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# DEBEN BHATTACHARYA AT THE BBC, 1949–79: CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURISM, PRECARITY, AND THE BUSINESS OF POST-WAR FOLKLORE COLLECTION

D-M Withers 

*Deben Bhattacharya (1921–2001) had a prolific career as a field recordist that spanned the second half of the twentieth century. Yet his impressive contributions in radio, tv and film have to date been overlooked. Bhattacharya arrived in London from India in November 1949; by the end of the year, he had made his first broadcast on the BBC Eastern Service. Drawing on material held in the BBC Written Archives, this article focuses on Bhattacharya’s work with the BBC from the late 1940s–1970s. It discusses Bhattacharya’s work across different BBC departments: the Eastern Service, the General Overseas Service, the Third Programme, and the BBC Sound Archive. Overall, it highlights Bhattacharya’s contribution to the curation of traditional folklore in the post-war period. I analyse how he interpreted cultural traditions via radio broadcasts and, through field recordings, made substantial contributions to the BBC Sound Archive’s international folklore collections. Bhattacharya’s relationship with the BBC reveals how he developed his career as a cultural entrepreneur, building speculative partnerships with large institutions that supported his activity in the field. The BBC offered Bhattacharya minimal upfront support for his work, however, which meant his field work was often conducted in deeply precarious circumstances. This article discusses how Bhattacharya negotiated institutional prejudices and embraced new opportunities to record and publish field recordings in the post-war creative and cultural industries.*

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In the post-war era amid the ferment of the second folk revival, the business of folklore collecting was booming.<sup>1</sup> Deben Bhattacharya (1921–2001), an itinerant, hand-to-mouth field recordist, author, and translator was in the thick of the action. Unlike other well-known collectors who worked with the BBC after the war – figures like Alan Lomax, A.L. Lloyd, Peter Kennedy, Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger – his contributions have received very little scholarly attention.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as this article demonstrates, Bhattacharya made substantial contributions to the BBC's folklore programming and archives in this period. Bhattacharya's collaborations with the BBC is one chapter in a rich career which spanned the second half of the twentieth century, and through which he proved to be a prolific – and versatile – polymath: a producer for radio, TV and film; an author and translator; photographer and LP curator.

Bhattacharya predominantly worked freelance, outside the constrictions and validations of academic institutions, leveraging partnerships with large organisations such as BBC, UNESCO and Rikskonserten (Sweden). He also worked with record labels such as the UK's Argo Record Company, France's La Boîte À Musique, Angel Records in the US, and Philips in the Netherlands.<sup>3</sup> At the centre of all his endeavours were field recordings, captured on reel-to-reel tape recorders, and 'harvested' across multiple mediums, and territories.<sup>4</sup> At the time of his death in 2001, Bhattacharya had produced over 120 records, 20 films and countless radio programmes that drew on over 400h of sound recordings made in countries across the world; this collection, along with slides, paper and photographic archives are archived at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.<sup>5</sup>

## **Cultural entrepreneurship, precarity and the post-war creative industries**

Bhattacharya was born in Benares (now Varanasi), India, on 12 December 1921. He arrived in England on 5 November 1949 along with hundreds of Indian students who had made the journey on the SS Stratheden. In his pocket were 18 shillings; his hands held a large steel suitcase, filled with precious poetry books.<sup>6</sup> Bhattacharya moved fast finding work in Britain: his first job was in the Post Office, and within two weeks he had made inroads at the BBC. The first mention of Bhattacharya in the BBC Written Archives is dated 17 November 1949 – he was a replacement speaker on the Eastern Service for Prof. D. Ganguly who had been unable to attend the transmission.<sup>7</sup> This was the beginning of a dynamic professional relationship that Bhattacharya cultivated with the corporation that was especially active in the 1950s and 60s, and continued in the 1970s.

The BBC Eastern Service provided Bhattacharya with regular, bit-part work from the late 1940s to the early 1960s, with occasional opportunities for more substantive talks which drew on his growing expertise in traditional music from across the world, including popular music trends in Britain, such as folk, jazz and skiffle. He made a few programmes for the General Overseas Service (GOS), which dramatized his travelling adventures and folklore collection. GOS also commissioned Bhattacharya to broadcast his thoughts on changing perceptions of Western thought in India in the early 1950s.<sup>8</sup> Bhattacharya made several Third

Programme talks in the 1950s and early 60s, and with Radio Three in the 1970s. These initially drew on his expertise in Indian Classical and Traditional music(s), and later covered other national and regional territories. The bulk of financial returns came from work with the BBC Sound Archive, where he became an important private collector who greatly expanded the BBC's collection of international folk music recordings.<sup>9</sup>

Bhattacharya's career as field-recordist and folklore collector was undoubtedly conditioned by the new technology of portable magnetic tape-recording. Portable recording created new professional opportunities for amateurs to enter the cultural field.<sup>10</sup> Relatively little technical training was needed to work the equipment and, while not cheap, tape recorders were – at a stretch – affordable. This was especially the case for enterprising individuals like Bhattacharya whose enthusiastic, determined approach enabled him to generate financial or in-kind support. Bhattacharya had an irrepressible ability to ask for help and to keep asking; this skill enabled him to broker access to better quality machines and tapes in partnerships with cultural organisations like the Argo Record Company and, to a lesser extent, the BBC. In 1954, for example, Bhattacharya purchased a GB732 reel-to-reel tape machine for £83.10s (worth approximately £1993 in 2017) using a patchwork of funds, including an advance of 30 guineas from Argo against future royalties.<sup>11</sup>

The BBC were reluctant to give Bhattacharya financial support, however. They did not provide advance guarantees to purchase his field recordings, nor did they help him source equipment.<sup>12</sup> In 1961, prior to a field trip to India, Kashmir, Nepal, Ceylon, and Burma, Bhattacharya wrote to Timothy Eckersley, then Assistant Head of Programme Operations in Recording Programmes, to ask if the BBC could loan him a Nagra tape recorder. In exchange Deben proposed he would provide recordings from his trip, costed against the value of the loan. The request was turned down, although a loan of tapes was offered, as consolation.<sup>13</sup> Such approaches, while often knocked back or tempered, demonstrate how Bhattacharya, as a man of minimal financial resources, made his career as a folklore collector possible. He was always asking, pitching, and hustling.

As a committed freelancer, Bhattacharya worked in what would be termed, today, as precarious circumstances. At times he operated on a hand-to-mouth basis, at the mercy of the BBC's accounts department to pay his invoices. Thankfully they understood the need for prompt payment. Often by the end of his field trips he would literally run out of money. On one trip, in 1954, he wrote desperately, 'I am now collecting every penny I can to pay for my passage to London.'<sup>14</sup> Bhattacharya's precarity was heightened by his practice: he was using new technologies to create content, in not always optimal conditions. The quality of material recorded, especially his early efforts, was sometimes compromised. 'Letters from India', six talks created for the 'Commonwealth Club' in 1954, was not deemed satisfactory by Peggy Branford when she played back the tapes in the BBC's London studios. Bhattacharya had been recording talks in India and sending the tapes to London, *via* the BBC's office in New Delhi. Working in this way was not simple, logistically. Sending tapes to the BBC seemed to generate in Bhattacharya real anxiety, as he feared tapes would be lost or damaged in transit.

