



# ***International Conference***

## **Music of the Mountains**

**Melodies and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions**

**13th-14th Nov. 2024**

**CONFERENCE PROCEEDING**

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Sikkim University  
and  
Sangeet Galaxy**



# MUSIC OF THE MOUNTAINS

*Melodies and Socio-Cultural Dimensions*

**E-CONFERENCE PROCEEDING**

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## Concept Note



The music of India's mountainous regions, encompassing the Himalayas and Western Ghats, serves as a rich tradition that weaves together elements of the natural environment, spiritual beliefs, and community life. These musical traditions are deeply rooted in the landscapes that surround them, where the sounds of nature such as the whisper of the wind, the rush of rivers, and the calls of wildlife are often reflected in the melodies and rhythms. Instruments like the sarangi and bansuri are emblematic of these traditions, providing a hauntingly beautiful quality that complements the mountainous setting. The sarangi, with its resonant, string-based tones, and the bansuri, a flute known for its ethereal sound, are central to the music's emotive expression. The vocal style in this music is characterized by a raw, heartfelt delivery that resonates with the emotional and spiritual experiences of the people. This vocal approach is often accompanied by traditional dance forms and ritual performances, underscoring the music's role in communal events and ceremonies. These performances are not merely artistic displays but integral to cultural practices, marking significant life events such as births, marriages, and festivals. They also play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting oral traditions, folklore, and ancestral knowledge through song. As these mountain communities engage with modern influences, their music undergoes a dynamic evolution. Contemporary elements are increasingly woven into traditional practices, creating a fusion that respects historical roots while addressing current trends. This adaptation ensures that the music remains vibrant and relevant in a rapidly changing world. Despite these changes, the core essence of the music its deep connection to nature, spirituality, and communal identity remains steadfast, reflecting the enduring resilience and cultural richness of the mountainous regions of India both local and global music landscapes. Additionally, the conference intends to facilitate an exchange of knowledge among scholars, musicians, and cultural experts, highlighting the ongoing evolution of mountain music as it adapts to contemporary influences while preserving its cultural essence. This comprehensive approach not only enhances our understanding of the music's intrinsic value but also underscores its significant contributions to the diversity and richness of global musical traditions.

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## About the Department of Music, Sikkim University

The Department of Music at Sikkim University, located in the picturesque town of Gangtok, serves as a vibrant centre for academic and artistic excellence in music education, research, and performance. Established in 2011 with the aim of preserving and promoting the rich musical heritage of the region while embracing global musical traditions, the department offers a unique blend of theoretical and practical training in music. The department is committed to fostering creativity, cultural exchange, and innovation. Its curriculum encompasses a wide range of subjects, including Indian classical music, folk traditions, western music theory, musicology, and performance studies. It places special emphasis on the indigenous and folk music of the Himalayan region, thereby contributing to the preservation and study of the cultural legacy of Sikkim and its neighbouring areas.

Equipped with dedicated faculty members and state-of-the-art facilities, the department provides students with opportunities to explore various dimensions of music, from performance and composition to ethnomusicological research. Additionally, the department actively organizes seminars, workshops, and conferences to engage scholars and practitioners in meaningful dialogues on music and its socio-cultural dimensions. Through its programs and initiatives, the Department of Music at Sikkim University strives to create an inclusive and dynamic space for learning, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of music in its diverse forms.





## **PATRON**

**Prof. Jyoti Prakash Tamang**  
Honourable Vice Chancellor,  
Sikkim University



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**Dr. Bilambita Banisudha**  
Head of the Department  
Associate Professor,  
Department of Music



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(A central university established by an Act of Parliament of India in 2007 and accredited by NAAC in 2015)

## Vice Chancellor's Note



It is a great honor to welcome all participants, scholars, and esteemed guests to the International Conference on "Music of the Mountains: Melodies and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions," hosted by the Department of Music at Sikkim University. This event will take place on November 13th and 14th, 2024, in the beautiful and culturally rich city of Gangtok. It aims to bring together various viewpoints on a topic that is highly significant for the Himalayan region and beyond. The mountain communities worldwide have long had a special relationship with music, which is deeply embedded in their histories, traditions, and everyday lives. The mountains of Sikkim and other Himalayan areas are no different; they are filled with musical traditions that reflect the land, lifestyles, and cultural values of the people. This conference seeks to explore these musical practices while also examining how they connect with modern issues and expressions.

As we come together for this important discussion, it is important to consider the value of studying music in its social and cultural context. Music is not just a form of art; it serves as a record of shared memories, identities, and strength, especially for indigenous and marginalized groups. Our goal for this conference is to create a space that encourages respect and understanding for these varied musical forms, showing how they still influence identities and communities today.

I would like to thank the Department of Music and the organizing committee for their hard work in making this conference happen. We look forward to engaging discussions, insightful research presentations, and opportunities for teamwork that will deepen our appreciation of mountain music and its cultural importance.

I hope the Department of Music achieves great success.



Professor Dr. Jyoti Prakash Tamang *FNA, FNASc, FNAAS*  
Vice-Chancellor (Officiating) and Senior Professor (Microbiology)  
ICIMOD Mountain Chair  
Sikkim University (Central University)

## Padma Shri Kaajee Singh



It is a great privilege to join the International Conference on “*Music of the Mountains: Melodies and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions*,” organized by the Department of Music, Sikkim University. This remarkable gathering, the first of its kind in the Eastern Himalayas, celebrates and examines the profound influence of mountain music on identity, heritage, and community life.

Mountain music, with its unique melodies and traditions, is not only an art form but also a powerful reflection of the people, landscapes, and histories from which it emerges. As we listen to and discuss these resonant sounds, we are reminded of the importance of preserving and understanding our intangible cultural heritage in all its diversity. The theme of this conference captures this spirit beautifully, offering a platform where the unique stories, struggles, and strengths of mountain communities can be explored and celebrated.

I commend the organizing committee and faculty members of the Department of Music for their exceptional efforts in making this event possible. Their vision, hard work, and commitment to advancing knowledge and appreciation of mountain music have created an invaluable opportunity for learning and collaboration. It is truly inspiring to see such dedication to fostering cultural and academic dialogues that enrich our collective understanding.

I look forward to engaging in the insightful discussions and performances that will unfold over these two days. May this conference inspire new perspectives and collaborations that honor the music of the mountains for generations to come.

With Warm Regards,

Padma Shri Kaajee Singh

**Chairperson**  
**Dr. Bilambita Banisudha**



It is a matter of great pride and joy to welcome you to the International Conference on “*Music of the Mountains: Melodies and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions*,” organized by the Department of Music, Sikkim University, on **13th and 14th November 2024**. This conference marks a historic moment, being the first of its kind in the Eastern Himalayas to focus on the rich musical heritage and cultural landscapes unique to mountain regions. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the entire organizing committee, whose tireless dedication, meticulous planning, and unwavering commitment have brought this ambitious vision to life. Their effort in curating a program that combines academic rigor with cultural celebration is truly commendable, and their ability to bring together such a diverse group of scholars, artists, and cultural enthusiasts speaks to their commitment to advancing this important field of study.

We are confident that the outcomes of this conference will resonate far beyond these sessions, sparking new collaborations, insights, and appreciation for mountain music and its socio-cultural impact. Once again, my sincere gratitude to the organizing team for their exceptional work and to all participants for joining us in this pioneering initiative.

Warm Regards,

Dr. Bilambita Banisudha  
Head, Department of Music  
Sikkim University

## Convenors Note

### Dr. Samidha Vedabala



It is with immense pleasure and pride that I welcome you to the International Conference on “*Music of the Mountains: Melodies and the Socio-Cultural Dimensions*,” organized by the Department of Music, Sikkim University, on **13th and 14th November 2024**. This conference is the first of its kind in the Eastern Himalayas dedicated to exploring the rich and intricate musical heritage of mountain communities and aims to establish a landmark event for scholars and artists in the field of music and cultural studies.

Our primary objective is to delve into the unique traditions of mountain music, examining its socio-cultural dimensions, preservation, and its contemporary relevance amidst rapid globalization. Through this conference, we aim to foster dialogue on these themes, highlighting the transformative role of mountain music in shaping identity and heritage. We envision this gathering as a platform that not only celebrates but also critically engages with the melodies and traditions that echo through mountainous regions worldwide.

This milestone event would not have been possible without the guidance and support of our Hon’ble Vice-Chancellor, whose encouragement has been instrumental in bringing this conference to fruition. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my esteemed faculty colleagues and the organizing team for their dedication and hard work. Their collaborative spirit has been invaluable in ensuring that this event meets the highest standards of academic and cultural engagement.

We are honored to host a diverse array of speakers, participants, and cultural enthusiasts, each of whom brings unique insights into the theme. I am confident that our discussions will contribute significantly to the field of ethnomusicology, inspire future research, and underscore the importance of preserving these cherished musical traditions.

Thank you for joining us in this pioneering event. May the conference be both enlightening and inspiring, fostering new paths of collaboration and understanding.

Warm regards,

Dr. Samidha Vedabala



**Dr. Amit Verma**  
**Editor: Sangeet Galaxy e-Journal**



I extend my hearty wishes to the Department of Music, Sikkim University to organize a Two-day International Conference on “Music of the Mountains”. The title of conference is pregnant with lots of innovative possibilities in the context of different socio-cultural aspects of hills. I believe this conference will provide a platform for meaningful discussions, exchange of ideas, and collaboration on rich music culture of Mountains. May it also be a memorable experience for all involved and publication of conference proceeding will enlighten the coming aspirants and researcher in this area.

Regards

Dr. Amit Verma

Editor: Sangeet Galaxy e-Journal

Email: [editor@sangeetgalaxy.co.in](mailto:editor@sangeetgalaxy.co.in)

## **Guest of Honour**

### **Padma Shri Kaajee Singh**

Aacharya Kaajee Singh is a Neoteric originator of the Nepali community in the field of Nepali Folk Music ShreeMaadal, Maadalay Geet and Maaruni Naach. He is an Indian percussionist/ Music Director/ Writer. He is awarded Padmashree by the Indian government for his contribution in music specially for inventing the notation system of the Shree Maadal. He plays a vital role in contributing, preserving and promoting the prime drum of Nepali community “Shree Maadal” and also contributing his exceptional Ragas, Talas and Chhandas in Indian Classical Music too. His works have continuously shaken the foundation of Indian Classical Music fraternity and thus, the stalwarts of Indian Classical Music have always appreciated his unprecedented creations till date. He is given the title of “Mardal Maharaja” by the Government of India and the first Padmashree awardee in the field of Folk Music and Indian Classical music contribution in the Nepali community.



Kaajee Singh has served as a music teacher in the Tashi Namgyal Academy, Gangtok, Sikkim for 23 years and he has been a part of a family immersed in music for three generations. While he was growing up, he developed a fascination for folk culture and music from a tender age, inspired by his parents. In 1974, Kaajee Singh was also serving as an established cine musician (Maadal Player) in Mumbai working with stalwart Music Directors like Laxmikant Pyarelal, Kalyan ji Anand ji, Ram Laxman, Shankar--Jaikishan, Ajay Swamy, for ten years. Though, he was doing extremely well in the field of Bollywood music, he never forgot his roots. He always thought about imparting the right information to his community through his books, so that the upcoming generation could remember the importance of their Prime instrument ShreeMaadal. This was the primary reason which made him research in the "Notation System" of this Instrument ShreeMaadal and also the Traditional Folk Song "Maadaleygeet". He managed to put everything in format so that it would sound more musical, practical and also disciplined.

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## Key Note Speakers

### Naren Gurung

Born in 1954 in Chakung, Sikkim, Shri Naren Gurung received formal training in vocal music from Shrimati Mitali Palit. He has excelled in singing in the indigenous style of the region. Shri Gurung's performances have been highly acclaimed. He has issued a large number of audio-cassettes on folk and contemporary songs, which are popular all over Sikkim. A regular performer over radio and television, Shri Gurung is also a competent Bhajan singer. He is currently devoted to the propagation of the folk music and dance traditions of his State. Shri Naren Gurung received the SangeetNatak Akademi Award for his contribution to folk music and dance of Sikkim.



### Nishaant Singh

Nishaant Singh, a disciple of Pandit Chanchal Kumar Bhattacharya, is a well-known Pakhawaj performer from the Lala Keval Kishan Gharana-Bengal Parampara and torchbearer for the instrument among his peers. Son of 'Mardal Maharaja' Padma Shri Awardee Kaajee Singh, Nishant Singh hails from a well-known traditional folk musical family with four generations of music history. He is India's most versatile Pakhawaj artist at present, performing solo as well as with Dhrupad Vocal, Bhajani's, String Instruments such as Rudra Veena, Surbahar, Sitar, Sarode, and Santoor; Wind Instruments such as Flute; and Kathak, the Indian classical dance style.



Hence, Nishaant is currently regarded as one of India's best Pakhawaj players due to his wide range of accompanying capabilities. He is also a certified folk singer and Shreemaadal performer for All India Radio. He is a top-tier Pakhawaj player affiliated with the Cine Musicians Association (CMA), Film Industry, Mumbai. With his global popularity, he is the only Pakhawaj player in the country who is acquainted with Swami Vivekananda's compositions. Singh is currently a guest lecturer at Pakhawaj's Department of Cultural Affairs at Ramakrishna Mission Vidya Mandira College in Belurmath, Kolkata. He is the youngest and first Fulbright Associate in Pakhawaj, having studied under Padmashri Pandit Swapan Chaudhuri at Ali Akbar College of Music in San Rafael, California. Singh's distinctive blend of traditional and contemporary approaches has earned him international prominence, making him a sought-after performer and professor in the profession. His innovative approach to teaching and performing has inspired a new generation of musicians to explore the rich heritage of Indian classical music.

## **Kali Prasad Baskota**

Kali Prasad Baskota is a Nepali singer, musician and lyricist. Baskota has also judged in Four season of Nepali Reality show Nepal Idol. Baskota has also judged a child reality show called "sa re ga ma pa lil champs Nepal". He started his music career since 2007/8, as a lyricist and composer for the song Chahana Sakiyo Bahana Sakiyo sung by Sashi Rawal. Some of his earlier hits are Laija Re sung by Hemant Rana, Bida nai deu baru sung by Azad Dhungana. His 2017 song called Saili sung by Hemant Rana was trending worldwide on No. 14 on YouTube after the first week of its release. The song also made the record for getting more than 400,000 views in YouTube in first 24 hours of release, which was the most views any Nepali song got till that date. In feature films he gave songs like Jaalma, Nira, Lappan Chappan, Panchi, Daiba Hey. Kali did his singing debut from song Jaalma from the movie Resham filili which is of the biggest hit songs in Nepali movie industry. Recent times, his song "Thamel Bazaar" from the movie Loot 2 (a sequel to the highly successful movie Loot and directed by Nischal Basnet) is one of the most viewed Nepali songs; it ranks third amongst the most viewed Nepali songs on YouTube. Some of his most recent songs are Ajambari sung by himself and Melina Rai for the movie Gangster Blues starring Aashirman DS Joshi and Anna Sharma, and Okhati from the movie Mr. Jholay starring Dayahang Rai. Kali is a mechanical engineer by education, and worked at the famous Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology in Kathmandu for over a decade before becoming a full-time musician since 2015. He has been providing his songs for popular franchises named kabaddi (Has 4 sequels) & Jatra (Has 3 sequels) every time a new sequel comes out. His popular songs for those franchise includes Malai maya pirati (Kabaddi), jiban jatra ho (Jatra)sustari (Kabaddi) Sathi (jatra). In 2019 baskota's song "sali man paryo" from the film "ghamad shere" was the most popular song of that year and now it is among top 5 most viewed songs in Nepal. His other songs like "Maya pirari, insta ko photo and funfunny" were also very popular. His fame didn't seem to quit even after two heavy lockdowns. From 2020 to 2022 he released many viral songs among which his song Maya raicha ra from "Fulbari" got the most recognition. In 2023, he wrote and sang a song named Chari Basyo for a film Jaari.[8] In 2024 too, he has provided music for a very popular song, "Rai maila" for a film "gau aayeko bato".



