Oral tradition of Rajasthan is getting lost.....

To give you an idea I will narrate the summarised mainstream version of the story.

I am narrating this story using the traditional Phad style narration. You will notice that different areas of the Phad are highlighted in different parts of the story.



Pabuji was born in Kolu, to a Rajput king Dhadal who had two sons Pabu and Buro and two daughters Pema and Sona. Pabuji's mother was not the queen but a nymph who left him when he was very young and promised to return to him as a mare. Pabuji had four good companions: Chando, Dhebo, Salji and Harmal. They were not from the upper caste like Pabuji.



His first fight was with Jindrav Khichi in a hunting dispute. Jindrav's father Saragde Khichi and his army is killed in the battle by Dhebo. To avoid more bloodshed and settle things quietly with Jindrav Khichi, Pabuji marries his step sister Pema to Jindrav Khichi.



But Jindrav was being very hostile and had his heart set on the Charan lady Deval's cattle, and a fine black mare named Kesar Kalami, who was Pabuji's mother. To protect Deval, Pabuji wins the mare Kesar from Deval and promises to protect her.



After this, Pabuji went on various adventures where he killed Ravan and brought she-camels from Lanka to Rajasthan.



On his way back to Kolu he meets Phulvanti in Umarkot, where he receives a wedding proposal from Phulvanti's father. He agrees to marry Phulvanti but insists on dying the garments for his wedding processions with saffron.



To obtain saffron, Pabuji fights Lakkhu Pathan, the owner of Saffron. Finally, he sets off to Umarkot to marry Phulvanti. While marrying her Pabuji is informed that Jindrav Khichi stole Deval's cattle.



As he had promised his protection to Deval, he rushes to rescue her and her cattle. In the fight against Jindrav Khichi, Pabuji's companions kill all of Khichi's army but spare Khichi on Pabuji's order as he did not want Pema to become a widow. After sparing Khichi's life, a palanquin comes from heaven and takes Kesar Kalami and Pabuji to heaven. Jindrav survives and Pabuji is forever known as the protector of cattle.

Only a small area of the phad was
covered by the mainstream version.....

The mainstream version summarised the whole episode of the tale of Saffron into a couple of lines and this is the amount of depth known to people when it comes to these stories.

About the secondary characters

Deval is called a Goddess who is more powerful than Pabuji.

Pema (Pabuji's step sister) is the one who kills the villain Jindrav.

Dhebo was a warrior who constantly struggles to maintain his valour. His conscience comes in the way of his duties.

Through this book, I highlight the importance and agency of the secondary characters: Deval, Dhebo, and Pema. Pabuji's stories are important to this project as an inspiration and to provide relevant context.

The Final book....

“Timeless Tales of Pabuji”

Three characters..





Devals story highlights her importance in Pabujis survival.



Dhebo's story highlights the difficulties of being a Rajput warrior



Pema's story highlights her decisiveness
and drive to be independent.

Structure of the Book

Introduction

First story (Deval's)

- Introduction
- The story

Second story (Dhebo's)

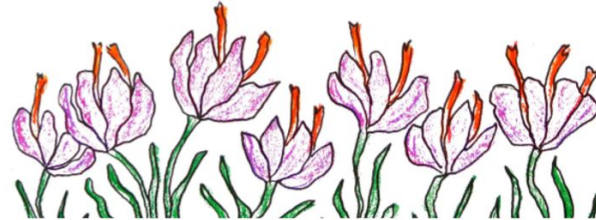
- Introduction
- The story

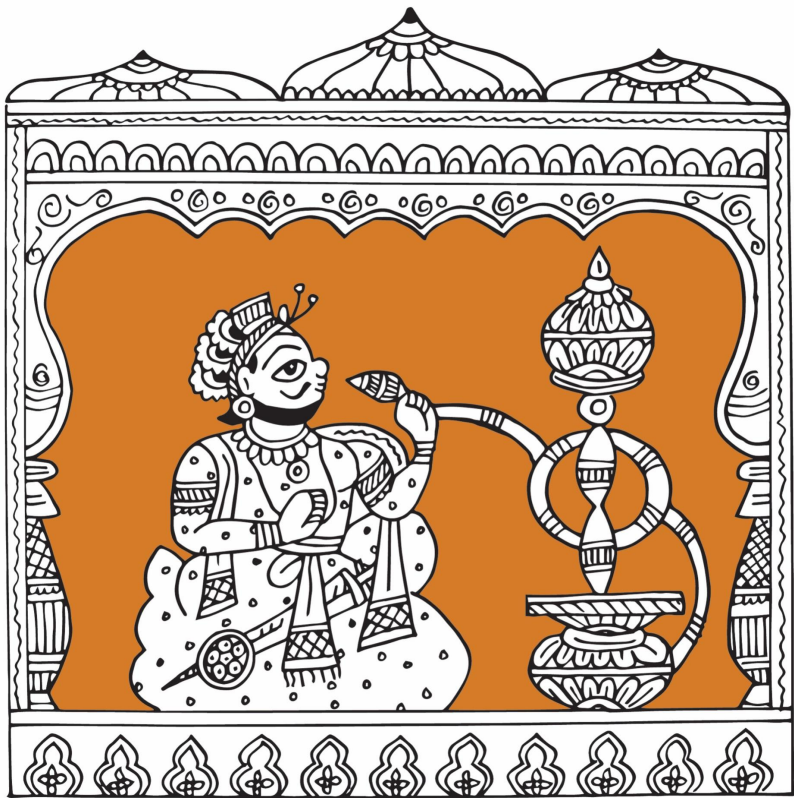
Third story (Pema's)