In some cases, these worries were realised: in 1962 Bhattacharya sent 38 tapes to London. On receipt of the first tape, an unwelcome Telex message was despatched: 'Permanent library report first Bhattacharya tape arrived severely battered please arrange stouter packing future tapes.'<sup>15</sup>

At times Bhattacharya did seek greater financial security from his work with the BBC, as will be detailed below. Yet there can be no doubt that, for the most part, he courted precarity and chose to work in such conditions. Bhattacharya venerated and romanticised nomadic lifestyles. Writing in his multi-media book *The gypsies: Pictures and music from East and West* (1966) he admired how their 'way of travelling reflect the spirit of improvisation rather than of calculation. They move, as if for the sake of moving, regardless of the consequences.'<sup>16</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that Bhattacharya's work involved a lot of travel and border crossing. Throughout the period covered in this article, he was almost constantly on the move. Even when he was stationary, he lived in three different countries, bouncing between London, Stockholm, and Paris. Due to this, he had more than his fair share of encounters with customs officers, which no doubt made his work practically difficult. In 1954, he had to put down a deposit of £65 at customs in Bombay for his GB732 tape recorder, an outlay that meant he had to borrow money from friends to support the rest of his trip.<sup>17</sup> While the BBC were careful to never commit to buying his recordings in advance, they did write many letters of support which Bhattacharya used to legitimise his travel when confronted by distrustful customs officers. His letter to Marie Slocombe in June 1960, prior to a multi-country field trip encompassing Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Greece, provides some insight of the pressures Bhattacharya faced as an Indian man with a tape recorder, travelling into and out of Britain. He asked Slocombe if she could write 'some kind of introduction letter which may be of help to me while in the field and also when I return to this country. As you remember I explained to you that the British Customs [view] my tapes with great suspicion and a little note from the BBC makes the customs ordeal easy both for them as well as for me.'<sup>18</sup>

Bhattacharya's tone in letters to the BBC was often congenial; constructive when pitching ideas; rich in incidental detail when he reported back from the field, and often laden with hyperbole. Even so, allusions to the 'great suspicion' he is viewed with by customs officers, and the 'ordeal' he wished to avert when faced with them, is a rare admission of discomforts experienced during his work and travel. Perhaps such discomforts go some way to explain Bhattacharya's preference for arduous overland adventures in boneshaker vans.<sup>19</sup> Such forms of travel could avoid some officials and scrutiny, unlike the restrictions of air and ferry-ports. While supportive, the letters supplied by the BBC to placate border officers also make clear Bhattacharya had limited standing with the institution: 'If the recordings you make on your present trip come up to your usual high standard I have no doubt that we shall probably wish to acquire some of these also for our Library', wrote Eckersley. Nevertheless, 'it must be made perfectly clear that you are not commissioned by the BBC to make these recordings.'<sup>20</sup> His ability to leverage 'institutional authority' was tentative, fractional.<sup>21</sup>

These specific examples of Bhattacharya's precarity were part of wider challenges he faced as a creative freelancer working with institutions over a long

period of time. There was a constant need to pitch ideas and establish relationships while making a modest impact on institutional memory. Bhattacharya, for instance, had developed a good working relationship with Roger Fiske on the Third Programme throughout the 1950s. This led to several commissions and advocacy for Bhattacharya within the BBC. When Fiske left the role in July 1959, it was easy for incoming Third Programme talks producer Hans Keller to dispatch Bhattacharya's pitches with a professional – and detached – tone.<sup>22</sup> In the case of the Sound Archive there was also the need to re-establish relationships for each new venture, despite Bhattacharya being well-known and, with the benefit of historical hindsight, an important private collector. Even with track record of successful delivery he was, essentially, in a constant state of probation. The tone of Eckersley's letter is indicative of this: '*if the recordings you make on your present trip come up to your usual high standard...*' lays down criteria that people with permanent salaried jobs rarely must live up to, when it is possible to coast and be 'good enough'. The creative freelancer – the racialised creative freelancer, in Bhattacharya's case – must always maintain their highest standards, or even surpass them, to be taken seriously.

### The BBC Eastern Service

On the 17 November 1949, less than a fortnight after arriving in Britain, Bhattacharya walked through the doors of the BBC's studios at 200 Oxford Street, home of the GOS. He was a replacement speaker for Professor D. Ganguly on the 'Questions and Answers' programme, broadcast in Bengali, on the BBC Eastern Service. Passing the commercial record library before he squeezed into the medium-sized booths of Recording Studio 3, Bhattacharya looked at the TD/7 machines – 78rpm records in place, poised for transmission – with curiosity.<sup>23</sup> Speaking into the BBC microphones for the first time, a rush of excitement coursed through him. By the end of 1949, Bhattacharya had returned to 200 Oxford Street on four more occasions, each time recording ten-minute talks in Bengali for the BBC Eastern Service. For each broadcast he was paid 1 and a half guineas (about £50 in 2022).<sup>24</sup> Up to September 1951, Bhattacharya made regular contributions to the BBC Eastern Service's 'magazine' style programmes. He took part in discussions in Hindi, Bengali and English about life 'Here in Britain', and offered critical commentary on culture, including a review of the 1951 film *Tom Brown's Schooldays*.

The BBC Eastern Service was established in 1940 and became a 'dynamic contact zone for South Asian and British journalists, writers and intellectuals' during the Second World War.<sup>25</sup> Mulk Raj Anand, E.M. Forster, George Orwell, Z.A. Bokhari and V.K. Narayana Menon are some of the famous names associated with the wartime Eastern Service and its innovative literary programming. After the war, however, like many of the BBC's external services, funding for the Eastern Service decreased, which led to reduced programme hours, staff and office space.<sup>26</sup> Immigrants to Britain from Commonwealth countries readily found employment with the BBC's Overseas services, as Amanda Bidnell has demonstrated in her study of Caribbean artists at the post-war BBC.<sup>27</sup> Bhattacharya's ability to quickly

secure work at the BBC so soon after his arrival in Britain offers further evidence of this, even if such employment was clearly bit-part, episodic and insecure.

Travel – adventurous, sometimes extreme travel – was an integral part of Bhattacharya’s work in the field. His first commission for the BBC that was based on Bhattacharya’s own field recordings were six ‘Letters from India’, written and recorded during his six-month trip to India and Pakistan in 1954. The talks featured on the ‘Commonwealth Club’, broadcast on the GOS. The transcripts clearly indicate the discursive influence of the post-war folk revival in Bhattacharya’s presentation of traditional culture in India and Pakistan. The destructive impact of industrialisation upon tradition, and the threat that what has been destroyed will no longer naturally regenerate is a recurrent theme, as is the value of authenticity – ‘nature’, and enduring ‘time’. Describing the Folk Dance of East Pakistan in 1954, for example, he wrote:

Some of these are gradually disappearing as people move from their villages to the more industrialised areas. Still, there are a great many of these dances as alive now as they used to be during the days when life was not involved in factories and mills. Unfortunately, factories have a deadening effect on the existing folk arts of a country. The tradition of the industrial civilisation has not developed enough to offer any substitute for what it destroys. Can you ever imagine life connected with factory producing a dance as natural and powerful as this? It expresses the power of Time: Time which on the one hand, dissolves the decay of life, on the other creates anew.<sup>28</sup>

Bhattacharya describes here the folk culture of East Pakistan, but he could have been referring to Northumberland or Lancashire. His characterisations harmonised with the BBC’s approach to folk culture during the post-war period. While the BBC ‘did not unreflexively adopt all the dispositions’ of the first folk revival, Daniel Gomes has argued, the strong association of folk song with an enduring – and authentic – rural life persisted and continued to shape the BBC’s collecting and programming practices. This reflected a wider cultural mood: the ‘desire to access a pre-industrial past’ that ‘was a defining feature of the broader folk movement in Britain.’<sup>29</sup>

If Bhattacharya was influenced by the cultural logic of the moment, he was also an important vector through which the sounds and ideas of the English folk revival, as well as emergent trends in British popular music, flowed to India.<sup>30</sup> On 24 April 1959 he presented a comparative talk exploring ‘Parallel Themes in British, Indian and Pakistani Folk Music,’ and between 2 May–27 June 1959 he delivered six talks for the BBC Eastern Service on the ‘Music of England.’ This included talks on folk music and mythology; sea shanties; Scottish folk music; Classical Music; Popular Music; Jazz and Skiffle. On 8 August 1959 he presented a talk on ‘Contemporary British Musicians.’ For some listeners in India, Bhattacharya was to them what Alan Lomax was to British listeners: an informed guide, a roving interpreter, and skilled presenter of vibrant, living traditions. That Bhattacharya saw *himself* as a Lomax for the Indian listener is suggested by a letter he wrote to Mr Linton of the Eastern Service in June 1957. This pitch is one of the few examples when Bhattacharya aimed to secure a regular income from the

BBC to support his field recording and broadcast activities. The letter captures his ambition, vision (and hopefulness) when pitching for work; it also demonstrates a canny understanding of audiences and markets. Bhattacharya likely knew the BBC's Home Services would never consider him an authority on 'Britain in Sound', but he was well-placed to fulfil that role for Indian audiences.