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## Papers Presented in Technical Sessions

**Day 1 -Technical Session – 1 (Offline) – 13<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024**  
**2.00pm- 3.30pm**

Serial No.	Paper Presenters	Institute	Title Of the Paper
1.	Dr Dipjyoti Deka	Sonapur College	Impact of Modernization and Globalization on the Music of the Mountains
2.	Dr. Pahi Baishya	Healing Sounds Therapy Centre, Guwahati	Exploring The Therapeutic Role of Folk and Devotional Music in The Healing Practices Of Hill Communities: A Scientific Inquiry With Special Reference To Northeastern India
3.	Dr. Sandeep Kumar Patel	Sikkim University Gangtok	Rhythms of the Hills: Importance of various musical instruments in the folk music of Sikkim
4.	Tukumoni Mahanta	Arunachal University of Studies	Echoes of Primordial Legacy: A Study of the folk songs of the Moran Community of Assam
5.	Supriya Chanda	CSSR Kolkata & Presidency University	Music and Identity in the Gorkhaland Movement, Darjeeling
6.	Bhuyash Neupane	Jain University	Examining the current scenario of music commodification of Magar tribe around the hills of Tanahun region in Nepal

**Session Chair: Dr. Santosh Kumar**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Sikkim University*

### Discussions:

The papers presented at the conference offered a profound exploration of mountain music traditions, focusing on their cultural, social, and therapeutic dimensions amidst the influences of modernization and globalization. The discussions collectively underscored how music in the mountainous regions serves as a powerful medium for cultural preservation, identity assertion, and community cohesion. From the therapeutic role of folk and devotional music in fostering mental well-being and spiritual healing to the significance of traditional musical instruments and their craftsmanship, the presentations highlighted the urgent need to preserve these rich traditions. At the same time, challenges such as the commodification of music, the erosion of authenticity, and the impact of global influences on indigenous forms were critically analyzed. Music's role in political movements, such as identity assertion and community mobilization, further demonstrated its capacity to unite and



empower marginalized communities. The conference also included interactive Q&A sessions, where participants engaged in dynamic discussions, sharing insights and perspectives that enriched the discourse.

<b>Day 1 -Technical Session – 2 (Offline) – 13<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024</b> <b>3.45pm-5.00pm</b>			
<b>Serial No.</b>	<b>Paper Presenters</b>	<b>Institute</b>	<b>Title Of the Paper</b>
1.	Dr P Nirmal Harish	Central university of Tamil Nadu	The songs depicting the greatness of the Mount Kalakasti from the work Kannappar kuravanji
2.	Dr Sumona Banerjee	Sikkim University Gangtok	Music and Nature of Sikkim
3.	Yadhav Sharma	Sikkim University Gangtok	Assessing The Impact of Modernization on Folk Traditions in Sikkim
4.	Dr Moutusi Roy	Rabindra Bharati University	Manipuri Dance as Social Communicator Through Rituals of Mountainous Regions.
5.	Millind Dhamala	Sikkim University Gangtok	Exploring the Live and Recorded Music and its Evolving Scenario in Sikkim
6.	Tanmoy Mani	Sikkim University Gangtok	Cultural and Musical Heritage of the Khasi Community: The Role of Ka Shad Suk Mynsiem.
7.	Sourima Ghosh	Presidency University, Kolkata	'Himalayan influence' on Hindustani classical music and Ravi Shankar: an analytical study

### **Session Chair: Dr. Manoj Kumar Das**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Sikkim University*

#### **Discussions:**

The second session of the conference provided an equally enriching exploration of mountain music and cultural traditions, delving into themes of nature, heritage, and the evolving dynamics of musical expression. The presentations highlighted the profound connections between music, nature, and cultural identity in the mountainous regions, as seen in works like *Kannappar Kuravanji*, which glorifies Mount Kalakasti, and studies on the music of Sikkim, which reflects the deep harmony between the environment and artistic expression. The impact of modernization on folk traditions in Sikkim was critically examined, revealing both the challenges of preserving authenticity and the opportunities for



innovation and broader dissemination. Manipuri dance was analyzed as a powerful social communicator, particularly through rituals that emphasize community and spiritual connections in mountainous regions. The evolving dynamics of live and recorded music in Sikkim showcased how technological advancements have transformed traditional and contemporary practices, enabled broader accessibility while raised concerns about the commodification of art forms. The session also explored the rich cultural and musical heritage of the Khasi community, with particular focus on *Ka Shad Suk Mynsiem*, a festival dance symbolizing joy, gratitude, and community spirit. Interactive Q&A sessions following the presentations allowed for dynamic discussions, with participants sharing insights on the balance between preservation and innovation, the role of rituals in sustaining cultural identity, and the integration of traditional music into modern contexts.

**Day 2 -Technical Session I (Online)- 14<sup>th</sup> Nov**  
**Time: 10:00 am – 11:15 am**

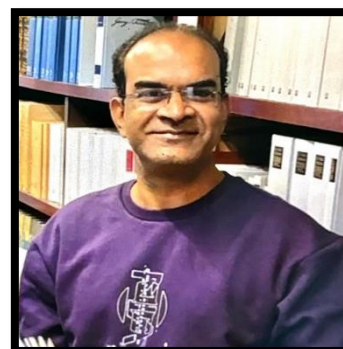
Serial No.	Paper Presenters	Institute	Title Of the Paper
1.	Dr. Abhijit Majumder	Rabindra Bharati University	Rabindranath's holistic view of the seasonal festivals celebrated at Santiniketan and their composition of songs
2.	Bisakha Goswami	Rabindra Bharati University	Endangered Music Tradition of the Totos: Songs of a Disappearing Culture.
3.	Anupama Pradhan	Raiganj University	The Subaltern sings; Analysing Some Select Tea Garden Songs of Darjeeling Region with the Female Gaze
4.	Hardeep Kaur	Eternal University	Contribution of Bhai Bakshish Singh in spiritual and Religious Influences on music.
5.	Sanchita Manna	Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan,	"Rabindranath's spiritual realization in the "Swadesh" section of Geetabitan"

**Session Chair: Professor K.R. Ramamohan**

*Professor, Department of Anthropology, Sikkim University*

**Discussions:**

This session of the conference explored the intricate intersections of music, culture, spirituality, and identity through a diverse range of presentations. The holistic vision of Rabindranath Tagore in the seasonal festivals at Santiniketan was highlighted, emphasizing the seamless blend of nature, art, and spirituality in the composition of songs for these festivals. The endangered music tradition of the Toto community brought attention to the urgent need for preservation efforts for this disappearing cultural heritage, emphasizing the songs' role as living testimonies of their





history and identity. Another compelling presentation focused on the subaltern narratives in the tea garden songs of the Darjeeling region, analyzed through a female gaze. These songs vividly portrayed the struggles, resilience, and lived experiences of marginalized women, creating a poignant picture of subaltern agency through music. The contributions of Bhai Bakshish Singh were explored, shedding light on his profound spiritual and religious influence on music, particularly in the Sikh devotional traditions. Finally, Tagore's spiritual realization in the *Swadesh* section of *Geetabitan* was analyzed, illustrating how his songs transcend personal devotion to evoke a collective sense of identity, belonging, and freedom. The session's Q&A discussions were vibrant, with participants reflecting on the interplay of spirituality and socio-cultural realities in music, strategies to document and sustain endangered traditions, and the importance of contextualizing music within its historical and cultural frameworks. Collectively, this session reaffirmed music's enduring power as a vessel of cultural memory, spiritual exploration, and social commentary.

**Day 2 - Technical Session – II (Online)- 14<sup>th</sup> Nov**  
**11:30 am – 12:45 pm**

<b>Serial No.</b>	<b>Paper Presenters</b>	<b>Institute</b>	<b>Title Of the Paper</b>
1.	Dr Rashmi Rekha Das	Sri Sri University	Music And Nature
2.	Dr.Mausumi Pal	Purnidevi Chowdhury Girls College, Bolpur	Traditional Music and the Instruments of the hills of India
3.	Dr.Maitri Sinha	Debnarayan Shikkha Sansthan	The Dance Culture of Tamang People
4.	Bipul Bez	Arunachal University of Studies, Namsai, Arunachal Pradesh	"Healing Practices and Sacred Sounds: Exploring the Role of Instruments in Sumit Tribe Ceremonies
5.	Sima Challeng	Assam Women's University	Traditional Dance and Rituals Practices of Dimasa Kachari

**Session Chair: Dr. Santosh Kumar**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Sikkim University*

**Discussions:**

Chaired by Dr. Santosh Kumar again, this session focused on the deep-rooted connections between music, dance, nature, and cultural identity, particularly within the hill communities of India. The exploration of music and nature revealed how the environment profoundly influences traditional melodies, rhythms, and lyrics, reflecting the symbiotic relationship between natural landscapes and artistic expression. The traditional music and instruments of India's hill regions were highlighted for their role in preserving cultural heritage, with discussions on the craftsmanship, symbolism, and unique acoustic qualities of these



instruments. The dance culture of the Tamang people was celebrated as a vibrant expression of their history and spirituality, emphasizing the intricate movements, costumes, and music that encapsulate their collective identity. Another presentation delved into the healing practices of the Sumit tribe, exploring how sacred sounds and instruments are integral to ceremonies that promote spiritual and physical well-being, offering a glimpse into the therapeutic dimensions of traditional music. The rituals and dance practices of the Dimasa Kachari community further illustrated the harmonious interplay of movement, music, and spirituality in cultural ceremonies, underscoring the importance of these traditions in maintaining social cohesion and cultural continuity. The session also featured engaging Q&A discussions, where participants reflected on the challenges of preserving these traditions in modern contexts, the role of community knowledge in sustaining musical practices, and the potential for integrating traditional healing sounds into contemporary wellness approaches. Together, the presentations reaffirmed the profound cultural and spiritual significance of music and dance in the lives of hill communities, celebrating their resilience and enduring legacy.

**Day 2 -Technical Session – III (Online)- 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 10:00 am – 11:15 am**

<b>Serial No.</b>	<b>Paper Presenters</b>	<b>Institute</b>	<b>Title Of the Paper</b>
1.	Dr. Ajanta Jana	Sadhu Ramchand Murmu University of Jhargram	Music of Mountain: Spiritual and Religious Influences on Music
2.	Dr. Hricha Rashmi	University of Delhi	Tunes of the Hills and the Indian Classical Music: An Analytical Study
3.	Nikita Mohan Darekar	University of Mumbai	Traditional Music of Sikkim as Soft Power in Improving Cross-Border Interactions with China
4.	Devendra Raj Pandav	Sikkim University	Folk Music and Folk Tradition among the limboos in Sikkim: An Ethnomusicological study
5.	Brintali Acharya	Rabindra Bharati University	Music & Nature
6.	Risaka Nancy	Tetso College	Melody Of the Mountains: “Rhythmic Pattern Of <i>Ka Maieñ</i> ”

**Session Chair: Dr. Jayanta Kumar Barman**  
*Assistant Professor, Department of Music, Sikkim University*

**Discussions:**

The presentations delved into the spiritual and religious dimensions of mountain music, illustrating how deeply ingrained belief systems influence musical compositions, fostering communal harmony and individual transcendence. An analytical study of the tunes of the hills and their connections to Indian classical music revealed a fascinating exchange of motifs and structures, demonstrating how the mountains have inspired classical traditions while maintaining their distinctive essence. The role of traditional music from Sikkim as a form of soft power in enhancing cross-border relations with China emphasized the diplomatic potential of music in fostering mutual understanding and cultural exchange. The ethnomusicological study of folk music and traditions among the Limboos of Sikkim provided an in-depth look at how music serves as a repository of history, identity, and rituals, reflecting the resilience of this indigenous community. Presentations on the symbiotic relationship between music and nature further highlighted how the rhythms, melodies, and themes of mountain music are deeply inspired by the natural environment. Lastly, an exploration of the rhythmic patterns of *Ka Maieñ* showcased the intricate blend of cultural and natural influences in creating music that is both vibrant and deeply rooted in tradition. The session was enriched by interactive Q&A discussions, where participants engaged in thoughtful exchanges about the preservation of traditional music, its role in diplomacy and identity politics, and the integration of these rich traditions into contemporary contexts. Collectively, this session celebrated the multifaceted essence of mountain music as a bridge between culture, spirituality, and diplomacy.



**Day 2 - Technical Session – IV (Online)- 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 11:30 am – 12:45 pm**

Serial No.	Paper Presenters	Institute	Title Of the Paper
1.	N. Shelao Konyak	Tetso College, Dimapur Nagaland	Music of the Mountains: Melodies and Socio-cultural dimensions in the Naga Hills.
2.	Dr. Sandip Kumar Raut	Utkal University of Culture, Bhubaneswar	Echoes of Himalayas: Traditional Music and Instruments of the Hills
3.	Dr. Thara Gangadharan	Bharata Mata College, Thrikkakara	Art, Music, and Sacred Transition: The Liminal Space of Kalamezhuthu Pattu Rituals in Kerala

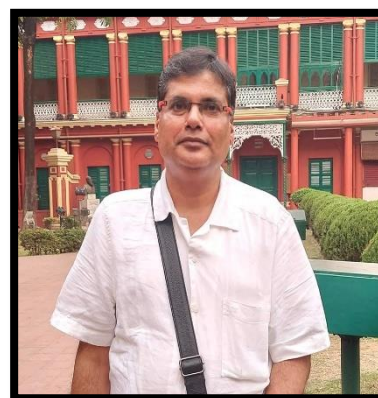
4.	Rutu. N. Raj	The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda	Experiencing the Religious Journey through Devaranamas of Purandara Dasa
5.	Abbey Thom Sunil	Central University of Himachal Pradesh	Literary Echoes: Ethno-Political and Spiritual Narratives in Indian Mountain Music
6.	Swarali Panshikar Kulkarni	Mumbai University, Mumbai	Influence of melodious tunes of mountain on North Indian Classical and Semi Classical Music

### **Session Chair: Dr. Krishnendu Dutta**

*Associate Professor, Department of Music, Sikkim University*

### **Discussions:**

The final technical session of the conference provided a rich culmination of insights into the melodies and socio-cultural dimensions of mountain music, emphasizing its spiritual, cultural, and artistic significance. The music of the Naga Hills was explored for its profound connection to the social and cultural life of the Naga people, revealing how melodies serve as a medium for storytelling, community bonding, and preserving historical narratives. Presentations on the traditional music and instruments of the Himalayas highlighted the ingenuity and craftsmanship of these regions, emphasizing their role in maintaining cultural heritage while adapting to modern contexts.



The discussion on *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* rituals in Kerala illustrated the intricate interplay of art, music, and sacred transitions, where the liminal space of these ceremonies serves as a powerful site of spiritual and communal transformation. The spiritual journey through *Devaranamas* of Purandara Dasa offered a deep dive into the devotional music of South India, showcasing its timeless appeal in connecting individuals with the divine. The session also delved into the ethno-political and spiritual narratives embedded in Indian mountain music, revealing its dual role as a preserver of indigenous identity and an instrument for addressing socio-political issues. Lastly, the influence of mountain melodies on North Indian classical and semi-classical music was analyzed, demonstrating how the serene and evocative tunes of the hills have inspired and enriched these classical traditions.

The session concluded with a lively Q&A segment, where participants engaged in meaningful discussions about the preservation of musical traditions in rapidly changing socio-political landscapes, the role of rituals in fostering spiritual connections, and the cross-pollination of musical influences across regions and genres. This closing session not only celebrated the diversity and depth of mountain music but also emphasized its enduring significance in shaping cultural identities and spiritual experiences across India

## Report on the International Conference

### Rapporteurs



**Simran Gurung, MPA**



**Muskan Gurung, MPA**



**Gurpreet Singh, MPA**



**Bipasha Barman, MPA**



**Sukanya Mushtak, MPA**

The two-day international conference explored the intricate connections between music, culture, and the natural landscapes of mountainous regions. It brought together diverse perspectives, emphasizing the interplay of tradition, modernity, spirituality, and ecological harmony in music and performing arts. The first day included discussions on themes such as the cultural and spiritual significance of music inspired by sacred mountains, showcasing how regional music reflects history, mythology, and devotion. Presentations highlighted the connections between traditional music and its role in preserving cultural heritage, with an emphasis on the influence of modernization. Other topics explored included the social communicative power of traditional dance forms, their role in rituals, and how they convey deeper messages about identity and community. Discussions also focused on the impact of globalization and fusion music in transforming traditional practices, as well as the enduring legacy of mountain-inspired classical compositions. The second day's online session delved into themes such as the therapeutic potential of music and its ability to reconnect individuals with nature. Discussions emphasized the symbolic connections between music, human physiology, and natural elements. Traditional music and instruments from the hill regions of Northeast India were analyzed, highlighting their significance in festivals, rituals, and

storytelling traditions. Another theme was the role of dance and music in the life of indigenous communities, focusing on the integration of cultural practices with ecological values. Presentations also explored the use of sacred sounds and musical instruments in healing ceremonies, revealing the spiritual dimensions of music.

