

ABSTRACT

The Collection, Transliteration, Translation, Classification
and Critical Analysis of East Indian Folk
Songs in the West Indies

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A large section of this society, including the present descendants of indentured immigrants, is not aware of an existing corpus of East Indian folk songs of the West Indies. Indeed, this area has been largely neglected as a subject of serious scholarly research. The need to collect, translate, classify and critically examine these songs is therefore a central concern to which this thesis addresses itself.

This thesis begins with a discussion on the nature and significance of the songs. Then, it attempts to discuss how the songs were collected and explains their actual delivery. It goes further to critically examine the historical, sociological, cultural, linguistic, religious, as well as the more purely literary aspects, which are necessary for their full appreciation. An illustration is given of East Indian folk culture and the oral tradition, the various vocal genres and also, of Indian musical folk instruments. Finally, there is some discussion on the survival of this traditional form of culture and its apparent influence on contemporary literary compositions.

The volume of one hundred and forty (140) songs, culled directly by this author from Trinidad, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Grenada and St. Vincent, will certainly in itself, provide an authentic and valuable contribution to the store of West Indian literature.