I would like to wander about England with my portable tape recorder not only picking up what fragments of folk music I may come across in Britain, also other sounds such as birds and street musicians, noises of factories and undergrounds etc. This wandering through Britain may take me 6 months to a year; I simply don't know, and I wonder if the Indian programmes could provide me with a weekly contract of 7 or 8 minutes for a series of programmes entitled 'Britain in Sound'. It would make my life easier during this unplanned search for sound in Britain.<sup>31</sup>

Mr Linton was pleased to read of Bhattacharya's proposal but made clear it was 'highly unlikely' they could provide a regular contract.<sup>32</sup> 'Britain in Sound' never materialised, but Bhattacharya did deliver several talks on the Eastern Service throughout 1957. These drew on his growing collections of field recordings, including his recently completed overland journey from Paris to Calcutta. Bhattacharya was skilled at extracting maximum value from his recordings. Even within the BBC, one recording might be used as the basis for a short talk for the Eastern Service; for longer, in-depth talks on the Third Programme; or sold in their entirety to the BBC Sound Archive.<sup>33</sup> He was resourceful and adaptable, as many creative entrepreneurs need to be. Throughout the 1950s and between his many trips in and out of the country, Bhattacharya regularly returned to the BBC Eastern Service. For them he was a safe pair of hands; for Bhattacharya it was his broadcasting bread and butter.

Bhattacharya's BBC career extended far beyond the Eastern Service, though. Bidnell's analysis of the BBC careers of Caribbean artists such as Edric Connor (who, like Bhattacharya, released LPs with the Argo Record Company in the 1950s), Cy Grant and Pearl Connor, revealed that it was far more challenging for immigrant creatives to gain a foothold on the BBC's newly launched Home services – the Light Programme, the Home Service and Third Programme – due to embedded institutional prejudices that confined racialised minorities to restricted, and stereotypical roles.<sup>34</sup> The fact Bhattacharya was able to break into other BBC programmes and departments is testimony to his enterprising approach. Almost as soon as the steady trickle of fractional work from the Eastern Service began to dry up, around 1951, Bhattacharya began pitching talks to producers in other BBC departments. 'The enclosed stories were written by an ex-BBC official in the Overseas Service who is now out of a job owing to the recent reduction in staff', wrote Martin Starkie in April 1951 to P.H. Newby, then producer of the Third Programme. 'They were read (not by me)', he further explained, 'to an appreciative audience at the Asian Institute last Sunday. The author is called Deben Bhattacharya, a young Bengali.' Newby was not, however, impressed by the stories, and rejected them for the Third Programme, citing an oversubscribed schedule.<sup>35</sup> It was the Third Programme, however, where Bhattacharya secured his first



major commissions on the BBC's Home services; he delivered three talks, broadcast between July 1952-March 1953, on the Classical, Folk and Contemporary Music of India.

### The Third Programme

Bhattacharya's speculative proposal for three talks on Classical, Folk, and Contemporary Indian music landed on the desk of Third Programme producer Alec Robertson in the second week of January 1952. In the brief and business-like letter, Bhattacharya explained he was currently working on a 'casual basis' as a producer for the Bengali programme. He outlined his musical expertise, and stressed personal connections with the Visva-Bharati Music Board in India, an institution set up in 1944 to promote the study and diffusion of *Rabindra Sangit* (Rabindra Music), part of Visva-Bharati, an educational centre and university set up by Tagore in 1901.<sup>36</sup> With the letter, he enclosed a detailed outline of all three talks. Bhattacharya's pitch was followed up, a week later, by a supportive note from William Archer, who worked in the Indian Section of the V&A, and with whom Bhattacharya would collaborate on the publication *Love Songs of Vidyāpati*, published by Allen & Unwin in 1963. Archer recommended his friend to the BBC, and commended Bhattacharya's radio work with the Eastern Service, and musical knowledge.<sup>37</sup> The programme proposals focused on the formal aspects of Indian Classical music ('different modes and their relation with notes') and the technical features and sounds of instruments. Vina, sarangi, sitar, sarod, flute and shehnai were used as 'effects.'<sup>38</sup> Bhattacharya utilised existing recordings, housed in the Commercial Record Library at 200 Oxford Street, to illustrate his talk.<sup>39</sup> While a full list of records played on the programme is not accessible in the archives, it is likely that artists such as Alland-din Khan, Enayet Khan, Omkar Nath, Ravindra (Ravi) Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan, Patavardhan and Bismillah were featured, due to mentions in Bhattacharya's original proposal.

In line with other mid-century music education talks commissioned by the BBC, Bhattacharya aimed to cultivate ordinary listeners' capacity for 'music appreciation', while subverting the corporation's dominant focus on Western art music by centring Eastern Classical traditions.<sup>40</sup> Aesthetic judgements were minimal and held back until his third talk on the Contemporary Music of India, which he characterised as 'definitively' divided between Modern, Tagore, and Film Music. Was such musical hybridity, he pondered, 'harmful to the musical sense of the people' today?<sup>41</sup> Notably, Bhattacharya's exclusion of the harmonium in his discussion of classical music is indicative of how the instrument had accrued significant aesthetic and political controversy since the early twentieth century, notably being banned from All-India Radio between 1940-71.<sup>42</sup> While Bhattacharya's presentation of 'Indian Classical Music' was not explicitly political, it nonetheless mobilised a category produced by colonial encounters in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and that had, by the year of Indian independence, become 'an established fact.'<sup>43</sup>

Listener responses to Bhattacharya's programmes were, overall, positive. Indeed, after receiving several appreciative letters Bhattacharya discovered an interest in Indian music in Britain and began to actively collect records to

illustrate his talks. Perhaps most importantly for his future field-recording career, the feedback encouraged him to buy his own tape recorder, on which he began to record instrumental music, performed by Indians living in or visiting Britain.<sup>44</sup> The BBC did receive one very critical letter, however, which prompted them to seek the advice of an external authority to verify the accuracy of Bhattacharya's scripts.<sup>45</sup> They contacted Dutch ethnomusicologist Dr Arnold Adriaan Bake, then a Reader in Sanskrit at the School of Oriental and Asian Studies and leading scholar of Indian Music, who endorsed Bhattacharya's expertise.<sup>46</sup> Although not stated in the BBC Archives, it is possible Bhattacharya knew Bake, who had spent time in India between 1937 and 1946, during which time he was a regular visitor to Visva-Bharati. Certainly, Bake's paternalistic concern with the 'authenticity' of folk music, and his belief that Indian folk music represented the soul of the people, stored in the artistic and cultural traditions of the village community, is echoed in Bhattacharya's depictions of traditional culture.<sup>47</sup> Overall, Bhattacharya's first talks on Indian music for the Third Programme established him as an authority on the topic, with the ability to translate specialist knowledge to popular – if well-educated – Third Programme audiences. The experience also demonstrated to Bhattacharya there was a niche interest in Indian music in Britain, and he was uniquely placed to fill that cultural gap. His second Third Programme commission, three talks on Ragas and Raginis, were broadcast on 31 October–13 November 1953, and repeated 17 May–4 June 1954.