The conference emphasized the pivotal role of music and performing arts as cultural repositories in mountainous regions. Key themes included the preservation of traditional practices amidst modernization, the integration of ecological values into music, and the transformative power of music in rituals and healing. The discussions underscored the adaptability of these art forms and their relevance in contemporary contexts, bridging the gap between tradition and innovation. This conference successfully celebrated the rich musical and cultural heritage of the mountains, providing a platform for critical discourse on their evolution. The event highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in understanding the socio-cultural dimensions of music, fostering a deeper appreciation of its role in shaping and sustaining mountain communities.

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**Padma Shri Kaajee Singh**



## **Impact of Modernization and Globalization on the Music of the Mountains**

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### **Abstract**

*In an interview with “Rest of My Family”, a travel-based, not-for-profit, social-work-through-art organization, Lallura Darnei, one of the oldest members of the Biaste community, an ancient hill tribe living in many parts of North-East India (Dima Hasao in Assam), expressed his fear that the ancient melodies that they had inherited would probably die with him and with it, also the history, the knowledge, culture of the Biaste would be gone forever. This fear was the result of the young generation’s love for the guitar music and K-pop, thus neglecting the Siranda, the tribe’s traditional violin crafted from wood and the dried skin of an iguana.*

*This paper thus attempts to analyse the impact of Modernization and Globalization on the ancient tunes of the mountains that bear a testimony of the rich cultural heritage that had thrived and sustained themselves for hundreds, sometimes thousands of years. Unfortunately, this time-tested rich musical heritage is facing extinction only due to the inclined interest of the new generation towards a western-way of life. During the study, efforts will be made to realise the objectives of the paper through an in-depth study of the musical heritage that characterises the cognitive components like values, social and spiritual life, oral traditions, etc., and variety of positive emotions of the mountain people, and the threats posed before it due to the interference of modernization and globalization.*

*Data for the study will be gathered particularly from the secondary sources such as books and journals and also from my association with different hill tribes of Assam as part of my Ph.D. research on a topic that focuses on the rich cultural heritage of rice cultivation.*

**Key-words:** Ancient heritage, mountain music, modernization, globalization, cultural.

### **Introduction:**

Modernization and globalization bear resemblances in a way that has swayed the very concept of the interaction of individuals and countries through technological advancements, communications and cultural values. Globalization is in-fact a continuation of modernization and even an enlargement of it. Globalization has its roots in the phenomena of modernization and constitutes a continuation of, rather than a break with, modernity. Both these movements have ushered many a change in our economy, society, culture and politics. There is no denying that Indian culture, which had long been showing resilience, has experienced some diminishment in its quality due to modernization and globalization leaving their footprints in every aspect of existence. They of course do not register merely a unidirectional process, rather generate opposite reactions. Hence, there has also been an acceleration of self-consciousness



and cultural identities, along with homogenization of certain aspects of Indian culture. The growing disparities among different segments of Indian population and the resultant unevenness in the spread of a global culture also proliferates diversity. The corollary effect is both adoption and rejection. Several aspects of our custom and tradition thrive to exist side by side. The process of modernization and globalization is much broader, complex and multifaceted. In spite of all the odds that have been created, the contemporary modernization and globalization have posed a challenge to respect and recognize plurality and multiplicity as a better model of globalized and modernized social life.

The exchange of ideas and world perspectives thus heralded by the process of modernization and globalization have left a significant impact on people's lifestyle and standard of living all around the world. Similar phenomena of culture recurring in different parts of the world is an incidental proof of authenticity (Tylor, 1871). India's rich cultural experience and deep-rooted tradition have not stood a barrier to the specific transformation and have been impacted by the process. Our deeply ingrained customs and habits have not been spared as the process has rooted its foot at every place (Devi, 2017). Every geographic region has its own distinctive characteristics that sets one population inside a boundary apart from another. The impact of modernization and globalization is such that it makes the region to compromise with its unique distinctiveness to varying degree. Since it's a global process, every nation or continent irrespective of its geographic location has been impacted by it. But, when they set their foot on a developing nation like India, the impact is much more noticeable. Modernization includes advancement in science and technology as well as interactions, and this makes people begin migrating frequently, thus igniting the process through which globalization occurs (Dutt, 2017)

### **Objective:**

Both modernization and globalization impact the local regional phenomena, thus transforming into global phenomena. The process of changing the way of life in every community at every level become possible through the participation of every economic, technological, sociocultural and political power. They have a significant impact on culture, specifically the indigenous culture of the tribal societies. The forested, hilly, mountainous and other remote areas, rich in mineral resources, used to be the places where the indigenous people, the initial settlers chose to reside and their offspring are still residing. These people have distinctive rhythms of life and intrinsic expressiveness or vitality. Now there is a threat posed to indigenous, local, regional, or ethnic identity of cultural tradition, as a result of which their own distinctive culture is now being isolated from the popular (fusion) culture. From music to cinema, this fusion culture has spared none. This process has only turned traditional identities that are deeply anchored in community life into a faceless audience. Globalization is not solely responsible for this, but the very paradigm of modernity which we, along with the rest of the humanity, very enthusiastically embrace (Singh, 2002). As their counterparts, the mountain population across the country or the globe have also inherited ancient melodies that bear a testimony to their long cherished musical heritage, from their forefathers. But, this musical heritage is being threatened by the all-encompassing process of modernization and



globalization. But obviously many consider it as an opportunity to exchange ideas, values and traditions leading to greater understanding and tolerance between cultures.

This paper, therefore, attempts to analyse the impact of Modernization and Globalization on the ancient tunes of the mountains that bear a testimony of the rich cultural heritage that had thrived and sustained themselves for hundreds, sometimes thousands of years. The new generation's inclined interest in the western way of life is thus pushing this rich musical heritage to the face of extinction.

Change of culture is a global phenomenon, but this study is particularly aimed at highlighting the impact of modernization and globalization on the music of the mountains in India and more specifically the north-east India.

### **Methodology:**

The present study is analytical in character and the data collected for the study are basically from secondary sources such as journals, books, magazines, internet etc. The information applied to conduct the study also come from my association with a number of hill tribes who had supplied with the same during my PhD research on the topic "Rice-lore in Lower Assam: An Exploratory Study", which includes a chapter on folk music of the region associated with different phases of rice cultivation.

### **Mountain Cultures:**

There are different definitions of culture, though it precisely refers to the set of customs, traditions and values of a society or community. Tylor (1871) defined culture as: "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". It is the socialisation process at root which makes culture pass down from one generation to another. Folk culture is the product of ordinary people's experiences, customs and beliefs. It is found to be practiced by a small homogeneous group of rural people. Mountain culture is basically folk-culture which has been moulded and shaped by a small homogeneous group of mountain people.

Mountains are home to a large proportion of the world's minority populations. These communities that reside in the mountain regions are marked by unique ancient cultures and traditions. Mountains serve as muses for literature, cinema and music, as well as for oral traditions. The cultures that the mountains have rooted are characterised by a strong connection to nature, a deep sense of community, and the preservation of oral traditions, music and crafts. The rugged topographic barriers that eventually create isolation has helped craft and maintain many diverse cultures relatively intact. It is really unfortunate to observe that the very stability that the mountain populations have so long nurtured and maintained with different values and beliefs is threatened by migration, urbanization and conflict. The ethnic groups that inhabit the mountains have their own traditional architecture, art and clothing, and the indigenous languages that they speak serve as a carrier of this rich cultural heritage.



Economic growth drives a country's transition from a traditional to a modern society. Tourism, which has an intimate relation with the impacts of modernization and globalization, serves as an indicator of national progress and a catalyst for a transition to new societies. If a positive trend, these forces allow the local artistic scene to enter international context and even encourage funding of various initiatives in the field of contemporary art, creativity and critical reflection (Raikhan, 2014). Hence, the impacts of tourism on culture and identity in the mountains can encourage both possibilities and challenges. Many tourists express their interest in indigenous traditions and customs, which helps to enhance or restore a certain pride of the local communities, especially those who feel marginalised in their own countries. But the same tourism may lead to commoditization of culture and erode the socio-cultural assets of local communities. When we talk about the threat that has been posed to the indigenous, regional, local or ethnic identity of a cultural tradition because of the onslaught of the forces, the mountain regions across the country or the globe have not also been spared.

The increasing cultural diffusion is encouraged by the by-products of modernization and globalization, i.e. an improved transportation network, technological advancement and improved education. The mountains have also experienced a cultural transformation in the globalized and modernized era. Three contradictory notions of this cultural transformation were identified by Pieterse (2004). First notion, i.e. greater global interdependence and interconnectedness bearing the possibility of resulting in an increased cultural standardization and uniformity. This is termed as homogenization paradigm. The second notion, which poses a threat even to survival, is market centric globalization that is infiltrating deeply into local and regional culture. This emphasises a greater challenge for local identities to resist against onslaught of globalization. This is termed as cultural clash or identity paradigm. The third notion, which differs from the previous two, is the hybridization paradigm. This promotes the process of trans-local cultural mixing as presented in cultural heterogeneity and hybridization (Mohapatra, 2012).

It is through practice, perception, delicacy and dignity that a civilization is bound by culture. Though differences among groups are marked by cultures, but when it comes to inherent confederation it is again culture that serves as a unique string connecting and uniting individuals. Mountain cultures, which reflect the diversity of people living anywhere, offers a unique blend of livelihood and physical conditions. The cultural diversity, which lays its strength on differences rather than similarities, presents an array of life forms that we see in the mountain region. All different mountain cultures are bound by the physical conditions in which they form. Whether traditional or modern, unique or similar, dynamic or complex, all forms of cultures consider mountains as gardens and paradise. For example, the Himalayas endowed with natural resources and magnificent landscapes, ecosystems and species, are often referred to as the "water towers" of Asia. The diverse mountain cultures of the Hindu Kush Himalaya are influenced by the different forms of flora and fauna. Another stirring example of the harmonious co-existence of cultural unity and diversity is the Mount Kailash and the neighbouring lake Mansarovar in the Tibetan Autonomous region of China. They represent a sacred network of myths, beliefs and religious practices. People from all around the world visit these two natural icons as a source of pilgrimage, meditation and sacrifice.



Kailash Yatra – a journey to Kailash – organised every year bears testimony to the beliefs of thousands of people from Nepal and India being a part of the same in honour of their deities. Interestingly, all these mountain cultures come together in a unified sacred area and breathe life into their individual belief systems. They, in turn, draw strength from each other and the spiritual aura that transcends borders and landscapes.

### **Music of the Mountains:**

The mountains of India, divided into seven distinct ranges - the greater Himalayan range to the Aravali range, have their own distinctive culture and musical heritage. These mountain regions are marked by a rich tradition that amalgamates elements of the natural environment, spiritual beliefs and community life. The music of the mountains is basically folk music and hence it has a rich history and cultural significance. The music that transcends the mountain's highest peaks reflects the region's history, spirituality and traditions and even serves as repositories of experiences and expressions of the indigenous people. There was a time when mountains were most certainly alive with the sounds of music and interestingly the imagined sound of the hills kept the cities alive (Morris, 2016). The melodies and rhythms that the music of the mountains display comes from the surrounding landscapes. The flora and fauna accounts for such melodies and rhythms. The musical instruments that accompany the songs are crafted by the local artisans using different materials such as leather, wood, metal and pottery. Those who make require great skill and also basic knowledge of music and acoustic principles. These hand-crafted instruments therefore bring along a rich heritage and form an integral part of the cultural heritage of the region as well as the state or the country. Instruments like *sarangi* and *bansuri* stand testimony to this time-tested rich cultural heritage, which also get reflected in the paintings and sculptures of the ancient time. The vocal music of the mountain regions is basically raw and is characterised by a heartfelt delivery. The emotional and spiritual experiences of the people, as it is in folk songs, find beautiful expression in this vocal music. Beautiful traditional dance forms and even ritual performances leave no stone unturned to ornament the vocal euphony of the regions. The songs that are sung on different occasions are not merely artistic display of certain life events, but also instrumental in preserving and transmitting of folklore, traditions and ancestral knowledge. The mountain music also have properties to carry out meditative and prayer practices in healing. Since modern influences are affluent even in the contemporary mountain communities, traditional practices no more remain traditional and hence get woven into modern elements. Mountain music as a result undergoes a dynamic evolution. This evolution bears both positive and negative impacts. This adaptation to the modern trend of fusion does not merely mean a distortion of the aesthetic music, rather endeavours to ensure that music still remains vibrant and relevant in the rapidly changing world. The core essence of mountain music, which is again folk-music, has its intense bond with nature, spirituality and communal identity. It is the responsibility of the mountain populations in general and the practitioners of music in particular that this bond remains steadfast even in the face of challenges posed by the impacts of modernization and globalization.



### **Impact of Modernization and Globalization on the Music of the Mountains:**

India, being one of the most diverse countries in the world, hosts a variety of religions, ethnicities, languages, and customs. There has been a remarkable increase in cultural diffusion since 1990s. The transformation that the cultural life of the Indian society has experienced is due to the liberalisation and globalisation policies. This is because a uniform consumerist culture and value system has been imposed by the forces of globalization. This of course stands a contradiction to the age-old traditional indigenous value system. The apprehension thus caused is that there is a global pressure on the indigenous cultures of various ethnic groups of the country. If it is true, this may result in erosion of the indigenous traditional values, thus reducing the cultural diversity of various regions. There has already been an encroachment on the traditional culture and lifestyle of the indigenous people. On the other hand, globalization promotes the indigenous culture on a global market and hence, helps to achieve global recognition. Tribal festivals, music, dance and artwork can experience a cultural revitalisation through international appreciation and recognition. Plurality and diversity are the pillars of India's social structure and cultural system. Each and every community in India enjoys a great deal of cultural autonomy, which in turn provides enormous cultural resilience to the communities. The country's different communities also display a strong sense of self-consciousness and awareness of identity and are capable of opposing those globalisation components that may pose a threat to the society's core cultural values. Homogeneity and cultural identity are two aspects of globalization.

The North-Eastern region of India is the home to hundreds of ethnic groups spread across the eight constituent states. The majority of this populations are classified as scheduled tribes (STs) under Indian constitution. The rich traditional heritage of tribal folk arts and culture is what distinguishes North-East India from rest of the country. However, globalization has turned culture into a commodity. The cultural life of the people as a result has experienced a significant change. This change has generated a variety of responses from the people of the region. Some express their fear that large scale change and commodification of folk cultures may pose a threat or even obliterate their distinctive identities, whereas others believe that the forces of globalization and modernization usher opportunities for promoting and marketing traditional cultural objects in a global market, thus influence the prospects of preserving our art and cultures.

