

## Interview Hari Ram, Jaisalmer

*What's your name?* Hari Ram

*What is your village?* Ghiccupara near Sanawara, Nagaur.

*What is your caste?* Bhopa.

*Bhil, Bhopa, Nayak and Thori? What is the difference?* Fifty years ago before independence, singers of Pabuji would call themselves Thori. That has changed. We are *bhopas*. If we don't sing *Pabuji ki par*, we don't have bread. So we marry our children to those of other singers only. We don't intermarry with other Bhils or Thori, or exchange food. Bhils do agricultural work, not singing

*Do they worship Pabuji?* They do but they don't sing the epic.

*What about Thori?* They are different. They are farmers.

*Does anyone of your group hunt animals?* Yes, those who work in agriculture. But in our *bhopa* group, only *bhopas* sing epic. My coat for performance of Pabuji got burned in a fire unfortunately.

*Are the 'bagri' community and Bhils similar to each other?* No.

*Do you set up alliances with Thori?* No, we set up alliances with families of *bhopas* who play the *ravanhatta*.

*How many families in your village belong to the same caste?* 30 or 40.

*Are all these people living in the same place?* No some are living there and some have migrated away.

*When you used to live in your village, who were your patrons?* We used to go from village to village and there we would find patrons. In our village, the regency of our *thakur* (regent) incorporated 12 villages so we used to circulate in these 12. We would recite the epic at the request of Rajput patrons for up to 3-4 nights in a row.

*Are you still living in a particular regency?* No, these are territories, feudal estates.

*Is Sanawara your place of origin?* Yes, we used to live there and travel within Sanawara.

*Have you ever seen a bhopa who became possessed?* (37:04) This is the blessing of Pabuji. It comes to us all but to *bhopas* only rarely. But yes, I have seen two or three...

*Is there anyone in your bhopa community?* Yes, there is one. His name is Hanuman Bhopa.

*Where does he live?* Near Jaipur.

*When does the spirit come to this man?* After the invocation, it comes...then again at midnight, and then again at dawn.

*How do you release the spirit?* We sprinkle cow's urine or Ganges water on him... Or show him a photograph of Hanuman. And it's gone.

*How does a person react when he's possessed?* He trembles violently and his voice deepens and he can see Pabuji standing in front of him.

*What is the manner of questioning?* The possessed man picks up some grains of wheat in his hand and gives details of the question and its remedy.

*Did you ever personally have this experience?* Yes, two or three times.

*Can we talk to Mr. Hanuman Bhopa?* Whenever you want to meet him, give me a call.

*Where can I look for him?* In a village called Sanganer. He works in a small cottage industry working in brick-making.

*Have you ever seen a bhopi's body possessed by Pabuji?* No. I never have. Pabuji's spirit does not possess a woman's body. Pir Baba, Hanuman ji and Mataji do... Pir Baba is a Muslim Saint so not one of ours...

*How do you sing the epic in high pitch?* Our ancestors taught us to perform like this.

*Do you have to sing at high pitch?* It depends on which section of the epic we are singing... and the melody. If we sing at high pitch, it becomes more melodious... And if the *bhopi* sings at high pitch... people in nearby villages will know that there is a recitation... and crowd round to hear her. She will become famous.

*How long have you been playing ravanbatta?* From childhood.

*What's the connection between the instrument and the melody you sing?* The strings create the melody for the singer. There is a close connection and the pitch of the music is raised or lowered according to the music of the strings.