In an interview with Argo producer Kevin Daly, Bhattacharya remembered his work with the Third Programme, and believed his talks on Indian music were the first of their kind to be broadcast on the BBC.<sup>48</sup> In fact, recitals and lectures of Indian music had been featured on the BBC since the early 1920s. *An India Programme*, aired on 11 January 1929, for example, was produced in collaboration with the India Society, a London-based organisation established in 1910 to promote Indian Art, in Britain and internationally.<sup>49</sup> The forty-minute show featured a collection of Tamil, Sinhalese, and Nepali folk songs, and – the *Radio Times* listing claimed – the first ever broadcast of the sarangi. The poems of Tagore, read in English, and a talk on 'the People of India' by Edward Thompson, an author of two works of Tagore criticism and biography, completed the transmission.<sup>50</sup> These examples reflect the wider cultural transfer, entanglement and encounter between India and Britain in the inter-war period.<sup>51</sup> Further examples of this include *A Recital of Indian Music*, aired a decade later on 28 September 1938, which featured veena performances from V. K. Narayana Menon. Menon was an accomplished veena player and recorded the programmes while a PhD student at Edinburgh University.<sup>52</sup> Menon went on to have a varied radio career, at the BBC and beyond: he joined the Indian Section of the BBC's Eastern Service in 1942 and acted as advisor and producer of the Eastern Services Music programme until 1947. On 15 May 1945, Menon played a selection of Indian records on the BBC's General Forces Programme.<sup>53</sup> Menon moved back to India in 1947 and worked as Director of Broadcasting in Baroda State (1947–8) and, later, All-India Radio (1948–63). While Bhattacharya's talks were not, therefore, the first of their kind on the BBC, they were the first to be aired after India's independence. For those listening to Bhattacharya's talks, they would have been listening to Indian music, definitively, after Empire.

Despite their shared interest in music, it is not clear from the BBC archives if Bhattacharya and Menon were ever in direct contact, in London, India or elsewhere. It is possible Bhattacharya consciously kept a distance, because he knew Menon to be a competitor for the BBC's precious airtime. Following Bhattacharya's talks on Indian Classical, Folk and Contemporary Music; and three-part series on Ragas and Raginis, he was commissioned by Roger Fiske for another three talks on Wind and Drum Music from India, broadcast 3–20 January 1955. These were the first of Bhattacharya's Third Programme talks that used his original field recordings. He utilised material collected during his India trip in 1954, recorded in Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, and Bombay. When Bhattacharya first pitched for these talks, Fiske explained that the BBC already had plans for a series on Indian Music in 1955, presented by Dr Narayana Menon: 'He will either record programmes in India or bring music disc with him if he comes to England next spring [...] it may be a slight disappointment to you in that we could not have two considerable series on Indian music in the same year.'<sup>54</sup>

As it happened, Menon's series on Indian music didn't materialise until 1960 (six talks, broadcast 9 January-16 March 1960). 'Indian Music', a conversation between violinist and President of the Asian Music Circle Yehudi Menuhin and Narayana Menon, was however broadcast on the Third Programme on 15 October 1954. In the eyes of the BBC Menon, who had previously worked for the BBC's Eastern Service and was at the time working for All-India Radio, would clearly have had the greater authority – and broadcasting experience – to speak on the topic of Indian Music. In what must have been a deflating letter to receive, Fiske was able to throw Bhattacharya a lifeline. 'If, as is probable, Dr Menon doesn't come until next May, we might be able to slip in at any rate one programme from you earlier than that, say about Christmas.' He also nudged Bhattacharya to branch out and diversify, encouraging him to collect music from Central Asia: if such recordings 'turned out well I don't think you would have any competition at all!'<sup>55</sup> Bhattacharya's reply was polite and gently assertive. He thanked Fiske for letting him know about Menon's programme and reiterated his offer: 'apart from my recordings of classical music, most of what I have recorded – approximately to the extent of 18 h – have never been touched by anyone else before. And I hope that you would find some of the material suitable for your programme.'<sup>56</sup>

Fiske was a good ally to Bhattacharya within the BBC. In the letter which pitched 'Wind and Drum Music from India', Bhattacharya again reached out to Fiske, to ask if he could help provide contact details for Home Service producers. Bhattacharya had no contacts in this area and appended the letter with a trusty episode outline – a tactic that had so often worked well in the past – for three talks on the Folk Dance and Drum Rhythm of Bengal. It was not unusual for archival and field recordings to be used, albeit in different ways, across BBC networks in the post-war period. Gomes has described this as the 'reciprocal influence' of the BBC's different services.<sup>57</sup> Fiske forwarded the proposal to Anna Instone with the following note:

I don't know what you think, but I suspect that 'Music Magazine' would be its only hope. I think it might be very well worth while your considering. Whenever he has done anything on the Third there have always been a surprising lot of letters asking why the BBC can't do more on Indian music.<sup>58</sup>

As is clear from the letter, Fiske was supportive, and actively advocated for Bhattacharya – and for recognition of the wider cultural interest in Indian music – within the BBC. Instone was not, however, able to accept the proposal. Fiske shared the news with Bhattacharya, encouraging him to write to Instone again and to only offer one talk, and framed in a very specific way: ‘Your piece would have to be something you could do in twelve or thirteen minutes [...] and it would have to be Indian music at its most attractive from the European point of view!’<sup>59</sup> While disappointing, Fiske shared crucial producer insights with Bhattacharya, and provided another precious commodity: the name of a person within the Home Service to pitch to in the future.

Folk music collection was, as I have emphasised throughout, a competitive business. Bhattacharya likely heeded Fiske’s advice about portfolio diversification: fortunately, he was about to embark on a trip that would substantially expand his oeuvre and offer, to the BBC and many other cultural organisations. Bhattacharya’s overland journey from Paris to Calcutta enabled him to record in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and India. There he captured the sounds of the Bedouins in the desert, dancing Dervishes, and many other examples of ‘music with life in it [...], music not isolated from life and religion.’<sup>60</sup> On his return, he successfully pitched a seven-part series based on the adventures, initially called *Music and Men on Road to India*, but broadcast as *The Overland Route to India*, that was broadcast between 11 February–5 March 1957. Bhattacharya proceeded with consistent success with the Third Programme over the next few years, as he continued to travel and record traditional folk music and culture in new territories. ‘Heard in Israel’ (two talks, 15–22 January 1958); ‘Music and Chants of the Arab World’ (two talks, 5–10 August 1959); ‘The Music of Iran’ (two talks, 4 March 1961) and ‘The Music of Turkey’ (two talks, 23–29 August 1961) demonstrate his movement away from an exclusive focus on Indian music and culture. His field recordings also finally appeared on the Home Service, as an illustration for colonial radio drama, *The Murders in Bokhara*. Bhattacharya’s reputation as a folklore expert had grown so much in the period that he caught the attention of David Attenborough, who enlisted him to help with two shows for the BBC series *Adventure* that followed the expeditions of travellers across the world (*Crusaders’ Path*, 9 November 1961; *Kathakali*, 30 November 1962).

Like many businesses at the vanguard of market creation, there is always the risk of becoming a victim of your own success. Bhattacharya was an important figure who invented new markets for the consumption of international folklore and music, in broadcast and recording contexts, in the 1950s. He – along with the institutions and businesses he collaborated with – laid the groundwork for the growing commercialisation of folk music in the post-war period, telling popular stories about ‘unknown’ sonic locations, literally making different worlds, traditions, and territories available through sound. As material produced through his field work and ‘harvesting’ activities accumulated, this led to increased demands for specialisation and differentiation. In August 1962, when Bhattacharya was living in Stockholm, he wrote to Robert Layton to propose five programmes based on forty hours of music, recorded from his latest trip to India. ‘This year I concentrated mostly on the tribes of India as everybody seems to be getting civilised!’, he joked.<sup>61</sup> Of these five

proposals, the BBC accepted three, with Peter Crossley-Holland choosing regions that were ‘completely new to us’, while avoiding ‘the more usual kind of Indian folk music.’<sup>62</sup> Programming was geared toward filling existing – and increasingly specialised – gaps. Many of Bhattacharya’s Third Programme talks were drawn from large collecting expeditions which generated hours of recordings. These were packaged, expertly, as stories by Bhattacharya, but they were also sold in selections to the BBC Sound Archive, as is discussed in the next section.