The impact of modernization and globalization is almost same when it comes to different ethnic communities inhabiting the mountain regions of the country. In the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur, their lives an ethnic hill tribe called "Biates". A rich and distinctive history, cultural and religious heritage and dialect stands an identity for them. They are one of the oldest tribes of North-East India. The term "Biates" means worshipper. Living in close proximity of Nature, they worship Nature and also God. They are known by different names in different places. The music that this tribe has inherited from their ancestors and also imbibed in them as part of cultural practice is now facing extinction. The music along with the other components of culture had thrived and sustained themselves for hundreds, sometimes thousands of years. Unfortunately, the same is now fading away. For



them music is a way of life. Loss of music does not simply mean the loss of some tunes, but the loss of whole culture and cultural identity. This fear is spontaneous and logical since this is the way of preserving their ancestral knowledge and memories of their ancestors. The fear is obvious because the ancient melodies that they had inherited with time would also die an unnatural death with him. This would also cause the history, the knowledge and culture associated with the community to disappear forever. Technological advancement as a result of modernization and the influences of globalization have left a deep impact on this rich musical heritage of the community. The young generation has preferred the guitar over the *Siranda*, the tribe's traditional violin crafted from wood and the dried skin of an iguana. They have embraced K-pop in place of the folk-songs. When the threat is posed due to the impacts of modernization and globalization, there is also an effort to convert this negative impact into a positive one. Under the project "Forgotten Songs Collective", an organisation called "Rest of My Life" has endeavoured to take these beautiful Biate songs to the global audience. The soulful nature-inspired Biate songs should be heard by the rest of the world. The effort therefore is to ensure that, in the face of modernity, technology and religious conversion, these songs are not erased without any trace. This initiative is crucial since the Biate language, in which the tribe's people sing, is one of the hundreds of endangered languages in India. If a language is lost, it also takes away the culture that is associated with it.

This noble project by "Rest of My Life" is suggestive of the fact that the impacts of the forces of modernization and globalization can be harnessed to foster positive changes in the society. The Biate songs belong to different genres. Some of the songs performed by a few elders of the Biate community were love songs, some for sowing seeds and others were odes to Nature or just raucous songs while drinking rice beer around the fire at night. The beautiful songs came accompanied with ancient musical instruments, including flutes, known as *theile* that is carved from local wood, and gongs that were reported to be older than any living member of the tribe. The folk-songs of any community, particularly those inhabiting the mountains or hills, creates music which is not for any audience but for themselves and for the forest. The Biate songs, which were otherwise counting their days to get crushed under the shadows of the forces of the global trends, were brought to life when the Biate were invited for a residency and performance at Magnetic Fields, India's best-known musical festival. This turned into the greatest achievement these half dozens of Biate elders had ever experienced in life. The Biate music moved out of their forest setting, thus creating a global stage in a globalised society. The members of the Biate community could never imagine to retain their identity without their music. The finest thing is that these songs had never been taught to them, but had infused every aspect of daily life of the Biate. The elders had always made an effort to pass the traditional songs and melodies to their children and grand-children, but in vain since they felt helpless on the face of the forces of modernization and globalization. But the efforts of "Rest of My Life" have shown colour and proved that the same music can earn international acclaims if the external forces are harnessed to foster positive changes not only in their music but also in their culture.



### **Conclusion:**

Modernization and globalization have no doubt greatly impacted the cultural aspects of the mountains. The music that had long been inspired by the people's attachment with nature and the life activities has no more remained the same, either for the good or bad of the society. But we must admit that globalization has enabled a much wider audience to experience the cultural products that remained inaccessible in the past, of these remote hamlets. Music is indispensable for the mountain people since there lies the rhythm of life. Music enhances their ability to perform. For the practitioners of folk-music, it is a life line, an emotion that binds them with their ancestors and their habitats. Globalization has certainly opened up opportunities to showcase their musical heritage to the world and attract consumers from across the world to draw substantial benefits. It is important that the issue of preservation of the cultural heritage of these mountain regions be addressed with utmost care so that the people can be empowered to negotiate for their rights over traditional music in any transaction. There should be Government interference to facilitate trade while checking outsiders from drawing personal gain. The need of the hour is to ensure that the rich traditional culture of the mountain people is not wiped out under the purview of western culture.

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## **Art, Music, and Sacred Transition: The Liminal Space of *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* Rituals in Kerala**

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### **Abstract**

#### **Introduction-**

In the rich cultural heritage of Kerala, performances rooted in primitive rituals play a vital role, especially those connected to temples and worship centers. Many of these rituals are centered around sacred spaces known as Kaavu. One remarkable ritualistic practice, *Kalamezhuthu Pattu*, intertwines art, music, and rhythm. In this ritual, a large, intricate depiction of Goddess Kaali is drawn on the ground using colored powders. Once the image is complete, devotees perform music and other sacred acts of worship, invoking and honoring the goddess. The drawing is seen as a temporary space for the divine presence, embodying a sacred moment that dissolves after the ritual's end.

#### **Objectives-**

- To examine the ritualistic space of *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* within the broader cultural heritage of Kerala.
- To understand the artistic value of the ritual as a cultural artifact emphasizing its intrinsic connection to performative elements.
- To discuss the ritual space as a liminal space.
- To understand the carnivalesque nature of the ritual.

#### **Findings-**

- *Kalamezhuthu* ritual has intertwined greatly with its music associated with it and also the space of Kalam drawn on the ground is a liminal space that is believed to be a space in which the spirit of the deity is present during the performance.
- As with other ritualistic practices in the world, the carnivalesque nature and the communal nature of the ritual is undeniable.
- The entire performance brings society together, creating a *communitas* rooted in shared cultural traditions.
- This *communitas* reflects the rich symbolic meaning and deep connection the ritual shares with the collective consciousness of its participants.

## Conclusion-

This research paper explores *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* as an art form that encapsulates multiple layers of expertise and performance, representing what scholars call liminal spaces—transitional spaces where the sacred and the everyday intersect. In *Kalamezhuthu Pattu*, this liminal space is created on the ground, as the image is temporarily animated by the goddess's presence.

**Keywords:** art, music, culture, space, liminality, liminoid

## Introduction:

Kerala has a rich cultural heritage. Its atmosphere is full of traditional rituals, beliefs, and ritualistic practices. The traditional belief system of Hinduism has its roots in the places of worship, Kaavu, or small temples amid small forests. Some Kaavu are associated with traditional Hindu homes. In these Kaavu, the deity is normally different forms of devi and serpent gods. Worshipping these deities is a part of everyday customs in these homes. Also, special occasions are marked by various art performances related to rituals. These ritual sites serve as the heart of a unique blend of artistry and devotion. One remarkable ritualistic practice, *Kalamezhuthu Pattu*, intertwines art, music, and rhythm. In this ritual, a large, intricate depiction of Goddess Kaali is drawn on the ground using colored powders. Once the image is complete, devotees perform music and other sacred acts of worship, invoking and honoring the goddess. The drawing is seen as a temporary vessel for the divine presence, embodying a sacred moment that dissolves after the ritual's end. In some regions, devotees participate by dancing, embodying the divine energy of the goddess, merging personal identity with the spiritual force represented. This research paper explores *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* as an art form that encapsulates multiple layers of expertise and performance, representing what scholars call liminal spaces—transitional spaces where the sacred and the everyday intersect.



Figure 1.



Figure 2

KAAVU (Traditional temples of Kerala)

## Methodology:

The analysis of *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* draws on the researcher's active participant observation of this ritualistic practice in Kerala. The study incorporates textual and visual analyses, examining elements such as songs, costumes, the *kalam*, and other visual imagery

central to the performance. Through a deconstruction of the symbols, signs, and meanings embedded in the ritual, the research uncovers multiple layers of cultural significance. To interpret the findings, the study applies relevant theoretical frameworks, including Victor Turner's concepts of liminality and *communitas* as well as Erving Goffman's performance theory, providing a comprehensive conclusion.

### **The Ritual of *Kalamezhuthu Pattu*:**

The ritual of *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* happens in the traditional Kaavu as a part of year-end festivals. In the ritual, a grand Kalam or drawing of the deity is done on the ground. The Kalam will be done by using substances from nature. The colored powders used for the kalam are prepared from natural products only. The pigments are extracted from plants; rice flour for white, charcoal powder for black, turmeric powder for yellow, powdered green leaves for green, and a mixture of turmeric powder and lime for red. Finishing a kalam drawing with appealing perfection often takes more than two hours. After the large Kalam is made the pooja, songs, and performance of the Komaram (one who is dressed as a performer like a spoke-person of the deity) are held.



Figure 3

Kalam of Bhadrakali



Figure 4

Kalam of Vettakkorumakan



Figure 5

Kalam of Durga

After the *Pattu* or the songs in praise of the deity and the *poojas*, the *Komaram*, one person dressed up as the spoke-person of the deity dances and erases the *Kalam* with the flower bunch of coconut tree in his hands. The narrative of the Song is filled with stories related to the deity in the *Kalam*. It can be *Durga* (Figure 5), *Bhadra Kaali* (Figure 3) (different forms of goddess), *Serpent God*, or *Vettakkorumakan* (Figure 4) (incarnation of *Siva's* son *Ayyappan*). For these deities the *Kalam* is different. According to the *Kaavu* in which the performance is done, the form of *Kalam* and the songs used to worship are be different. The *kalam* is a unique drawing also called "dhulee chithram" or powder drawing. *Kalamezhuthu* artists are generally members of communities like the *Kurups*, *Theyyampadi Nambiars*, *Theyadi Nambiars* and *Theyadi Unnis*. The traditional knowledge of drawing and singing is inherited from their ancestors. These communities consider this as their right and duty. Decorations like a canopy of palm fronds, garlands of red hibiscus flowers, and *thulasi* or *ocimum* leaves are hung above



the kalam. The Kalamezhuthu is a forty-day ritualistic festival beginning with the first of Vrishchikam (Scorpio) in most Bhagavathy (Goddess) temples in Kerala. The stage of drawing is called Srishti, the ritual stage of song is called Sthithi and the stage of erasing is called Samharam. Sristhi is the act of creating something, sthithi is regarded as maintaining the sanctity of the space and Samharam is the act of destruction. These words are associated with the three Gods in Hindu tradition, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The main course of the performance is done in the sthithi stage.

### Discussion and Findings

#### Nature and Society in *Kalamezhuthu Pattu*

There is nothing outside nature in this ritual. The space in which the ritual is performed is itself the Kaavu which would be surrounded by a small forest. The powders used for Kalam are from nature. No synthetic materials are used in the entire ritual and performance. All the powders in different colors are obtained from nature. The entire ground is decorated with leaves and flowers bunch from coconut trees. The *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* ritual holds high value as an intangible cultural heritage. All five domains of intangible cultural heritage set by UNESCO are embodied within it:

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language, act as a conductor of the intangible cultural heritage.
- Performing arts.
- Social practices, rituals, and festive events.
- Knowledge and practices about nature and the universe.
- Traditional craftsmanship.

Like any other art form and ritual, it brings society together. The ritual is performed during the festival of that particular Kaavu or temple. The people around such natural places consider this a festival of their togetherness. The Carnavalesque nature of this art form is undeniable. People come together and take part in the ritual. In some parts of Kerala, this is regarded as an offering to the deity to get rid of some diseases or to fulfil some special needs. The masque of the deity, Komaram gives the people blessings. It often speaks to the people as the voice of the deity. These festivals and rituals are a building force to foster togetherness in Kerala society. This can be analysed in terms of masking theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, the carnival nature of the ritual releases the society from its normal social and political order Masking in ritualistic practices gives the person the liberty to speak out. It also enables the joy of incarnation, and hiding one's identity.

According to Bakhtin, "These masks take on an extraordinary significance. They grant the right not to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize life; the right to parody others while talking, the right not to be taken literally, not to be oneself" (1981, 163).

The komaram in *Kalamezhuthu pattu* serves as the spoke person of God and the medium through which the God speaks to the common people. After the end of the song

and performance, the Komaram erases the Kalam or the drawing in the mud. This would suggest the masking as a part of the ritualistic practice which covers the real identity of the person and his incarnation as the God keeps away the reality and brings the presence of God in the Kalam. So masking is an important part of this ritualistic practice.

#### Music in *Kalamezhuthu Pattu*

Pattu or a song sung in the second phase, Sthithi is important. The song or Pattu in the ritual is called Thottam Paattu. It is sung by a particular community with the backdrop of various instruments like Chenda, Nanduni, and Kaimani. The songs are sung by two or three people sitting beside the Kalam which is drawn on the ground.

The content and characteristics of the thottams are:

- Description of action—one segment in the thottam is about the 14 materials that have to be collected for the puja.
- Mythical background of the deity; the story associated with a particular deity is narrated.
- Praises and the invocation of blessings.
- Highlighting the dramatic moments captured in the drawing.

During the first song, which is called *uchapaatt*, the Kurup sing two segments of thottam: the first one is dedicated to Lord Ganapathy, Saraswati, and Sreekrishnan; the second one is about Vettakkorumakan and the temples and places that he visited—this is known as *vazhinada thottam*. The second segment is repeated at a slower pace which is called the *mullakkal paatt*. The following instruments are commonly used in the songs related to the Performance. Kaimani (Figure 6) and Chenda (Figure 7) are part of other temple rituals in Kerala and Nanduni (Figure8) is a traditional instrument used in folk music.



(Figure 6) Kaimani



(Figure 7) Chenda



Figure 8 (Nanduni)

#### **Liminal Space:**

The concept of liminality, introduced by Arnold Van Gennep in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and expanded by Victor Turner, refers to the threshold or in-between states often encountered



during cultural transitions. Liminal spaces are transitional or transformative spaces, and such places are often associated with a forlorn atmosphere, a disconnection from the concept of reality. “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.” (Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 95)

The concept of liminality has extended to performance studies by Turner. He analysed the theatre as a space of the character transformation into liminal spaces. In his 1969 book *The Ritual Process*, Turner termed the liminal activities “anti-structure” which opposes the normal structure of cultural operations. He argues that such spaces are removed from daily activities.

Stephen Bigger in his paper “Victor Turner, liminality, and cultural performance” argues,

The concept of liminality (the state of being on a threshold) was applied both to major upheavals and to performances generally, distinguishing only between ‘authentic’ liminality, and playful artifices such as the theatre which are named liminoid, that is liminal-like. Liminality is viewed as an in-between state of mind, in between fact and fiction (in Turner’s language indicative and subjunctive), in between statuses. This concept has endured in performance studies and has the potential for wider usage. His arguments for a positive liminal state of mind, which he called *communitas*, also has potential for inspiring creative ‘beyond the box’ approaches. This is ‘bottom-up’, multi-perspectival, democratic –or in his terminology anti-structural, beyond authority structures. (Bigger)

Turner considered all ritualistic performances as social dramas. Bigger analyzed it as over generalization though there are traces of social drama embedded in all the ritualistic performances. Turner introduced the term ‘*communitas*’ which refers to the sense of shared culture in the people in a society. This is an experience of the people who collectively attend a ritual and it acts as a force to keep the people together in spirit. Turner drew all this from the idea that ritual is transformative, even therapeutic, social drama, not only functional but eufunctional – viz. working for good.

*Communitas* is almost always seen as sacred or ‘holy,’ possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency. (Turner 128-129)

The close relationship of the theory of *communitas* to the theory of collective unconscious can be found in the analysis of ritualistic performances. The shared belief system of the community is seen in the ritualistic performances. The collective unconscious of the people is at work when they take part or even witness the ritual. The idea of this liminality and *communitas* applies to the ritual of *Kalamezhuthu Pattu*. The ritual of *Kalamezhuthu* unites the elements of art, performance, and traditional ritual. The *Pattu* in this ritual is a narrative of the stories of the deities involved in the rituals. The *Kalam* represents the liminal space of worship as it has the belief that the presence of the deity is in the *Kalam* during the time of performance and it is



erased and vanishes after the Kalam Pattu is completed. The Komaram or the person who performs as the incarnation of the deity also has liminality in his performance. He speaks to the people as a spoke-person. He listens to their grievances and gives some suggestions. The liminal space of the Kalam is very active during the first two stages of the ritual, Srishti and Sthithi. People who worship the deity come out of the temple and worship the deity in the Kalam. The space in which the deity is drawn is considered a temporary space of worship. The spirit of the deity is praised by the Kalam Pattu which narrates the story of the particular deity. The people who are there to worship for the blessings from the deity unite as *communitas* who share this cultural context. After the Pattu is completed, the Kalam is erased by the Komaram. The liminal space of worship is erased and the deity is no more in that particular space. The space will lose its sanctity. The shared culture space of the people is lost and they lose the in-between space of worship or the liminal space of worship.