- Introduction
- The story

The Tale of Saffron

"Long time ago, in the arid desert region of Rajasthan, men of all communities were compelled to migrate, for thousands of years, in search of livelihood or fortune. To follow the tradition of early marriage and betrothal, these men would marry women at an early age. Marriages in this region of Rajasthan were based on clan exogamy. These marriages took place between families that were almost 1000kms apart, where young teenage girls would live away from family in strange lands. The girl's family would give grains and other produce as dowry to the girl and her husband's family. One such girl brought Saffron from her homeland to Rajasthan and introduced the rang Kesariya that represents the golden dunes of this desert region. Kesariya rang was used by many (Hindus, Buddhists) in India showcasing qualities of sacrifice by Sannyasis. The Rajputs adopted the saffron turban and the saffron robes to represent their honour and sacrifice."





A Charan Goddess named Deval had a magical mare and lots of cattle. She lived alone with her cattle near the village of Kolu. One day, Pabuji's friend Chando visits her assembly and calls out to her.

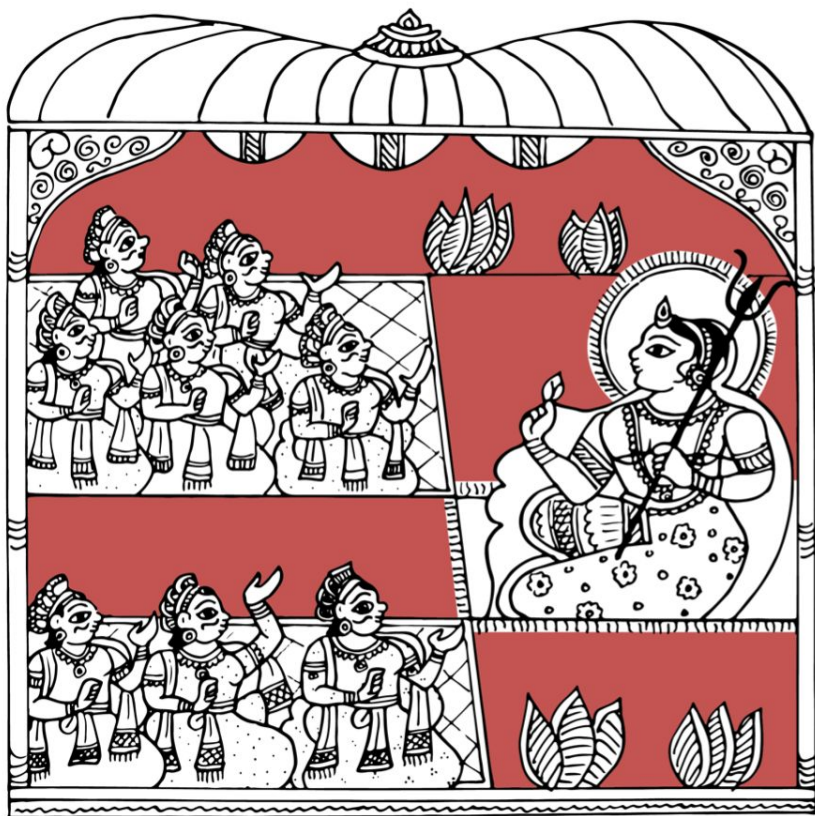
Hearing his call, Deval yells out of curiosity,
'O Chando, tell me what is on your mind?
On what great business have you come to my glorious assembly?
I shall help you with everything that I can!'

'O Lady Deval, today you have a great task to perform.
Without Saffron, Pabuji will not become a bridegroom!
O Lady Deval, only you know the features of Saffron!
Tell me the features of Saffron!
Tell me where can I find Saffron?'
Said Chando, desperately in need of help.