## The BBC Sound Archive

Bhattacharya’s first sale to the BBC Sound Archive was in 1955. With money from the Stock Music Scheme, the BBC purchased three hours of material from his trip to India in 1954. Marie Slocombe, founder of the BBC Sound Archive, said the recordings were ‘very good indeed’ and would be ‘of great value to the R.P. Permanent Library.’<sup>63</sup> Justifying the spend, Slocombe explained that within the BBC there was real need for more Indian Classical and Folk music. The Library Staff ‘are asked for such material nearly every week’ for use in drama or documentary programmes. Due to Bhattacharya’s track record with the BBC, he was viewed as ‘sufficient an authority on Indian Folk Music’ and trusted as a viable collector.<sup>64</sup> Bhattacharya was paid £210 (around £5,862.46 in today’s money), a fee that encompassed the recordings, selection and copying time, and documentation.<sup>65</sup> Present at the copying stage was Madeau Stewart, who came to work at the Sound Archives after the war, and took an active role assessing acquisitions and checking documentation. Meticulous and at times pedantic, as the decade wore on Stewart’s frustrations with the quality of Bhattacharya’s documentation created professional friction between the collector and the BBC.

The purchase of material from the 1954 India trip was followed by further purchases: in 1955 the BBC bought 30 min of recordings from the Gypsy Festival, Fete des Saintes Maries in Southern France.<sup>66</sup> In 1956, the Sound Archive acquired 140 min of material from the overland journey from France to India.<sup>67</sup> In 1957, they purchased 66 min of recordings made in Israel.<sup>68</sup> He was a prolific and important collector. When the Recorded Programmes Library published their catalogue of *BBC Folk and National Music Recordings, Volume 1: Foreign Countries* in 1958, for the entries dedicated to India and Pakistan alone, Bhattacharya represented 62 out of 106 entries. To put it even more quantitatively, between 1954 and 1958, Bhattacharya’s endeavours expanded the BBC Sound Archive’s sound collections from India and Pakistan by over 100%.

In all his expeditions, Bhattacharya asked the BBC for help, either in the form of financial advances (which they refused), or by asking for letters of introduction (which they promptly wrote). Bhattacharya was, despite his best efforts, resolutely freelance.<sup>69</sup> As mentioned earlier, beyond the UK, the BBC had no mandate to collect international folk music recordings and worked with private collectors to expand their archives. The BBC were firm in their convictions that ‘we are not in a position to commission you in advance to make recordings of this kind for the BBC.’ Even so, there is certainly evidence they valued Bhattacharya’s efforts.<sup>70</sup> In response to Bhattacharya’s ‘scouting for funds’ to pay for a new Stereo Ferrograph

tape machine, for example, Stewart doubted 'the BBC can do anything as speculative' as provide funding but wondered if other support could be available. 'He is definitely a good collector from our point of view,' she stressed.<sup>71</sup> At Bhattacharya's request, the BBC also met the expense of copying onto LP all the material they bought from him for his own library, which amounted to 45 records. Justifying the expense, the internal memo cited the amount of material Bhattacharya contributed to the archive, but also – crucially – the expensive journeys he had made to collect it.<sup>72</sup>

Bhattacharya undoubtedly had a lot of success selling field recordings to the BBC in the 1950s and 1960s, but there was also friction, especially in relation to documentation, with Stewart repeatedly raising issues. It is difficult to gauge the nature of Stewart and Bhattacharya's relationship from correspondence held in the BBC Written Archives. They both, clearly, had a strong passion for traditional music. While British folk music, Stewart admitted in an interview from 1979, 'bored me to loud sobs,' 'foreign' folk music was 'fascinating', a means for her to access 'new worlds.' In this interview she described Bhattacharya as an important figure in the development of the BBC Sound Archives' international collections. He was, she reflected, one of the 'curious people one met who were doing this job.'<sup>73</sup> Bhattacharya often wrote effusive, elaborate, and gushing letters to Stewart – not directed toward her necessarily, but clearly aiming to stir her interest in what he was doing, professionally, in the field. These letters he signed passionately: 'much love', or with 'longing' to see her, so they could share the latest 'gossip'. Perhaps such affection was strategic, given the position she held in the BBC Sound Archives (Bhattacharya also gifted a bottle of wine to her on one occasion, which she 'knocked back solo'). It is possible they were, simply, very good friends.<sup>74</sup>

Stewart – who has been described by Sound artist and historian David Toop as a 'formidable character' – gave very little back, in the emotional sense, to Bhattacharya, and even sometimes actively undermined his professional standing among her colleagues.<sup>75</sup> The main – and recurring – problem she had was the quality of Bhattacharya's documentation. Stewart first queried Bhattacharya's documentation when cataloguing his recordings from India in 1954, and this was followed by more substantive queries for later acquisitions. 'I am sorry to trouble you again – I find it is impossible for me to do the labelling of the Israel material without further information from you', she wrote in 1957. In the same letter, she asked for clarification about Bhattacharya's description of the santoor: 'You say it has 23 × 4 metal strings. Could you please explain exactly what this means; can it mean it has 92 metal strings? Or that it has 23 strings and 4 metal ones?'<sup>76</sup> In 1959, the BBC Sound Archive bought further recordings from the 1954 India trip, along with other material collected in Hungary. Stewart, again, highlighted insufficiencies in documentation: 'The Indian material is good, but for the Hungarian, rather poor (no titles even).'<sup>77</sup> Bhattacharya replied as quickly as was possible to Stewart's requests for information, but not always with the same level of urgency as she might have hoped. 'Here are the notes', he wrote in January 1960, 'I can't think of anything else to add. AHIR BHARIV, a morning mode (Raga) played on bass flute (bamboo), tambura & dug. Pure classical, Benares style.'<sup>78</sup>

Bhattacharya's response to Stewart's (by her own admission) 'bullying' letters, may come across a little casual.<sup>79</sup> It does indicate, however, that despite the BBC's requests (and, really, Stewart's requests) for better documentation, there is no evidence that the corporation explicitly outlined to private collectors like Bhattacharya their specific expectations about the quality or style of documentation required. They might have suggested that he adhere to emerging professional standards shaping the field, such as those outlined in the *Manual for Folk Music Collectors*. This was first published in 1951 (with five editions printed up to 1963) and written by Maud Karpeles and Arnold Back under the auspices of the International Folk Music Council. Or perhaps they could have reused guidelines from the BBC Folk Music and Dialect Recording Scheme, which had captured the traditional music and culture of the British Isles.<sup>80</sup> The lack of clear guidance from the BBC is important because documentation became a point of contention for the recordings Bhattacharya collected on a typically ambitious four-month field trip to Austria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, and Greece in 1960. In an internal memo, Stewart's assessment of 20 h of material was utterly scathing. She portrayed Bhattacharya as a bumbling amateur, with several deficiencies. The recordings were 'little short of disastrous' with 'variable' quality. Bhattacharya had been, she claimed, 'nervous and uncertain' when using a new microphone to make the recordings, which had resulted in technical errors. Documentation, as ever, was 'abysmal. Slight, doubtful + suspect inaccurate,' with Stewart negatively comparing Bhattacharya's work with that of French field recordist J.C. Lubuntu, who had made recordings in Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey in 1956–7 that had been acquired by the Sound Archive.<sup>81</sup> Stewart also criticised Bhattacharya's ethics, wondering whether the BBC would even be able to use recordings of the Mevlevi Dervishes, which, she believed, were made in secret. 'I have tried to point out to Deben inadequacies', Stewart puffed, 'but am not brutal enough!'<sup>82</sup> After three days of listening, Stewart recommended the BBC bought a mere 23 min and 6 s of material. Her final verdict was damning: 'Mr Bhattacharya's documentation is not good and I do not, frankly, recommend an additional documentation fee.'<sup>83</sup>