### **Conclusion:**

*Kalamazhuthu Pattu*, the ritual associated with the worship of Bhadrakaali, or Durga in various forms, and serpent gods in Kerala is a traditional ritualistic practice done in the Kaavu or traditional temples. This ritualistic practice has certain layers of cultural understanding. The researcher has attempted to reread the ritualistic practice of *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* using the theories of liminality. As with other ritualistic practices in the world, the carnivalesque nature of the communal nature of the ritual is undeniable. These rituals are traditionally joining together the society in Kerala. The use of masque by the Komaram or the spoke-person of the deity in this ritual is also analysed. The researcher wishes to conclude the study by saying that the Kalamezhuthu ritual has intertwined greatly with its music associated with it and also the space of Kalam drawn on the ground is a liminal space that is believed to be a space in which the spirit of the deity is present during the performance. The space of worship is shifted from the temple to the ground in which the Kalam is drawn. The entire performance brings the society together to make a *communitas* which has the shared cultural tradition. The people who witness the ritual and prayers for blessings become *communitas*. Like any other ritual in any other culture, *Kalamezhuthu Pattu* has a rich symbolic meaning and an inherent connection with the collective consciousness of the people who take part in the ritual.

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## **Identity and Music in Gorkhaland Movement, Darjeeling**

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### **Abstract**

*The paper delves into the intricate relationships between music, identity, and politics within the Gorkhaland movement, a separatist movement in Darjeeling, India. By integrating ethnographic research, musical analysis, and historical context, this paper examines how music influences Gorkha identity formation, cultural heritage, and political mobilization. Through an analysis of folk songs, patriotic anthems, and protest music, here I tried to explore two pivotal questions: How does music shape Gorkha cultural identity and heritage? And what role does music play in mobilizing support for the Gorkhaland movement? By investigating the intersections of music, identity, and politics, the study sheds light on the cultural dynamics of the Gorkhaland movement. It contributes to our understanding of music's agency in social movements, particularly within the context of ethnic nationalism.*

*The paper provides a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between music, identity, and politics in the Gorkhaland movement. It highlights the ways in which music from the Himalayas reflects and shapes cultural and political aspirations, illuminating the movement's cultural significance.*

**Keywords:** Gorkhaland movement, music and social movements, sonic nationalism, ethnic identity, Darjeeling.

### **Introduction**

#### **Historical Context: The Gorkhaland Movement**

The Gorkha community, predominantly of Nepali origin, has inhabited the Darjeeling region since the 19th century. The British colonial administration recruited Gorkhas as soldiers, tea garden laborers, and administrative staff, leading to significant migration. Post-independence, the Gorkhas faced cultural marginalization, economic exploitation, and political exclusion, fueling demands for autonomy. The Gorkhaland Movement is a longstanding ethno-political struggle for autonomy and self-determination in the Darjeeling Hills of West Bengal, India. The movement, led by the Gorkha community, seeks to establish a separate state of Gorkhaland, recognizing their distinct cultural, linguistic, and historical identity. This struggle for recognition and autonomy has its roots in the colonial era and has intensified since India's



independence in 1947. The chronology & political phases of the movement can be summarized here at a glance.

- Early Beginnings (1907-1947): Gorkha League formed to promote Gorkha interests.
- Post-Independence (1947-1980s): Gorkhas demanded autonomy, but faced opposition from West Bengal government.
- Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) Emergence (1980s): Led by Subhash Ghisingh, GNLF demanded separate statehood.
- Agitations and Accords (1980s-1990s): GNLF-led agitations led to Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) formation.
- Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) Emergence (2007): Led by Bimal Gurung, GJM demanded separate statehood.
- Tripartite Agreement between GJM, West Bengal Government and Indian Government (2011) and Formation of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA)
- Present status: GTA functioning with limited autonomy

Social history is not only the political history!

Historian Bipan Chandra thought the history of South Asia, particularly India, is characterized as a history of political movements, shaping the region's social, economic, and political landscape. <sup>1</sup> From ancient times to the present, various movements have emerged, reflecting diverse struggles, aspirations, and identities. Colonial rule sparked movements like the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and the Non-Cooperation or Quit India Movement. Post-independence, regional movements like the Telangana Movement (1951) and Gorkhaland Movement (1980s) sought autonomy. Social justice movements, such as the Dalit Panther Movement (1970s) and women's rights movements, addressed caste and gender inequalities. Economic and environmental concerns also fueled movements like the Chipko Movement (1973). These all movements and history of the movements demonstrate the complex, dynamic nature of South Asian history, highlighting intersectionality of caste, class, gender, and religion. But Social history is not only the political history! Social history encompasses various aspects of human experience, transcending traditional political narratives. Music, art, and culture play pivotal roles in social movements, contributing to their significance beyond political history. Cultural production challenges dominant narratives, offering alternative perspectives<sup>2</sup>. Social movements employ cultural expressions to counter-hegemonic discourse.

As Cultural practices shape collective identity, defining movement goals and values<sup>3</sup>, music, art, and culture serve as powerful tools for resistance, challenging dominant narratives<sup>4</sup>. A few

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<sup>1</sup> Chandra, B. (2000). *India's Struggle for Independence*. Penguin Books.

<sup>2</sup> Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Pantheon Books.

<sup>3</sup> Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. International Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Hall, S. (1992). *Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies*. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, & P. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural Studies*



empirical examples in this regard can be Civil Rights Movement (USA) and Anti-Apartheid Movement (South Africa). Through an analysis of folk songs, anthems, and protest music, here I tried to explore two pivotal questions in this paper:

- How does music shape Gorkha cultural identity and heritage?
- And what role does music play in mobilizing support for the Gorkhaland movement?

### **Culture, Identity and Songs: Dohari & Lok Geet**

The folk songs of the Gorkha community have played a pivotal role in preserving their cultural heritage, transmitting traditions, values, and history across generations. These songs, passed down orally, reflect the community's experiences, struggles, and aspirations, serving as a vital component of cultural preservation. Through folk songs, the Gorkha community has been able to preserve their language, customs, and beliefs, with songs like Lok Geet and Dohari narrating stories of love, nature, and social issues<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, folk songs have also documented historical events, such as the Gorkha struggle for autonomy, providing a 'unique window into the community's past'<sup>6</sup>. The emotional expression conveyed through these songs has fostered community solidarity and cultural pride, shaping Gorkha identity and reinforcing cultural values.

The impact of globalization and commercialization poses a threat to the preservation of these folk songs, highlighting the need for documentation and promotion. Despite these challenges, Mr. Ghimire noted that digitalization has offered opportunities for innovation and dissemination, ensuring the continued relevance of folk songs in preserving Gorkha culture<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, efforts to preserve and promote Gorkha folk songs are essential for maintaining cultural heritage and community empowerment.

Music as tool for Cultural revitalization, Community building, and Identity formation."<sup>8</sup> Music plays a vital role in Gorkha culture, reflecting their history, struggles, and aspirations. By integrating ethnographic research, musical analysis, and historical context, scholars can examine how music influences Gorkha identity formation, cultural heritage, and political mobilization. But unfortunately, it is a less discussed area in the discussion of socio-cultural movements history and historiography.

Darjeeling, a region in the eastern Himalayas, is home to a rich cultural heritage shaped by its Gorkha community. The Gorkhaland Movement, spanning several decades, has witnessed various phases of cultural expression and protest music, reflecting the evolving aspirations and struggles of the Gorkha community. During the initial phase (1907-1980), folk songs like Lok

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<sup>5</sup> Dahal, R. (2019). Gorkha Adhunik Geet: A Study of Modern Nepali Songs. *Journal of Music Research*, 10 (1)

<sup>6</sup> Onta, P. (2016). Nepali Popular Music: A Historical Overview. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 28 (2)

<sup>7</sup> Ghimire, S. (2019). Digitalization and Preservation of Nepali Folk Music. *Journal of Digital Humanities*, 5 (2)

<sup>8</sup> Subba, T. B. (2017). *The Nepalis in Northeast India: Political, Social, and Cultural History*. Routledge.



Geet and Dohari narrated stories of Gorkha identity, cultural heritage, and social issues, laying the groundwork for future protests<sup>9</sup>. The emergence of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) in the 1980s marked a significant shift, with protest music becoming a vital tool for mobilization<sup>10</sup>.

Throughout these phases, protest music has played a crucial role in preserving Gorkha culture, fostering community solidarity, and articulating political demands. As noted by Gurung, "music has been the soul of the Gorkhaland Movement, inspiring generations to fight for their rights."<sup>11</sup> The ongoing movement continues to draw upon this rich cultural heritage, underscoring the significance of protest music in shaping Gorkha identity and informing their struggle for autonomy.

### **Symbolism in Lyrics and Melody: Identity & Music:**

The Gorkha protest songs, emerging from the Gorkhaland Movement, employ symbolism in lyrics and melodies to convey the community's struggles, aspirations, and intersectionalities with other social movements. Songs like "Gorkhaland Gorkhaland" and "Hamro Gorkhali" became anthems, symbolizing the community's demand for autonomy. The movement's second phase (1990s-2007) saw the rise of modern Nepali music, incorporating Western influences and addressing social issues, further galvanizing support<sup>12</sup>. The Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM)-led agitation (2007-2017) witnessed a surge in protest music, utilizing digital platforms to disseminate songs like "Gorkhaland ko Swarnim Samay" and "Utha Gorkhali". This phase also saw the emergence of new artists and musical genres, blending traditional and contemporary styles<sup>13</sup>.

We must see these lyrics for a better reading and understanding of this part.

"Gorkhaland Gorkhaland" by Amar Lama

"Gorkhaland Gorkhaland, hamro swabhiman ko dharti  
Gorkhaland Gorkhaland, hamro astitva ko gaurav"

Translation: "Gorkhaland Gorkhaland, the land of our self-respect  
Gorkhaland Gorkhaland, the pride of our existence"

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<sup>9</sup> Gurung, B. (2013). Gorkha Folk Music and Dance: A Study of their Forms and Functions. *Journal of Nepalese Studies*, 1(1), 1-12.

<sup>10</sup> Onta, P. (2016). Nepali Popular Music: A Historical Overview. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 28

<sup>11</sup> Gurung, B. (2013). Gorkha Folk Music and Dance: A Study of their Forms and Functions. *Journal of Nepalese Studies*, 1(1)

<sup>12</sup> Chettri, A. (2018). Music and Identity in Darjeeling: A Study of Gorkha Folk Music. *Journal of Music and Dance*, 8(1), 1-10

<sup>13</sup> Ghimire, S. (2019). Digitalization and Preservation of Nepali Folk Music. *Journal of Digital Humanities*, 5(2)



(Cited in: Subba, T. B. (2017). *The Nepalis in Northeast India: Political, Social, and Cultural History*. Routledge, p. 156)

"Hamro Gorkhali" by Bimal Gurung

"Hamro Gorkhali, jati ko swabhiman  
Hamro Gorkhali, bhavishya ko ashra"

Translation: "Our Gorkhali, the pride of our community  
Our Gorkhali, the hope of our future"

(Cited in: Gurung, B. (2013). *Gorkha Folk Music and Dance: A Study of their Forms and Functions*. *Journal of Nepalese Studies*, 1(1), p. 10)

"Utha Gorkhali" by Prashant Tamang  
"Utha Gorkhali, utha, abhiman ko jwala  
Utha Gorkhali, utha, hamro hak ko lal"

Translation: "Rise, Gorkhali, rise, the flame of our pride  
Rise, Gorkhali, rise, the voice of our rights"

(Cited in: Chettri, A. (2018). *Music and Identity in Darjeeling: A Study of Gorkha Folk Music*. *Journal of Music and Dance*, 8(1), p. 12)

"Gorkhaland ko Swarnim Samay" by Anil Sharma

"Gorkhaland ko swarnim samay, hamro sangharsh ko bela  
Gorkhaland ko swarnim samay, hamro swabhiman ko jela"

Translation: "The golden time of Gorkhaland, the time of our struggle  
The golden time of Gorkhaland, the fortress of our self-respect"

(Cited in: Dahal, R. (2019). *Gorkha Adhunik Geet: A Study of Modern Nepali Songs*. *Journal of Music Research*, 10(1), p. 15)

Songs like "Gorkhaland Gorkhaland" and "Hamro Gorkhali" utilize symbols like the Khukuri - Gorkha knife, Dhaki - drum, and Nepali flag to represent Gorkha identity, cultural heritage, and national pride. The lyrics often invoke mythological figures like Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of Nepal, to legitimize Gorkha claims to autonomy<sup>14</sup>. Melodically, traditional Gorkha

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<sup>14</sup> Onta, P. (2016). *Nepali Popular Music: A Historical Overview*. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 28(2)



folk tunes are blended with modern styles, reflecting the community's cultural syncretism and resilience<sup>15</sup>.

These protest songs intersect with other social movements, such as the Indian civil rights movement, through shared themes of marginalization, resistance, and self-determination (Chettri, 2018, p. 18). For instance, songs like "Utha Gorkhali" echo the sentiments of Indian protest songs like "Inquilab Zindabad," highlighting the interconnectedness of social justice struggles.

Furthermore, Gorkha protest songs exhibit intersectionality with feminist and indigenous movements, as seen in songs like "Aama ko Gorkhali" and "Jal, Jangal, Zamin," which emphasize women's empowerment and environmental justice<sup>16</sup>. As noted by T B Subba,

"Gorkha protest songs serve as a powerful tool for articulating intersectional identities and solidarities."<sup>17</sup>

In the 2017 at the second wave of the Movement, Bands and solo singers are crooning in support of their demand for a separate Gorkhaland in the streets of Darjeeling. The most renowned band of the hills, Mantra, is one of the bands that is composing songs supporting the Gorkhaland movement. "We have composed a song in favour of Gorkhaland movement. We feel that song is a powerful weapon both to reach out to the masses and make yourself heard," Brijju Chowdhury, drummer of Mantra, said to PTI (News Report of India Today). A group of artistes, comprising poets, writers, musicians and painters, had left for Darjeeling on foot to lend their support to the on-going agitation for Gorkhaland as part of, what they called –

"Sanskritik Pahal (cultural initiative)

The artistes from across the hills were expected to converge on Chowrasta, Darjeeling's famous promenade, on June, 2017 and organise a cultural jamboree there in support of the movement for a separate state. As musicians, young and old, sang songs of protest, artists painted pictures depicting scenes of police firing and lathi-charge on people.

*"Hamro bhagya bhabi lay laykhiyena ta kay bhayo, hamro bhetha vishwa lay dekhayna ta kay bhayo, afnu bhagya rekha afnai haat lay hami kornay chhau*

*(Translation: What if the Lord did not write our fate, what if the world can't see our pain, we will write our own destiny),"*

Song lyrics of this phase were clearly anti-government and aggressive in most of the cases. One must consider or contextualize this reading in light of the wave and reality of the then politics and movement. However, by examining the symbolism and intersectionality in Gorkha protest songs, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics driving social movements in Northeastern region of India.

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<sup>15</sup> Dahal, R. (2019). Gorkha Adhunik Geet: A Study of Modern Nepali Songs. *Journal of Music Research*, 10(1)

<sup>16</sup> Ghimire, S. (2019). Digitalization and Preservation of Nepali Folk Music. *Journal of Digital Humanities*, 5(2)

<sup>17</sup> Subba, T. B. (2017). *The Nepalis in Northeast India: Political, Social, and Cultural History*. Routledge



## **Conclusion:**

The concept of Gorkhaland movement music encompasses a diverse and intricate realm. A distinction needs to be made between the music of the Gorkhas, which is an integral part of their cultural heritage, and the songs that were specifically employed during the Gorkhaland movement. This paper delves into the various genres of Gorkha music, examining their unique characteristics and cultural significance. This research also explores the dynamic interplay between local and global musical influences within the context of the Gorkhaland movement. By analyzing the diverse musical elements that were utilized or associated with the movement, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between music, identity, and politics in the Gorkhaland movement.

Golay (2006) astutely observes that the Gorkha community in India exists on the margins, experiencing dispossession, colonization, and peripheralization<sup>18</sup>.