The wise Deval replied with all the rare knowledge she possessed,
'O Chando, Listen! There is Saffron in Lakkhu Pathan's village!
On my way back from Ano Vagelos wedding-processions,
I saw fields of Saffron in Lakkhu Pathan's Garden.
O Chando, let me get my trident of Mother Karni,
Let us make swift progress and help Pabuji!'

The Charan lady Deval went with Chando to Pabuji's fort. The proud Deval entered the assembly room crowded with courtiers with costly shawls over their shoulders. She shined brighter than everyone in the room as she asked Pabuji,





'O Pabuji, I hear you have business with the Charans today!
I hear you want Saffron in your wedding processions.'

'O Lady Deval, I hear you went to Ano Vagelos wedding-processions,
On the way back you saw fields of Saffron!
O Lady Deval, make swift speed!
Without Saffron, I will not become a bridegroom.' Pabuji replied.

With all the wisdom in her eyes, Deval announced in the assembly,
'O Pabuji, sit with an alert mind!
O Pabuji, I shall bring loads of Saffron for you!'

The fearless Deval took the trident of Mother Karni in her hand and set out to Lakkhu Pathan's land. As she travelled she sang songs of Pabuji, the deity of the desert. She spoke highly of him to everyone she met on the way to Lakkhu Pathan's land. When Deval reached her destination, she entered Lakkhu Pathan's crowded assembly room and paid her respects. As she walked through the room she shined as bright as Mother Karni. Lakkhu Pathan could tell right away it was Deval who had come to his assembly.

The pompous Lakkhu Pathan asked,
'O Deval, tell me what is on your mind!'

Deval replied humbly,
'O proud king, hear what is on my mind!
O Lakkhu Pathan, the serious businessman,

Give me a little Saffron and my Pabuji will become a bridegroom!’
Said Deval, the wise Goddess.

Once again her wisdom made Lakkhu Pathan furious. His arrogance made him lose his calm and he impulsively blurted out,
‘O Deval, I employ men like Chando and Dhebo to oversee my granaries, and men like Pabuji fan me when I go to sleep on my bed. I have no saffron for you today, nor tomorrow.’

Deval became angry. The calmness on her face vanished. The crowded assembly witnessed the changing aura and coldness surrounding everything. Deval’s wisdom helped her keep calm and she left Lakkhu Pathan’s assembly

room. She set out and travelled back to Kolu. As she travelled she sang songs of Pabuji, the deity of the desert. She spoke highly of him to everyone she met on the way to Kolu. At last, she reached Pabuji’s assembly room.

At her arrival, Pabuji rushedly asked,
‘O goddess Deval, what is on your mind?
In what kind of mood did Lakkhu Pathan discuss matters with you?’

‘O Pabuji, he said that he would employ Chando and Dhebo to oversee his granaries, he said that he would employ you, Pabuji, to serve in his bedchamber.’
Said Deval, with disappointment.



I have come to your glorious assembly on a domestic matter.
There is known to be a plot of Saffron in your garden.
I have come for loads of Saffron!

'O Deval, my Saffron is very costly.'
Said Lakkhu Pathan as he threw shade at Deval.
Do you really have business with Saffron?
Why do you need loads of Saffron?'
Asked Lakkhu Pathan arrogantly.

His comments did not affect Deval. She stood calmly and replied,
'O Lakkhu Pathan! In the barren desert lives the great Pabuji.
Without Saffron, Pabuji will not become a bridegroom!
Give me a few flowers and a little Saffron from your garden,
So that I can take it back home for Pabuji.'

The calm Deval made Lakkhu Pathan furious, he replied angrily,
'O Deval, my flowers are for me alone!
If your Pabuji needs flowers, there is plenty ak in Marwar,
Pluck ak flowers and make a garland for Pabuji's throat!
You can take garlands of ak,
But you will not get your hands on my Saffron,
Not today! not tomorrow!'

'O Lakkhu Pathan, you are a great king.
If a king will not come to the aid of a king, then whose aid will he come?



Future Possibilities

In the future I would like to make this book in Hindi or Marwari as maximum people who are still attached to the Oral traditions are from villages where the Oral tradition is still alive. Bringing these perspectives to them would be an interesting attempt as well.

Conclusion...

In the end I want to thank Prof Alka for her constant support and guidance. As this was one of my first attempts at storytelling I was really clueless at how to go about this project but her guidance helped me to progress. This project helped me in knowing about my culture and as sad as it sounds it is necessary for us to learn more about these cultures or else we will lose them soon. Through this project I also got introduced to other people who are trying to recover these stories in one or the other way. I had a lot of fun reading these stories and through this project I wanted to share the joy that I felt.



Thank you!