Slocombe wrote to Bhattacharya, explaining why the BBC had bought such a small selection. Interestingly, quality of documentation is not listed as a rationale for rejecting the bulk of the material. This perhaps indicates that Stewart was far more obsessed with the issue than Slocombe and did not represent attitudes within the BBC Sound Archive as a whole. It may also have been an implicit form of discrimination. Instead, Slocombe stated that the quality, fragmentary nature of the material, and duplication of items already held in the Sound Archive was the reason for their decision. 'We must become ever more and more selective. This means that we are, in many fields, now beginning to look for more specialised material, i.e. it might be better from your point of view (in so far as you are thinking of us) to make more detailed studies of smaller portions of the field.'<sup>84</sup>

Bhattacharya was, undoubtedly, stung by the BBC's rebuttal, but was able to write a clear-headed response the next day, in which he highlighted inconsistencies in their argument. On the question of recording quality, Bhattacharya was surprised because when the tapes were copied, the BBC sound engineers made no



comment. Furthermore, he had just returned from Philips in Holland, where he had edited six EPs. Bhattacharya had been 'congratulated for the technical quality compared with my previous recordings as well as considering the circumstances under which these recordings were made.' Duly noting Slocombe's point about specialism, he used this as an opportunity to explain his professional motives in the field. 'My object in continuing with this work for the last ten years is to help people understand the different regional characteristics of Eastern music just in the same way as you are helping the overseas producers of the BBC by introducing them to the different regional music of the British Isles.' He signed off with the honest, assertive, note: 'your letter was a challenge to my ability as well as to my attitude to my work, therefore, I had to clarify my position.'<sup>85</sup>

Undeterred, and displaying remarkable resilience, Bhattacharya set forth for further field recording trips. This time his plan was to conduct detailed studies of the tribal regions of India, Kashmir, Nepal, Ceylon, and Burma. From the BBC's perspective, these were more appropriate contexts for Bhattacharya's work. Learning of his plans, Slocombe wrote that she 'would like to encourage him as far as possible, especially in his own country!'<sup>86</sup> Slocombe's comments reveal the residual presence of colonial attitudes within the BBC; with Bhattacharya competency to record – and document – music outside of India persistently questioned. Bhattacharya felt as much, confiding to Stewart in 1964 about his experience with Third Programme producer Robert Layton, who had rejected a number of his recordings from Scandinavian and East European countries: 'I have been forced to ask Layton to let me know if he does not want programmes on European folk music from a non-European collector.'<sup>87</sup> These are, however, rare instances when prejudice or explicit discrimination is mentioned in the BBC Written Archives, even if it was likely in operation most of the time, shaping Bhattacharya's business relationship with the corporation.

There was considerable enthusiasm – notably from Stewart – about Bhattacharya's 1961 trip, and in which he readily took Slocombe's advice and offered the BBC a detailed study of the field. Writing to Stewart from the 'blazing desert of Rajasthan' where he was 'chasing the tribesman'; Bhattacharya enclosed a list of tribes he had so far covered, so 'you don't fill your cupboard with material from these before I return.'<sup>88</sup> Reviewing items for selection, Stewart was this time impressed by the precision and scope of Bhattacharya's notes. Excitedly, she wrote, 'I am tottering under the load of your documentation.'<sup>89</sup> Stewart was so impressed, in fact, that she broke with BBC convention and started copying the tapes before a contract was offered.<sup>90</sup> Overall, she recommended the BBC purchase a handsome 125 min of material.<sup>91</sup> Over the next few years, Bhattacharya would continue to sell recordings to the BBC, from field trips to Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Stewart's eagle-eye for detail began to creep, again, into her assessments. She noted his documentation to be 'slight' (Sweden and Finland), 'rather mere' (Hungary and Czechoslovakia) and, at best, for Bhattacharya's recordings from the Balkans, 'fair.'<sup>92</sup> 'That is to say', she qualified, 'there is always a date and place of recording and names of performers. There is also always the title in the original language, but there is not always a translation of the title and a synopsis of the subject of the song is often missing. While I feel that Mr. Bhattacharya could be paid for this, I suggest only a modest fee. There are no musicological or historical notes as one would find in, for instance the work of A.L. Lloyd.'<sup>93</sup>



Bhattacharya believed Stewart was a loyal ally within the BBC. Nevertheless, as should be clear from the cited internal sources, she never shirked from criticising his work to BBC colleagues. The prolific correspondence between Bhattacharya and Stewart in the BBC archives goes silent after a letter in October 1967. At this moment, Bhattacharya explained, 'I have now jumped into folk music filmmaking for television. Sweden is my first client. London has bitten too (not the BBC, nor the ITV); it is a secret and I shall reveal it only over a bottle of wine.'<sup>94</sup> This was the start of a new phase in Bhattacharya's adventure, as he shifted much of his energies from radio and into television and film. The next mention of Bhattacharya is in 1970, when the Sound Archive purchase a selection of Persian Classical Music.<sup>95</sup> The correspondent, this time, is Pat Bishop; Stewart lurked in the shadows, sending 'good wishes.'<sup>96</sup> Bishop, interestingly, also had questions for Bhattacharya about documentation, which does seem to suggest his practices were inconsistent, over time.<sup>97</sup> If Bhattacharya had worked in a more academic context, it is possible he would have had a research assistant to take care of the documentation for him; as it happened, he was often engrossed in the field, or always busy planning the next trip. It is possible that sometimes he dropped the details. Throughout the 1970s, Bhattacharya made several more programmes for Radio 3 that drew on new travels, such as 'The Music of Bangladesh' from November 1972. Older recordings were also used in the 'Forest of the Santals' and 'Indian Classical Music', both September 1974. His work with the BBC picks up again at the end of 1970s, with five Radio 3 programmes (some multi-episode), broadcast between 1977 and 1979. After that, Bhattacharya's becomes further involved with film, an aspect of his career in much need of further research.

### **Bhattacharya's living traditions**

Bhattacharya's radio career with the BBC in the post-war period spanned the BBC Eastern Service and GOS, Third Programme and BBC Sound Archive. He had a seemingly irrepressible ability to break down barriers, pester producers and ask for resources and favours, and to bounce back stronger in the face of disappointing rejections. He was a resilient and skilled cultural entrepreneur, whose talent and persistence overcame the prejudices and pigeonholing that might have deterred a spirit armed with less initiative.

Recognition of Bhattacharya's contribution to the development of the BBC Sound Archive's international folk collections is long overdue. In terms of numbers alone, his collecting activities place him on a par with figures such as Lomax and Lloyd. Furthermore, Bhattacharya's contribution is arguably more impressive because much of his fieldwork was self-initiated and funded. As should be evident from this article, the BBC offered him minimal support and, at times, internally undermined and confined his professional activity. Even so, the BBC benefitted substantially from his efforts, both in terms of Bhattacharya's authored programmes, and by providing producers with material they could use to illustrate radio and tv documentaries, and drama.

Bhattacharya's collaborations with the BBC complicate existing histories of the post-war folk revival in Britain. These tends to focus on folk collection within the

nations of Britain and Ireland and draw on a familiar cast of figures who are white, and usually male. Within the postwar BBC, folklore collection was significantly broader and more international in scope, even if non-British activities were not properly financed or supported by clear institutional mandates. In historical accounts to date, there has been a tendency to focus on 'official' folklore collecting programmes like the BBC Folk Music and Dialect Recording Scheme. As this article makes clear, it is also important to recognise that the BBC expanded its international collections through the efforts of independent collectors – entrepreneurs working in the business of folklore collection.<sup>98</sup> Bhattacharya is of course likely to not be the only collector who worked in this way, and there is certainly scope for more research on freelance cultural entrepreneurship in the postwar creative industries, especially those practiced by immigrant creatives and other 'precarious professionals.'<sup>99</sup> Doing so can offer a clearer picture of the contingent conditions in which audio recordings of transnational cultural traditions were initially acquired and archived.