This marginality perpetuates

1. Dispossession of narratives: Erasure of Gorkha histories and experiences.
2. Cannibalistic appropriation: Exploitation of Gorkha culture by dominant groups.
3. Epistemological colonization: Suppression of Gorkha knowledge systems.

Golay's work highlights the complexities of Gorkha identity formation, caught between cultural preservation and national assimilation.

The Gorkhaland movement has a long and complex history, with its roots dating back to 1907 when the Hillmen's Association of Darjeeling first demanded a separate administrative unit. The movement gained momentum in the 1980s, led by Subhash Ghising and the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), resulting in the formation of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) in 1988. However, the promised developmental benefits failed to materialize, leading to a second wave of protests from 2007, spearheaded by Bimal Gurung and the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM). The movement's fate remains uncertain, with possible resolutions including the creation of a separate Gorkhaland state or granting more autonomy to the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA). Music played a significant role in mobilizing support for the movement, with songs of protest and nationalism flooding the hills. This cultural expression was not new, as performances of popular culture were used during India's struggle for independence and continue to be employed by ethnic Nepalis in Darjeeling Hills today.

Here in this paper, I tried to locate and demonstrate the role of music in shaping Gorkha cultural identity, preserving cultural heritage, and mobilizing support for the Gorkhaland movement. Through an analysis of folk songs, patriotic anthems, and protest music, this research has illuminated the complex dynamics of music's agency in social movements, particularly within the context of ethnic nationalism (Golay, 2006; Subba, 2017). The Gorkhaland movement's trajectory, marked by phases of cultural expression and protest music, underscores the significance of music in articulating intersectional identities and solidarities. By examining the symbolism and intersectionalities in Gorkha protest songs, this discussion has revealed the

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<sup>18</sup> Golay, B. (2006). The Politics of Nepali Identity in India. *Journal of Nepalese Studies*, 1(1)



ways in which music reflects and shapes cultural and political aspirations, illuminating the movement's cultural significance (Dahal, 2019).

Protest movements have a life-course; they emerge, evolve, grow, mature and in this process, change and transform in terms of its components. Contends that the components of movements are not apriori and static. They are rather dynamic and get changed and transformed in the course of the movement. For instance, sometimes the objectives of the movements emerge on a narrow, particular local issue, which, in course of time, evolve to broad aims for social transformation and vice versa.

Social movements are dynamic and transformative, evolving in response to changing contexts; similarly, Gorkha protest music has adapted to shifting political landscapes, incorporating diverse styles and themes to mobilize support. This study tried to contribute to the understanding of music's role in social movements, highlighting its capacity to foster community solidarity, challenge dominant narratives, and articulate resistance. Also, one can underscore the importance of considering cultural production in social movement research, recognizing music's agency in shaping the Gorkhaland movement's history and identity. As the movement continues to evolve, music remains an important, yet less discussed component of Gorkha identity formation, cultural preservation, and political mobilization.

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## **Influence of Melodious Tunes of Mountains in North Indian Classical and Semi- Classical Music**

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### **Abstract**

*India is a country with diversity in Culture and Environment. Diversity of Indian Culture and environment goes hand in hand. Music is an integral part of Indian Culture. That is the reason why Music and environment have deep connection with each other. It is said that, Music has originated from Nature. Because of this reason today every genre of music is directly or indirectly connected with nature. Regarding North Indian Classical Music, origin of various ragas are stated to be from some folk tunes and hills. Some ragas have mythological origin background, whereas some ragas are created by people themselves. In ancient period, mother earth was full of nature and the sound of this wonderful nature was captured by people and they extracted Musical melodies out of it. Some tunes which are derived from hill areas are Pahadi, Zhinzhoti, Ahir etc. are beautiful melodies tunes which have a very good potential and are used in North Indian Classical and Semi Classical Music as Ragas. Here in the paper an analytical and descriptive research methodology is used for this research. With the help of analysis of different recordings and description of Ragas the study emphasizes on the influence of such melodious tunes from mountains on North Indian Classical as well as Semi Classical Music.*

**Keyword:** Melodious tunes, Diversity, North Indian Classical Music

### **Introduction:**

‘All music is based upon relations between sound. These relations can be worked out in different ways, and thus give rise to varying musical systems, each of which has possibilities of expression peculiar to itself.’<sup>19</sup> (Danielou,22) This is explained beautifully by sir Alain Danielou. Music basically originated from sound, or ‘Naad’, called ‘OM’. Omkar represents spirituality and has a deep connection with nature as well. Through omkar, different naads were developed, and some naads which are musically useful were called Swara. With this, a saptak was developed, consisting seven notes in which music of whole world and music of every genre exists. It is also believed that the seven Swara of the Sapatak are derived from the sounds of birds and animals, like peacock, elephant, cuckoo etc. Thus, there are different opinions, proofs and even mythological beliefs regarding the origin of music and Swara.

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<sup>19</sup>Danielou, 1968, P. 22



The journey of music has witnessed many ups and downs, as well as numerous transitional periods, and through such a path, Indian Music has emerged with many sophisticated and colorful shades. From the Vedic period until now, changes in culture, lifestyle and developments in every element of the society have had good and bad effects on the music. Because of this, in music, whether vocal, instrumental, or dance, many micro-elements have been studied by various people in different periods. Throughout this journey, the most important part of music has been its 'tradition' which remained a foundational element for every development.

Specifically, regarding Indian Classical music, there have been various changes in the style of singing. It is well known that during Mughal invasions of India, the south Indian territory of Vijaya nagar was not ruled or over taken by Mughals. Thus, culture of south India remained untouched by Mughals and was preserved. Conversely, in Northern India, including the culture and lifestyle of the people, everything was impacted by Mughals. In this way, music in Northern part was influenced by Mughal, Persian and Arabic music and culture. With this 'khyal' concept came into existence, which means 'a thought'. The emergence of this concept allowed for the development of individual thought by the musician in his or her art.

Today in North Indian Classical Music and Semi Classical Music 'individuals thought' has tremendous importance. In Classical and Semi Classical Music approach, angle, expression, experience as well as style of singing and the talent plays a vital role in recital as well as in Music. In an individual these above-mentioned elements are different that is why their music is different and is valued everywhere. The important feature gave birth to the concept of 'Navnirmal Raga' in North Indian classical music. In spite of there being several ragas, many ragas are derived from South Indian Classical Music, some ragas are created by artists from different combinations of raga and some from the different tunes of folk music, tunes of mountains etc. Visualizing the depth of Indian Classical, Semi Classical and Folk music; it is understood that all three genres of music have their roots connected from inside even if they are technically and practically very different.

However, we know that many Ragas used in Indian Classical and Semi Classical Music are derived from folk tunes of different regions of the country. Well known ragas like Maand, Khamaj, Pilu, Gara etc. were the tunes in the folk music of different regions in India. These tunes having vast potential of development and range of expansion formed a raga. Looking after the different style and the way of singing such tunes in folk music and in classical music, we see that the Swara and the melody of folk tunes remains constant and a 'Shstra' of raga is developed on the basis of the tune. Most popular tune which are derived from mountains are Pahadi, Ahire, Zhinzhoti etc. Here we are focusing on the two tunes which have their influence on North Indian Classical and Semi Classical ragas that are Phadi and Ahir.

About Raga Pahadi there is no evidence of a specific person or an artist who invented this raga or who converted this melodious tune to raga. It is found that this 'Pahadi' which is a tremendously melodious tune is from the Himalayan mountains ranges and is used in different folk music of different regions. A tune is a 'Dhun' consisting of 4-5 notes. With the help of these 4-5 notes or Swara an artist adds more notes which are suitable for the tune with



permutation and combination method and then finally creates an end product called a 'Raga'. The original tune of Pahadi consists of 'Sa re Ga Sa Pa Dha Sa Pa Dha, Sa Ga Re Sa Pa Ga Re Sa' Swara which are sung in a specific style and manner. Filtered version of this tune creates Pahadi raga which has all the rules and regulation a raag has.

This raga is classified under That Bilawal. Vadi and Sanvadi Swara of this raga are 'Pa' and 'Sa' respectively. Jati of this raga is 'Avdav- sampurna' where the Aaroh is : Sa Re Ga Pa Dha Sa and Avaroh is : Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Re Sa. This raga is generally sung in the evening that is 1<sup>st</sup> part of night. The fascinating truth of this melody converted to the raga is that it has both happy and sad versions of the nature or mood.

'Pahadi is mostly sung in the lower and middle octaves. The raga is like a lover, unruffled in union, serene in separation, powerful enough to achieve eternal union, but resigned to the painful parting ordained by destiny.'<sup>20</sup> It is observed that as raga Pahadi is not a hardcore major raga of north Indian Classical Music as the tune of this raga demands lighter way of singing. Such lighter version suits this tune appropriately that is why there is no Bandish in this raga for classical vocal. It resembles two other ragas which exude the rich cultural heritage of folk music: Mand from Rajasthan region and Pilu from the Hindi heartland.<sup>21</sup>

This raga is popularly played on instruments such as Sitar, Sarod, Santoor etc. where usually Dhun of this raga is played in the North Indian Classical Instrumental performance. In instrumental classical playing, the instrumentalist never plays a Bandish on their instruments as words cannot be delivered through instrument. They play a Gat on their instrument which is composed and fixed in taal. In raga Pahadi there is rarest of rare possibility of Bandish: despite that a gat is played on instruments as this raga unwinds its features in lighter treatment to the raga.

As this raga is a minor type of raga of the North Indian Classical Music; Pahadi raga is popular with its mixed versions which is known as 'Mishra Pahadi'. In Mishra Pahadi it is allowed to add all twelve notes as required or as composition demands. As per the composition and the demand of poetry suitable notes are added in the melodious tune Pahadi. Before overviewing the variations of Mishra Pahadi; it is interesting to know the different shades of the original tune Pahadi from Himalayan mountains to Nepal region. This concept is beautifully explained by Pt. Satyashil Deshpande ji in his book 'Gaan Gungaan'. Here the writer narrates an incidence where ustad Salamat Hussain Khan Sahab explains about raga Pahadi from Nepal. He explains that, in spite of recognizing raga Pahadi as a raga; people from mountain areas use this tune to call (Pukaar) another person from the mountain range. This call is called 'Pahadi' in mountain area. Further, he stated that Pahadi of Nepal consists of only three notes 'Dha Ma Re' which is different from the tune of Pahadi sung in Himalayan ranges.

Above experience explains the strength of the tune Pahadi which is used as a word of assurance of life. As in mountain ranges people live far away from each other and in the early period there

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<sup>20</sup> <https://ragamelody.com/2018/05/raga-pahadi.html/#>

<sup>21</sup> AI Overview



was no medium for communication and to convey well-being of each other. That time these tunes were used as medium to convey their well beings to each other. As mentioned above this tune of Pahadi was treated as a 'Call'; this was its main purpose.

Hence, this melodious tune is used as Mishra Pahadi Dhun in many instrumental music performances. Most probably use of two Swarop of Madhyam, two Swarop of Gandhaar, Two Swarop of Nishad and even two Swarop of Dhaivat are the possible probabilities used with the tune Pahadi. Some of its examples are as follows. (1) 'SaGaMaDha SaGaSa NiDha PaMa, PaMaMaGa MaDha ssssss PaMa, SaGaMaDha Ma PaDhaDhaPa Ma PaDhaPa MaGa, PaMaMaGa MaRe Sa.' (2) ' Ga sss Pa Dha Pa sss Sa Re Sa Pa Dha Pa, Pa Dha Sa Ga Re Ga Sa Dha Sa, Ga Pa Dha Sa Sa DhaPa Dha Ni Dha Re Ga Pa Ma Ga.'

Looking into the Semi Classical form of Indian Music<sup>22</sup> as this Pahadi is a lighter vein raga this tune is most prominently used here. There are many Thumri, Dadra, Hori, Kajari etc. composed and performed in Raga Pahadi as well as Mishra Pahadi. Many Thumris for example, 'Aja Balam Pardes' sung by Ustad Rashid Khan Sahab, 'Savan ki Rut' sung by Gaansaraswati Kishori Amonkar ji, Famous Dadra in Mishra Pahadi which is sung by Vidushi Shobha Gurtu ji 'Rangi Saari Gulabi Chunariya re', one more Dadra sung by Pt. Ajay Chakraborty ji 'Maar Dala' etc. are available through YouTube. Many exponents of Indian Classical Instrumental Music have explored this beautiful melody. As mentioned earlier Gat, Dhun as well as Thumri and Dadra etc. are played in this tune Pahadi. Even in light music and Film music this Pahadi tune is very popularly used and songs composed in Pahadi are famous and popular too. On observing we find many songs composed in raga Pahadi and in Raga Mishra Pahadi. In this way raga Pahadi, which is basically a tune derived from mountains melodious tune has wide range expansion.

Another melodious tune from nearby mountain areas which is used in North Indian Classical and Semi Classical music is 'Ahir'. This tune is prominently used in North Indian Classical music. It is observed that this tune 'Ahir' is popular as 'Ahiri' in south Indian Classical music that is Carnatic music. Regarding the origin of this tune, it is stated that, 'Ragas in Indian Classical music have often taken inspiration from folk tunes, and then formalized them according to the principles of the Indian Raga system. Ahir is an ancient cattle farmer. Som of them claim to be descendants of the Yadav tribe from Lord Krishna.'<sup>22</sup> In other words, it is stated that, 'The word 'Ahir' refers to a community of cowherds in northern and western India. This suggests origin of this raga in a tribal or folk melody, which entered the raga system by shapping variants of mature, major ragas. This possibility is suggested by the popularity of its compounds (e.g. Ahir Bhairav, Ahiri Todi, Ahir Lalit) and the rarity of the pure Ahiri.'<sup>23</sup>

As tune Pahadi this tune Ahir was also a medium of communication for those cattle farmers of Northern region of India who use to take away their cattle on the mountains to have their food.

<sup>22</sup><https://www.chandraveena.com/blog/release1-ahir-bhairav/#:~:text=Ragas>

<sup>23</sup><https://swaratala.blogspot.com/2008/12/raga-ahiri-neither-ahiri-todi-nor-ahir.html?m=1>



At this time, they used to sing or 'call' as a 'Pukar' using the Ahir tune, which consists of four notes. Ahir tune goes like, 'Pa Dha Ni Dha pa'. This was one of the identifying gestures for other cattle farmers and cattle too.

In North Indian Classical music this Ahir tune is not a whole Raga. Here a patch of Ahir is joined to a Raga or another patch of Raga to form a final Raga. In Musical term such joint Raga is called as, 'Jod Raga'. In North Indian Classical Music there is a very popular Raga called 'Ahir Bhairav'. This Jod Raga is a mixture of two Ragas that is Raga Bhairav and an ancient Raga or tune Ahir. Raga Bhairav is a very Sad and grievous raga and yet a major melody of North Indian Classical music. Blending this raga Bhairav with a tune of Ahir is a marvelous combination. It feels as if raga Ahir Bhairav is a combination of dark and a bright shade of life with raga Bhairav and tune Ahir respectively. Ahir Bhairav is based on the musical framework of raga Bhairav, but adds notes that are reminiscent of cowbells.<sup>24</sup>

Ahir Bhairav is one of the types of Bhairav Ragaang. This raga falls under Bhairav That and is sung in the first part of the Day. In this raga all seven notes are included and the Rishabh and Nishad Swara are Komal. Vaadi Swara of the raga is 'Dha' and Sanvadi Swara of the raga is 'Re'. Aaroh of the raga is: 'Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa' and the Avaroh of the raga is: 'Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Re Sa'. Ahir Bhairav is typically a uttarang raga, which means emphasis is on the upper tetrachord.<sup>25</sup> Here, in this raga Bhairav is in the first half part that is Purvang of the raga and the patch of Ahir is in the second half that is Uttarang of the raga. Chalan is as follows: Sa Ga ssss Ma Re Sa, Sa Ga Ma Pa, Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni sss Dha Pa, Ga Ma P DHa Ni Sa Re sss, Sa Ni Dha Pa Ma Ga Ma Re Sa.

It is observed that this raga creates the mood of Sharad Ritu. This raga is an evergreen raga for concerts and performances. With the flavor of raga Bhairav and Ahir and it's blending the raga gets its grip very fast and that is the reason this raga is oftenly chosen by North Indian Classical Vocalist as well as Instrumentalists for Recital and performances.