Furthermore, Bhattacharya's history adds further layers to current work charting South Asian networks and connections in Britain, while augmenting existing cultural histories that characterise postwar London as a contact zone, animated by transnational population flows.<sup>100</sup> More broadly, Bhattacharya's work with the BBC connects different media histories and cultures - the institutional history of broadcasting in the UK, the practice of folk collecting, the experiences of an immigrant practitioner in post-war Britain during a period of wide-reaching social and cultural change, and the BBC's role in the dissemination of transnational cultural traditions. His career helps bring such histories into contact and conversation.

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## Notes

1. The literature about the post-war folk revival is voluminous; for good overviews of post-war folk revival in Britain, see Michael Brocken, *The British Folk Revival*

- 1944–2002 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Juliet Mitchell, *Postwar Politics, Society and the Folk Revival in England, 1945–65* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).
2. Selected autobiographies of these figures include: Dave Arthur, *Bert: The Life and Times of A.L. Lloyd* (London: Pluto, 2012); Ben Harker, *Class Act: The Cultural and Political Life of Ewan MacColl* (London: Pluto, 2007); John Szwed, *The Man Who Recorded the World* (London: Arrow, 2011); Peggy Seegar, *First Time Ever: A Memoir* (London: Faber and Faber, 2018); Peter Kennedy Archive – A unique collection of British and Irish traditional music and customs. <http://www.peterkennedyarchive.org/>
  3. Taken from to date the most extensive available discography of Bhattacharya's work: <https://folkcatalogue.wordpress.com/2011/03/10/deben-bhattacharya-vinyl-discography-2-2/>
  4. 'Timothy Eckersley to Deben Bhattacharya, 20 September 1961'. R46/605, WAC.
  5. A comprehensive assessment of Bhattacharya's cultural legacy, that documents all his publications and collaborations is yet to be completed. This article contributes to a growing conversation appraising Bhattacharya's work and career. See the work of scholars, curators and artists including Robert Millis, Moushumi Bhowmik, Sushrita Acharjee, Arindam Sen and Stéphane Jourdain, whose 2002 film *Music According to Deben Bhattacharya*, offers a sensitive portrayal of Bhattacharya's return to Bangladesh in 2001, shortly before he died.
  6. Deben Bhattacharya interviewed by Kevin Daly, 23rd and 24th February 1982, Rue Lepic, Montmartre, Paris, part 3. Available <https://www.kevindaly.org.uk/posts/deben-bhattacharya-interviewed-by-kevin-3>
  7. "Questions and Answers" Eastern Bengali Service Talks Booking Requisition Form', 17 November 1949.' Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.
  8. 'Terence Cooper to Deben Bhattacharya, 11 January 1954', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
  9. Marie Slocombe, 'The BBC Folk Music Collection', *Folklore and Folk Music Archivist* 7, no. 1 (1964): 3–13, 12.
  10. Joe Moran, 'Vox Populi?: The Recorded Voice and Twentieth Century British History', *Twentieth Century British History* 25, no. 3 (2014): 461–83.
  11. The receipt for the tape machine is reproduced in Bhattacharya, *Paris to Calcutta*, p. 109. The royalties were claimed back against the record *Music From India: Songs from Bombay* (1956). Bhattacharya frequently collaborated with Argo, with the bulk of records released with the label between 1967 and 1974 in the 'The Living Tradition' series, curated compilations of field recordings of regional traditional music from Eastern Europe, South Asia and the Middle East. The 'Living Tradition' included the 1968 album *Ragas from Benares*, released when popular interest in India Classical Music was at its peak. See Oliver Craske, *Indian Sun: the Life and Times of Ravi Shankar* (London: Faber, 2020).
  12. Alan Lomax, by way of contrast, was generously funded by the BBC for his folklore programmes and collecting in the 1950s. Indeed, according to E. David Gregory, between 1953 and 1957 Lomax 'creamed the budget' for BBC folklore programmes. E. David Gregory, 'Lomax in London: Alan Lomax, the BBC and the Folk-Song Revival in England, 1950–1958', *Folk Music Journal* 8, no. 2 (2002): 136–69, 162.

13. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Timothy Eckersley, 3 July 1961 [with handwritten responses from Timothy Eckersley and Slocombe]', R46/605, WAC.
14. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Peggy Branford, 7 June 1954', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
15. 'From Overseas Liaison, 2 July 1962', R46/605, WAC.
16. Deben Bhattacharya, *The Gypsies: Pictures and Music from East and West* (London: Record Books, 1966), 9.
17. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Peggy Branford, 3 April 1954', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
18. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Marie Slocombe, 9 June 1960', R46/605, WAC.
19. Bhattacharya, *Paris to Calcutta*.
20. 'Timothy Eckersley to Deben Bhattacharya, 13 June 1960', R46/605, WAC.
21. Tom Western discusses Lomax's ability to leverage such authority during the creation of the Columbia World Library in Tom Western, "The Age of the Golden Ear": The Columbia World Library and Sounding Out Post-war Field Recording', *Twentieth Century Music* 11, no. 2 (2014): 275–300.
22. 'Hans Keller to Deben Bhattacharya, 16 November 1959', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
23. See '200 Oxford Street' <http://www.orbem.co.uk/oxfordst/oxfordst.htm>. Last accessed 8 June 2022.
24. Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.; See Daniel Ryan Morse, *Radio Empire: The BBC Eastern Service and the Emergence of the Global Anglophone Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 188 and Ruvani Ranasinha, 'South Asian Broadcasters in Britain and the BBC: Talking to India (1941–1943)', *South Asian Diaspora* 2, no. 1 (2010): 57–71. DOI: 10.1080/19438190903542018.
25. 'BBC Indian Section of the Eastern Service', <https://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/bbc-indian-section-eastern-service>
26. Morse, *Radio Empire*, 118.
27. Amanda Bidnell, *West Indian Generation: Remaking British Culture in London, 1945–1965* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 67.
28. "'Folk Dance of East Pakistan" Script', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
29. Daniel Gomes, 'Archival Airways: Recording Ireland for the BBC', *Modernism/modernity* 3, no. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.26597/mod.0084>.
30. Echoing the influence that English folk songs had on Rabindranath Tagore's Bengali compositions at the start of the twentieth century. See Bob van der Linden, *Music and Empire in Britain and India: Identity, Internationalism, and Cross-Cultural Communication* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), 107–28.
31. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Mr Linton, Mr Linton, 23 June 1957', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
32. 'Mr Linton to Deben Bhattacharya, 3 July 1957', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
33. From this journey, Bhattacharya produced seven talks, broadcast on the Third Programme between 11 February–5 March 1957 called 'The Overland Route to India'. The same material was released in the USA on the LP *Music on the Desert Road* (Angel Records, 1958).