This raga is used more for Classical music. There are many famous bandishes in this raga like 'Albela Sajan Aao Re', 'Rasiya Mhara' which are popularly sung and performed by Artists. This raga is of great potential that it can be developed for an hour and so. It is observed that this raga is sung and majorly used in North Indian Classical music rather than North Indian Semi Classical music. There are some rare compositions of thumri in raag Ahir Bhairav. Raga Ahir Bhairav is such a melodious yet impressive raga that there are many songs in light music and in film music. 'Albela Sajana aaori', 'Pyar Tere Pehele najar ko Salam', 'Teri Ummid' etc. are some of the compositions based on raag Ahir Bhairav.

In this way there are another raga which are blended with melodious tune of Ahir; known as 'Ahiri Todi' and 'Ahiri Lalit'. Here in Raga Ahiri Todi, it's a mixture of raga Ahir Bhairav and

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<sup>24</sup> AI Overview

<sup>25</sup>[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahir\\_Bhairav](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ahir_Bhairav)



Todi. And as the name suggests raga Ahiri Lalit is a combination of Raag Ahir Bhairav and raga Lalit.

### **Conclusion:**

Through descriptive and analytical studies, it is observed that melodious tune from the mountains and surrounding nature have always contributed beautiful melodies in North Indian Classical and Semi Classical Music. The influence of such melodies is tremendous, adding various shades to different ragas and semi classical music. A simple tune consisting of just 3-4 notes leaves a beautiful impression, capturing the essence and beauty of North Indian Classical and Semi Classical Music. The journey of these mountains and folk tunes transforming into raga is both interesting and beautiful. The gradual maturity of these tunes and raga, and the end products created from them, reflects the potential, depth and capacity of the combining notes into a tune. It is dependent on the capacity of tune that whether as a raga it is contributing to Classical music or to Semi Classical music. After transforming into a raga the tune is not at all damaged. Originality of the tune and the original flavor of the tune remains constant. This enhances the beauty of raga. This blend of nature and music enriches the cultural fabric of India, enhancing the experiences and lives of every living creature on the earth.

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## Traditional Dance and Rituals of Dimasa Kachari

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### Abstract

*Dimasa Kachari are an indigenous ethnic group of North East India. They belong to the greater Bodo Kachari tribes. Their language, Dimasa, is a branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. The Dimasa Kacharis are a scheduled tribe in the autonomous hill districts of Assam. They have their own rich culture, language, dressing pattern, religious beliefs, and practices. They mainly reside in the districts of Assam, including Cachar, Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong, and in parts of Nagaland and Manipur. People of this community traditionally live in close harmony with nature, and their cultural practices strongly reflect this connection. Agriculture is central to their way of life, and much of their folklore festivals and rituals are intertwined with the agricultural cycle. This community's rich cultural heritage has preserved a variety of traditional dances, music, and rituals that are integral to their way of life. This paper mainly focuses on traditional dance practice and its significance as a ritual of the Dimasa Kachari community. However, it also highlights their cultural significance, historical continuity, and transformation in contemporary times. The research adopts a qualitative approach, combining both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Culturally, the Dimasa are known for their vibrant festivals, dance, and music, which are integral to their social and religious life. The study documents some important dances of their community, such as Baidima dance, Baijmaijai dances, Baigrah dance, etc. Their dance and music forms, often performed during festivals, ceremonies, and social gatherings, are powerful symbols and expressions of communal solidarity and spiritual reverence. These traditional cultural practices have been passed down through generations and continue to be vital in maintaining the community's cultural identity, but in the present time they also face some challenges due to the influence of modernisation.*

**Keywords:** Dimasa Kachari, Traditional Dance, Culture heritage, indigenous rituals and practice.

### Introduction:

The culture of Northeast India holds profound cultural and spiritual importance, functioning as a vital expression of identity, tradition, and social cohesion among its various ethnic communities. During festivals, harvest ceremonies, and religious observances, each state and tribe in the region showcases unique dance forms. As such, the traditional dance of the Dimasa Kachari tribe also holds a significant cultural value in Northeast India, symbolising the unique heritage, spirituality, and communal identity of the Dimasa people. The term 'Dimasa' means 'children of the big river': in the Dimasa language, 'di' means river, 'ma' means big, and 'sa'



means children, referring to the Brahmaputra River (known as Dilao in Dimasa). According to Thaosen (1962, p. 44), the Dimasas were known as Bodosa prior to their settlement in Dimapur. When the Bodosas migrated to the Dimapur region and started living on the Bank of Dhansiri, they came to be known as Dimasa. Dimasa Tribes are the most widely spread tribal groups in the north-eastern region of India. According to geographic distribution, the Dimasas are divided into four distinct groups. Thus, the Dimasas living in Nagaland are known as Dizowasa, those living in Lanka and Hojai are known as Demrasa, the Dimasas of Cachar are known as Hawarsha, and the Dimasas of the N.C. Hills are known as Hasausha (Duarah: 1998). The social structure of this community has been formed and taken place based on Indian cultural consciousness. It reflects various elements that show the cultural continuity with the larger common and collective Indian consciousness in its unique and different social formation. Dimasa constituted their history and socio-cultural reality from the Mahabharat. They are deeply attached to the history and Katha of Mahabharat. They established themselves in the northern region of the Bharatvarsh. The Dimasa tribal community is very pious and religious-minded. Festivals, musical melodies, religious rites, and customs have enriched the culture of this tribal community. The supreme deity in the world is the Banglaraja, as per the Dimasa tribal community. These tribal people worship several deities like Lord Banglaraja, Sibrai, spirits of ill will and good will, Sakainjeek, and Madai. The main economy of the Dimasas is agriculture, and they are also engaged in government jobs, petty trades, wage earners, etc. They also have their own traditional village council, which acts as a socio-political unit in their parochial life.

#### **Literature review:**

Borah, D. (2024), examines the traditional music, musical instruments, and dance forms of the Dimasa, a tribe in Northeast India. He highlights some important musical instruments of Dimasa, like the Khram and Moori, and ritual dances that reflect the community's agricultural and social life. It also discusses how postmodern influences, particularly ICT, are reshaping Dimasa culture while also aiding preservation efforts. The author suggests that cultural programs and education can help sustain these traditions in the face of globalization. Paul, Hiranya, and Paul, Sujana. (2012), they explored the diverse cultural tapestry of North East India. They tried to highlight the ethnic diversity, languages, customs, traditions, and artistic expressions of the various tribes and communities in the region. It emphasizes the importance of preserving and celebrating this cultural heritage. Thousen, Vandana. (2021) discussed the construction of Dimasa identity through narratives of origin, migration, and dispersal. The author analyses the relationship between the emergence of new concepts of political space, changes in the political economy, and the formation of Dimasa collective identity. The paper highlights the role of memory, myth, and narrative in shaping the community's sense of belonging and continuity. Barman, Bidhan (2014), discussed the historical background and contemporary assertion of Dimasa ethnic identity in Assam. He discussed the process of ethnic assimilation and the subsequent movement to reconstruct Dimasa identity through language, culture, and history. The paper highlights the challenges faced by the Dimasa community in maintaining their distinct identity amidst the larger Assamese context.



Brahma, M.K. (2021), examines the traditional dances of the Bodos and their role in cultural identity. He highlights the significance of traditional attire, like Dokhna and Gamsha, in reflecting the Bodo people's heritage and connection to nature. The study uses an interdisciplinary approach, combining historical and anthropological methods, to show how these traditions adapt in modern times. Dutta, Ankur. (2020), in his study on the Sonowal Kachari Tribe and their Traditional Folk-Life, highlights the effect of globalization in their traditional folk dances. This study highlights some noticeable changes: their dances, once performed exclusively during specific festivals with strict cultural guidelines, are now more commonly showcased for broader audiences. Konwar Pinechumi, Das Bharat.et.al. (2023) they discussed on Dimasa tribe's cultural heritage, focusing on unique birth, marriage, and death rituals that strengthen social bonds. It highlights the role of folk dances, music, and craftsmanship in preserving history and promoting socio-economic growth.

### **Objectives:**

The research is based on following two main objectives:

- To study traditional dance forms and the role of rituals associated with Dimasa dance.
- To study how globalization has affected traditional dance and rituals of Dimasa Kachari.

### **Methodology:**

The paper is based on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary source is based on different tools such as interviews and focus group discussions. While the secondary sources are based on books, journals, articles, etc. The relevant data for this study were collected from Joypur Part III, Cachar District, Lower Assam. The village comprises 198 households with a total population of 1361. Data collection was carried out during the month of October 2024. For the study, we employed stratified random sampling and snowball sampling techniques. We have selected amounting to 150 individuals. This group was then stratified into two subgroups: the older generation and the younger generation, each comprising 75 individuals. The data collected from the respondents were from the Dimasa Kachari community, who have good knowledge about both traditional culture, religious rituals and practices, and also its transformation.

### **Discussion:**

Culture is Homo sapiens-specific behaviour, as well as material artefacts employed as an intrinsic aspect of that behavior. Thus, culture includes language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, institutions, tools, techniques, works of art, rituals, and ceremonies, among other elements. Sociologist Georg Simmel (1858-1918) defined culture as "the cultivation of individuals through the agency of external forms that have been objectified in the course of history." As such, in sociology, culture is described as the methods of thinking, the way of acting, and material objects that shape a people's way of life. For the Dimasa Kachari, their own traditional



culture, dance and rituals serve not only as entertainment. But they also serve as important expressions of their beliefs, social systems, and relationship to nature and ancestors.

There are various forms of dimasa dance; some of those dances are Baidima, Risingbani, Baimaijai, Baijabah, Mogongkhubani, Jauphinbani (Rongjaubani), Baisergee, Jaubani Renginbani, Dainslilaibani, Lamahembani Baidima, Nasagibrimbani, Khro-kuthaibani, Homijing Lodaibani, Dauthu Maikhonbani, and many more. All these dances are performed on different cultural occasions, festivals, ceremonies, social gatherings, etc. Among them, '**Baidima**' (Bai-means dance, Dima-means Dimasa) is the most common and popular dance form usually performed by the Dimasa people during the 'Busu' festival in the month of January. It is an annual cultural festival celebrated by the Dimasa Kachari tribe of India. It is the main harvesting festival for Dimasa people. It is celebrated after the completion of grain harvests in different villages. Busu, the word gives the meaning such as 'Brai-Sibrai' is a supreme god in Dimasa society. This festival is primarily celebrated at night, bringing together the entire village community to partake in dance and share meals in a spirit of unity and festivity. So, in this way, the entire harvesting of new paddy is offered first to the Brai sibrai madai for peace of the human kind, called Busu. Therefore, Busu is the most joyous and important community festival of their community. During this night, both men and women together participate in group dances, moving in a circular pattern while folding their hands upward and stepping and clapping in unison. A large fire is lit near the dancing ground in accordance with their customs. Villagers of all ages and genders gather to observe the dance performance, while the women of the village sit around the dancing area to witness the festivities at regular intervals. These Baidima dance practices are mainly based on two musical instruments: kharam and Moori.

**BaimaiJai** is a dance performed by young girls or women with a plate or silver dish, and they perform the dance with two plates in both hands. This dance has a distinctly unique feature. In the past, during the reign of the Dimasa kingdom, the king had come out victorious in the war and offered victory at the palace through delight. The dance was also reportedly performed at that festival. The colourful outfits of the dancers, the ornaments, and the sparkling sparkle of the dancers with their graceful movements give this dance a different dimension.

**Bai-jabah** dance is known as the war dance. It is a traditional Dimasa Kachari dance that was performed when the Dimasa king returned to his kingdom after winning a war.

**Baigrah** is a traditional dance form in Baidima that is similar to the standard or basic dance styles. Baigrah is usually performed at Busudima, a Dimasa post-harvest ceremony. Baigrah was traditionally done solely at 'Hangshong Manaoba' (a seven-day Busu celebration). However, it is currently performed only on exceptional occasions or at festivals. The Baigrah has many different forms, including Mai shubani (a dance form in which a dancer shows the process of grinding rice), Thapu Jaobani (a dance form in which a dancer shows the process of digging yam), Homoijing lodaibani (a dance in which a dancer shows pig bathing), and so on. Most of the steps of Baigrah are inspired by the daily activities of Dimasa people, like fishing, cultivation, weaving, and more.



**Kram Jang Mai Duba** is another dance form of Dimasa Kachari which literally means cultivating paddy with the drum beats. It is performed by both male and female folks. The instruments used in this dance are the khram (drum) and Moori, a wind instrument made of bamboo. It is believed that in olden days the Dimasa people performed this dance during drought.

All of these dances are performed by the Dimasas for their own pleasure, to honor distinguished guests, as part of religious ceremonies, and, most often, as part of the celebration of the Bushu community festival. The dance, which is performed to greet distinguished visitors who are coming for the first time, is only performed by the village's young, including both boys and girls. To express their joy upon the entrance of the honored visitors, they execute this type of dance.

### **Music and Instruments:**

The Dimasa Kachari employ a range of traditional musical instruments to convey their culture. Their music is mainly based on two instruments, that is, the khram (drum) and Moori (traditional trumpet). **The Khram**, a 1.25-meter-long drum constructed from the Jasim tree, has deer or goat skins spread over its ends and produces distinctive rhythms known as Baithai by adding things such as coins or charcoal. **The Moori** is a trumpet-like wind instrument made of Bongkholong timber, with six finger holes that regulate sounds and are necessary for dance rhythms. It has several components, including the Memu (mouthpiece straw) and Mooribar (horn). It comes in two sizes: Moorisa (small) and Moorima (big), and it creates music to guide dance moves. Other instruments include the **Khram Dubong**, which resembles a harp and is played by plucking dubong grass reeds, and the Suphin, a bamboo flute that contributes gentler tones. Khram and Moori collaborate to create the sound known as 'Khram Dubung', which is used to accompany songs celebrating harvests (Jaufinbani), nature, love, lullabies, and daily life. Dimasa music and dance are strongly connected to their agricultural techniques, natural surroundings, and community, with themes of joy, love, and resilience.

### **Traditional Dress:**

Dimasa traditional attire or dress is very colourful. They weave their traditional hand-woven dresses. These traditional dresses include a variety of outfits for men and women. Men typically wear rikaosa, richa, paguri, rimchau, and rimchaoramai. Women wear rikhra, jingsudu, rijamfini, rikaucha, rijamfinaberen, and rigu. Dimasa women also wear a variety of decorations, including chandraraal, jingbri, jongsama, kamautai, kaudima, longbar, rongbarcha, panlaubar, khadu, enggrasa, and ligjao. These traditional clothing and adornments eloquently portray the Dimasa tribe's rich cultural history. During dance, the Dimasa people commonly wear a white cloth called a rijamphain worn from the chest to the knees by women and a turban called a phagri or sgaopha worn by men. Men also wear a short dhoti, which can be white, green, or yellow, from the waist to the knee.



### **Use of Ornaments:**

Dimasa Kachari people wear a variety of ornaments during traditional dance performances, including:

- a) Yaocher and kharik: Worn by male Dimasa members.
- b) Phowal: A necklace made of expensive coral and silver metal beads, also worn by males.
- c) Jongsama: A necklace made of micro-beads with coral and silver beads in between.
- d) Rangbarsha: A necklace made of coins
- e) Yashungshrung or Yashimsho: A traditional silver anklet worn by both Dimasa men and women.
- f) Sgaopha or Phagri: A turban worn by men on their heads and tied with a red ribbon.