34. Amanda Bidnell, *West Indian Generation: Remaking British Culture in London, 1945–1965* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 67.
35. ‘Correspondence between Martin Starkie and P.H. Newby, 11 April 1951’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.
36. ‘Deben Bhattacharya to BBC, 11 January 1952’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC; van der Linden, *Music and Empire in Britain and India*, 27. For more on the Visva-Bharati, visit <https://visvabharati.ac.in/History.html>.
37. ‘William Archer to Leonie Cohn, 18 January 1952’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.
38. ‘Indian Classical Music’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.
39. ‘Deben Bhattacharya to Alec Robertson, 28 April 1952’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.
40. Katie Guthrie, *The Art of Appreciation: Music and Middlebrow Culture in Modern Britain* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 68–99.
41. ‘Contemporary Music of India’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.
42. Matt Rahaim, ‘That Ban(e) of Indian Music: Hearing Politics in The Harmonium’, *The Journal of Asian Studies* 70, no. 3 (2011): 657–82.
43. Amanda J. Weidman, *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern: The Postcolonial Politics of Music in South India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 24; Lakshmi Subramanian, ‘Song Sung True: Performing the Nation’, *South Asian History and Culture* 9, no. 4 (2018): 396–406, 401.
44. ‘Deben Bhattacharya to Mr. Paxton, 21 April 1953,’ Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.
45. ‘A/CTP to Alec Robertson’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1949–53, WAC.
46. Bake also worked for the Third Programme in the early 1950s, presenting talks on the Javanese Gamelan (1951) and Folk Music of Yugoslavia (1953).
47. van der Linden, *Music and Empire in Britain and India*, 117. Bhattacharya’s perspective on Indian music was almost certainly influenced by the historian, writer, and musicologist Alain Daniélou, of whose work the scholarly Bake was highly critical. See Bob van der Linden, *Arnold Bake: A Life in South Asian Music* (London: Routledge, 2019), 90–117 and ‘Text taken from Kevin Daly’s taped interviews with Deben Bhattacharya Interviews recorded 23rd and 24th February 1982, Rue Lepic, Montmartre, Paris’, <https://www.kevindaly.org.uk/posts/deben-bhattacharya-interviewed-by-kevin-3>.
48. ‘Kevin Daly’s taped interviews with Deben Bhattacharya Interviews’.
49. <https://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/india-society>
50. *Radio Times*, Issue 275, Southern 6th Jan 1929 - 12th Jan 1929, p. 38. Available online: <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/page/7418e02263b3472dba1846b9ce9bbf03>
51. Susheila Nasta, eds., *India in Britain: South Asian Networks and Connections, 1858–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013).
52. *Radio Times*, Issue 782, National, 25th Sep 1938 - 1st Oct 1938.
53. <https://www.open.ac.uk/researchprojects/makingbritain/content/narayana-menon>
54. ‘Roger Fiske to Deben Bhattacharya, 3 June 1954’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
55. ‘Roger Fiske to Deben Bhattacharya, 3 June 1954’, Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.

56. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Roger Fiske, 27 June 1954', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
57. Gomes, 'Archival airwaves'
58. 'Roger Fiske to Anna Instone, 9 July 1954', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
59. 'Roger Fiske to Deben Bhattacharya, 22 October 1954', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
60. Deben Bhattacharya (2018) *Paris to Calcutta: Men and Music on the Desert Road*. Seattle: Sublime Frequencies, p. 31.
61. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Robert Layton, 24 August 1962', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
62. 'Peter Crossley-Holland to Robert Layton, 5 Sep 1962', Deben Bhattacharya, 1954–62, WAC.
63. 'Marie Slocombe to Deben Bhattacharya, 26 May 1954', R46/605, WAC.
64. 'Marie Slocombe, to H.C.P. Ops. 4 Feb 1955', R46/605, WAC.
65. 'F. Miles Coventry, to Programme Accountant, 21 March 1955', R46/605, WAC.
66. 'Marie Slocombe to A.H.C.P. Ops, 28 July 1955', R46/605, WAC.
67. 'Madeau Stewart to Marie Slocombe, 29 Sept 1956', R46/605, WAC.
68. 'Madeau Stewart to A A C P, Ops, 18 August 1957', R46/605, WAC.
69. Bert Lloyd also had a challenging freelance relationship with the BBC, even if Stewart tended to use his work as a benchmark to measure Bhattacharya against. See Arthur, *Bert*, 219–38.
70. 'Marie Stewart to Deben Bhattacharya, 1 May 1957' R46/605, WAC.
71. 'Madeau Stewart to Librarian, 4 March 1959' R46/605, WAC.
72. 'Marie Stewart to A/A.H.C.P.Ops, 18 Feb 1958' R46/605, WAC.
73. J. M. Thomson, 'Underneath the Archives: recalls the early days with Madeau Stewart', *Early Music* 7, no. 1 (1979): 89–98, 91–3.
74. 'Madeau Stewart to Deben Bhattacharya, 29 Jan 1963', R46/605, WAC.
75. David Toop, letter to *The Wire*, 311, 2011, available online: <https://reader.exacteditions.com/issues/9257/page/6>.
76. 'Madeau Stewart to Deben Bhattacharya, 11 Oct 1957', R46/605, WAC.
77. 'Madeau Stewart to Librarian, 28 Oct 1959', R46/605, WAC.
78. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Madeau Stewart, 18 January 1960', R46/605, WAC.
79. 'Madeau Stewart to Deben Bhattacharya, 22 October 1957', R46/605, WAC.
80. 'R.V.A. George, BBC Folk Music and Dialect Recording Scheme, 16 May 1952.' R46/658/1, WAC.
81. See *BBC Folk and National Music Recordings, Volume 1: Foreign Countries*, 1–3.
82. 'Madeau Stewart to Marie Slocombe, 13 October 1960', R46/605, WAC.
83. 'Madeau Stewart to Librarian C.P.op. 17 October 1960', R46/605, WAC.
84. 'Marie Slocombe to Deben Bhattacharya, 20 October 1960', R46/605, WAC.
85. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Marie Slocombe, 21 Oct 1960', R46/605, WAC.
86. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Timothy Eckersley, 3 July 1961 [with handwritten responses from Timothy Eckersley and Slocombe]' R46/605, WAC.

87. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Madeau Stewart, 13 December 1964.' R46/799/1, WAC. Like Fiske in the 1950s, Layton in fact was a good ally to Bhattacharya in the BBC, throughout the 1960s and 70s.
88. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Madeau Stewart, 25 April 1962', R46/605, WAC.
89. 'Madeau Stewart to Deben Bhattacharya, 20 August 1962', R46/605, WAC.
90. 'Madeau Stewart to Deben Bhattacharya, 1 October 1962', R46/605, WAC.
91. 'Joyce Rainbow to Programme Accountant, A.A.C.P.Ops, 27 November 1962', R46/605, WAC.
92. 'Madeau Stewart to A.A.C.P.Ops, 9 January 1964', R46/605, WAC.
93. 'Miss Madeau Stewart to A.A.C.P.Ops. through Librarian, 27 September 1966', R46/799/1, WAC. Lloyd's documentation was, indeed, impressive, and was often presented in rich, narrative detail. See, for example, the listings for the collection of Bulgarian music in *BBC Folk and National Music Recordings, Volume 1: Foreign Countries*, p. 95–102.
94. 'Deben Bhattacharya to Madeau Stewart, 2 October 1967', R46/799/1, WAC.
95. 'Pat Bishop to Ass. European Liaison Officer through Librarian Sound Archive 20 March 1970' Deben Bhattacharya, 1968–72, WAC.
96. 'Pat Bishop to Deben Bhattacharya, 28 Jan 1972', Deben Bhattacharya, 1968–72, WAC.
97. 'Pat Bishop to Deben Bhattacharya, 8 January 1971', Deben Bhattacharya, 1968–72, WAC.
98. Lloyd, for instance, commented that his decision to collect folklore sources from Eastern Europe rather than England was due to economic reasons. See Arthur, *Bert*, 153.
99. Heidi Egginton and Zoë Thomas, eds., *Precarious Professionals: Gender, Identities and Social Change in Modern Britain* (London: University of London Press, 2021).
100. See *Remaking Britain – South Asian Connections and Networks, 1830s to the Present* (southasianbritain.org); Gail Low (2020) 'The Lure of Postwar London: Networks of People, Print, and Organisations', in *The Cambridge History of Black and Asian British Writing*, ed. Susheila Nasta and Mark U. Stein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 278–95. doi:10.1017/9781108164146.019.

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#### Notes on contributor

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