### **Impact of Globalization:**

According to studies from both primary and secondary sources, globalization has had both beneficial and negative effects on the Dimasa Kachari community's traditional dance, music, and ceremonies. Positively, globalization and advancements in technology, particularly through the internet and social media, have increased the visibility and popularity of Dimasa culture. Such digital platforms as YouTube enable the dissemination of their traditional culture with a global audience, increasing awareness and respect for their heritage. Furthermore, as many Dimasa students pursue education outside of their place or towns, they acquire exposure to a broader cultural landscape while often preserving indigenous dance techniques. This approach promotes and preserves their practices in a new social context. However, the report also reveals certain drawbacks of modernity. It is to be found that, in the present time, some younger generations are also neglected or less interested in their old ceremonies or customs as a result of the pressures of modern living and exposure to different cultures. It happens due to the trend toward modern lifestyles and fast-paced, urbanized living. As a result, in these times of change, the Dimasa Kachari have faced some difficulty in maintaining the regularity and validity of their traditional practices. This dual impact of globalization advocates the maintenance of balance between cultural preservation with adaptation to new influences, ensuring the community's rich cultural history is preserved for future generations. In this regard, Anthony Giddens' theory of space and time, particularly his concept of "time-space distanciation," can be effectively applied to understand the changing nature of traditional culture among the dimasa kachari community. Giddens argues that in modern societies, social relations are increasingly "stretched" across time and space, leading to the transformation of traditional practices and local cultures.

### **Result:**

The findings indicate that, historically, the Dimasa people performed these dances for various specific purposes and occasions. Traditionally, each dance was performed at its designated time or for its intended reason. However, in recent times, many of these dances have diminished or



are no longer practiced. Today, most dances are performed only during festivals or special occasions. Not all Dimasa communities perform every traditional dance; instead, the Baidima dance is the most commonly performed. Geographically, the prevalence of each dance varies, with certain dances performed in some areas but not in others. Nevertheless, the Dimasa people across all regions share a united respect and reverence for these traditional dances.

### **Conclusion:**

From this study, it is found that the Dimasa Kachari culture is unique and dynamic, distinguished by a strong sense of community and a deep connection to the environment. They preserve their cultural legacy for generations, upholding their customs, dance, music, dress, and rituals in a way that honors their ancestors and embraces their surroundings. Their dances, such as Baidima and BaimaiJai, as well as the use of traditional musical instruments like the Khram and Moori, reflect a distinct and spiritual worldview that is profoundly based in their agrarian lifestyle. Their traditional dances are still dependent on Khram and Moori. They did not use any other instruments. However, they still wear their own cultural dresses and ornaments. Apart from the influence of globalization and modernization this study also demonstrates that Dimasa Kachari culture is still maintaining naturalistic rituals. It's not only an expression of identity but also a monument to their persistence and respect for the environment. Their traditional attire, ceremonies, and customs highlight their rich heritage and dedication to preserving their traditions in a changing social landscape. It also highlights the significance of such cultural activities in contributing to Northeast India's diversity and ethnic vibrancy, demonstrating the value of preserving indigenous traditions within the larger context of national and regional cultural identity.

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## Spiritual Realization of Rabindranath Tagore in the Songs of "Swadesh" section of 'Gitabitan'

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### Abstract

#### **Introduction:**

*Rabindranath Tagore's "Swadesh" (Patriotic) parjay in 'Gitabitan' reflects his profound spiritual connection with the nation. Through these songs, Tagore expresses a deep love and devotion to the motherland, blending patriotism with a broader philosophical and spiritual consciousness. The term "Swadesh" is not just a reference to the geographical boundaries of a country; it symbolizes a deeper, spiritual homeland where love for the country intertwines with universal values of humanity and truth. The songs of "Swadesh" section of 'Gitabitan' are infused with a sense of duty, selflessness and the realization that the nation's soul is connected with the individual's soul. He often speaks of surrendering to the greater cause of the country, not merely through physical efforts but by nurturing a sense of moral and spiritual awakening. Through these songs, Tagore connects the idea of nationalism with the larger ideals of freedom, justice and universal humanism. This approach elevates patriotism beyond political borders, transforming it into a form of spiritual devotion to the essence of the homeland and its values.*

*When we refer to Rabindranath's Swadeshi songs, we generally mean those songs that are organized in the "Swadesh" section (46 songs) of the first volume of 'Gitabitan' and the "National Songs" section (16 songs) of the third volume. Among these songs, we can see the expression of patriotism, national consciousness, the call for liberation from the humiliation of subjugation and hints of self-awakening. In some of these songs, there is also the expression of God-consciousness. Through these patriotic songs, the poet not only expresses his thoughts on the country but also calls upon the entire nation to move forward on the difficult path of freeing the country from the shame of subjugation, urging the people to remain determined and united, maintaining a sense of brotherhood through collective effort. Even in these thorny and difficult times, the poet advises us to keep faith, trust and belief in the Almighty, the guide of all who are lost, the compassionate God.*

#### **Objective of the research:**

*The main purpose of this discussion is to analyse the underlying spiritual consciousness inherent in these patriotic songs of the "Swadesh" parjay from 'Gitabitan' of Rabindranath Tagore.*



### **Findings:**

*The "Swadesh" parjaya of 'Gitabitan' contains songs that embody the spiritual and philosophical ideals of Rabindranath Tagore. The convergence of patriotism and spirituality is evident in the above-discussed songs. These songs are not merely patriotic expressions but spiritual invocations. Tagore's vision of nationalism is intertwined with his philosophy of universal humanism, self-awakening and spiritual devotion. His songs invite individuals to transcend ego and self-centeredness, urging them to recognize the divine within themselves and their homeland. The spiritual realization of Tagore's Swadeshi songs lies in the fact that patriotism, for him, was not confined to political liberation but a quest for spiritual freedom and human unity. This aspect distinguishes Tagore's songs from conventional patriotic anthems and places them in the realm of philosophical and spiritual thought.*

### **Conclusion:**

*This analysis explores how Tagore's vision of nationalism goes beyond the tangible aspects of freedom to the intangible elements of inner awakening and human oneness. By blending patriotism with spirituality, Tagore's songs serve as an inspiration for moral, ethical and spiritual self-transformation within the framework of love for the homeland.*

**Keywords:** Spiritual Consciousness, Patriotism, Nationalism, Universal Humanism, Self-Awakening

### **Introduction:**

Rabindranath's *Swadeshi* songs are generally understood to be those found in the first volume of 'Gitabitan' under the section "Swadesh" (46 songs) and in the third volume under "National Songs" (16 songs). These songs primarily deal with nationalism, a call to free the country from the humiliation of foreign rule and the awakening of self-consciousness. However, some of these songs also express Rabindranath's thoughts on God. Through these patriotic songs, Rabindranath expressed his love for the nation and urged the people to unite with strong determination and brotherhood to free the country from colonial oppression. Even in this perilous and challenging time, he advised faith, trust and belief in the Almighty, the source of all strength.

### **Methodology:**

The study follows a qualitative approach, drawing upon primary and secondary sources, including 'Gitabitan' and various scholarly texts. Tagore's songs have been analyzed using textual analysis, exploring the spiritual dimensions of the lyrics. Secondary data from critical essays, books and research papers on Tagore's philosophy have been integrated to present a comprehensive perspective. In addition, Tagore's writings, such as his essays and letters, have been referred to for context and deeper understanding. For citation and referencing, the Chicago Manual of Style has been strictly followed.



### **Main Body:**

In this context, the poet has said in the essay "Vishwobodh" (Universal Consciousness), which is part of the second volume of the '*Santiniketan*' essay collection:

"यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतानि आत्मन्येवानुपश्यति सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते।" <sup>26</sup> (Tagore First published in 17 volumes: 1909-1916 AD, #)

"He who sees all beings within the Supreme Soul and the Supreme Soul within all beings, he no longer despises anyone".

This translation retains the essence of the original Bengali passage, reflecting the idea of seeing the divine within all beings and the interconnectedness of everything.

"सर्वव्यापी स भगवान् तस्मात् सर्वगतः शिवः।"

This retains the original meaning that "The all-pervading Lord is therefore the all-encompassing benefactor, Shiva."

"The Lord is all-pervading; therefore, He is the universal source of well-being. That God is omnipresent and hence, He is the embodiment of universal welfare. The more we try to know Him by dividing and opposing, the more we will hinder that universal well-being."

or it can said, —

"He is the omnipresent Bhagavan; therefore, He is the all-pervading source of auspiciousness. The more we try to understand Him through division and opposition, the more we will obstruct that all-pervading auspiciousness."

In this case, the poet argues that the more we separate ourselves from this omnipresent grace, the more we hinder its flow. Therefore, to him, the significance of patriotic songs was not only to praise the nation or to inspire courage—they were songs of self-awakening and spiritual inspiration.

Indeed, in Rabindranath's view, patriotic songs were not merely confined to the adoration of the homeland or the awakening of valour. These songs were about the self-awareness of human civilization, they were songs of self-motivation, aiding humanity in its journey of self-realization and self-awakening.

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<sup>26</sup> P. 290, *Vishwobodh*, *Santiniketan*, Volume - 2, Rabindranath Tagore, first published in 17 volumes: 1909-1916 AD, reprinted in Asharh 1423 (Bengali calendar), Visva-Bharati Publishing Department, 6 Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Road, Kolkata 17.



### **The Influence of the Tagore Family on the Composition of *Swadeshi* Songs:**

During the *Swadeshi* era, the Tagore family was distinguished for its use of Bengali as a patriotic expression. From Rabindranath's '*Atmaparichay*', we learn how the emerging Bengali consciousness was reflected in their household. Rabindranath mentions how his family maintained deep reverence for the Bengali language, using it for all forms of communication, in contrast to the educated society of the time, which preferred English. <sup>27</sup> (Tagore First Published on 1st Baisakh 1350 (Bengali Calendar), #)

The *Hindu Mela*, initiated with the support of the Tagore family, aimed to foster a sense of patriotic devotion to the motherland. At this event, Rabindranath's brother Satyendranath composed the famous national song '*Mile Sobe Bharat Santan*'. One of the special activities of this fair was singing hymns dedicated to the homeland, reciting patriotic poems, and showcasing indigenous arts and exercises. Additionally, honoring talented local individuals was a notable part of this event.

The activities of the *Hindu Mela* and the *Sanjeevani Sabha* left a profound impression on a young Rabindranath. Many members of the Tagore family, such as Dwijendranath, Ganendranath, Jyotirindranath and Rabindranath, were associated with this society. Inspired by the fervor of this period, Rabindranath composed his early patriotic song: "*Tomari Tore, Ma, Sonpinu E Deho*" (Song No. 8, "*Jateeya Sangeet Section*", '*Gitabitan*'). <sup>28</sup> (Tagore First Edition || Three Volumes || Ashwin 1338 | Shravan 1339, #)

### **The Convergence of Motherland and Universal Mother in Rabindranath's Vision**

Under the influence of his family's social and political environment, Rabindranath took an active role in composing national songs. He penned:

*"Bharat re, tor kolonkito poromanurashi, Joto din sindhu na felibe grashi, Toto din tui kand re"* (Song No. 1, *Jateeya Sangeet Section*, *Gitabitan*). <sup>29</sup> (Tagore First Edition || Three Volumes || Ashwin 1338 | Shravan 1339, #)

The song was composed by the poet at the age of 17, in the Bengali year 1285 (English year 1878). It is included in the "*National Songs*" section of '*Gitabitan*'. This song was published in the second edition of the Bhadra issue of Bengali year 1285. Although the '*Gitabitan*' index mentions the Bhairavi raga for this song, its notation has not yet been found. The song is cited

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<sup>27</sup> P. 78, *Atmaparichay*, Rabindranath Tagore, First Published on 1st Baisakh 1350 (Bengali Calendar), Reprinted in Ashwin 1417, Visva-Bharati Publishing Department, 6 Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Road, Kolkata 17.

<sup>28</sup> P. 819, *Complete Gitabitan*, Rabindranath Tagore, First Edition || Three Volumes || Ashwin 1338 | Shravan 1339, Reprinted in Magh 1416, Published by Visva-Bharati Publishing Department | 6 Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Road | Kolkata 17.

<sup>29</sup> P. 815, *Complete Gitabitan*, Rabindranath Tagore, First Edition || Three Volumes || Ashwin 1338 | Shravan 1339, Reprinted in Magh 1416, Published by Visva-Bharati Publishing Department | 6 Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Road | Kolkata 17.



in ‘*Sangeet Kalpatoru*’, edited by Shri Narendra Nath Dutta (Swami Vivekananda).<sup>30</sup>  
(Mukhopadhyay 1973, 25th Baishakh, 1376 (Bengali Year), #)

Although this song, composed when Rabindranath was just 17 years old, expresses the deep sorrow of a nation shackled by colonialism. Another significant song of this era is “*Tomari Tore Ma*”, written when Rabindranath was only 16.

The song, set in the Jayjayanti raga and notated in Chautal, was published as a dedication hymn in the Ashwin issue of *Bharati* magazine, 1284 Bengali year. It is one of the four national songs featured in the second edition of Rabindranath's book ‘*National Songs*’, published on August 30, 1878. According to the first volume of ‘*Gitabitan Chronological Index*’, edited by Shri Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay, this song was inspired by the *Sanjeevani Sabha*. Its notation is found in ‘*Swarabitan*’ number 47 and it is also featured in ‘*Sangeet Kalpataru*’, edited by Shri Narendra Nath Dutta. Additionally, the song appears in ‘*The Sworn Hero*’, translated by Shri Rabi Dutta, in ‘*Echoes from East and West*’, published in October 1899.<sup>31</sup> (Mukhopadhyay 1973, 25th Baishakh, 1376 (Bengali Year), #)

During that time, many songs composed by Rabindranath for worship reflect his deep patriotism and have been included in various song collections as “*Brahmo Sangeet*”. The Brahmo Samaj had a special place for patriotic songs in its musical repertoire, which might explain this categorization. However, more significant is that Rabindranath’s patriotic thought transcended traditional norms to evolve into a deeply held conviction, a perspective evident through his songs. His songs reveal how patriotism and spirituality became intertwined for him, his national pride surpassing even religious beliefs. His father, Debendranath, also believed that religious unity could lead to national cohesion.

In his autobiography, Debendranath emphasizes the belief that spreading the Vedantic Brahmo religion could foster unity and strength across India, overcoming divisions that create social and religious isolation. According to this view, the Brahmo religion—rooted in Vedantic principles, which emphasize the oneness of existence and the universal soul—could serve as a unifying faith across diverse communities. By embracing a common spiritual framework, Indians would no longer feel isolated within their own communities; instead, they would feel united as part of a single, inclusive brotherhood. This unity, the speaker suggests, would rejuvenate the spirit and collective strength of the Indian people, ultimately empowering them to achieve freedom (possibly from colonial rule or social and cultural oppression).

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<sup>30</sup> P. 5, *Gitabitan Chronological Index*, Volume 1, edited by Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, First Publication: 25th Baishakh, 1376 (Bengali Year) | Revised and Improved Second Edition: 13th Jyeshtha, 1380 (Bengali Year) | Bolpur-Santiniketan, 1973.

<sup>31</sup> P. 2, *Gitabitan Chronological Index*, Volume 1, edited by Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, First Publication: 25th Baishakh, 1376 (Bengali Year) | Revised and Improved Second Edition: 13th Jyeshtha, 1380 (Bengali Year) | Bolpur-Santiniketan, 1973.



In essence, the statement reflects an aspiration for national integration and empowerment through a shared spiritual philosophy, fostering a harmonious and liberated society.

Rabindranath's thoughts mirror his father's vision. He said, "If we begin to regard a special manifestation of God within the country and consider serving the country as a form of worship, we must not ignore *Swadeshi* ways of spreading this faith among people of all ages and genders."<sup>32</sup> (Ray January 12, 2000, #) Possibly for this reason, many songs composed for the Maghotsav festival as Brahma hymns in the early phase of Rabindranath's life were later categorized as national songs.

For example, songs now in the third volume of 'Gitabitan' under the "National Songs" section include "Shono Shono Amader Byatha" (Song No. 3), "Eki Andhakar E Bharat Bhumi" (Song No. 4), "Deshe Deshe Bhromi Tabo Dukha Gan Gahiye" (Song No. 6), "Keno Cheye Achho, Go Ma, Mukh Pane" (Song No. 10) and "Ekbar Tora Ma Boliya Dak" (Song No. 11). Most of these were written in the late 19th century. (De Baisakh 1380 (April 1973), #)

Songs such as "Amra Milechi Aj Mayer Dake" (Song No. 9 in the "Swadesh" section), "Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka" (Song No. 14 in the "Swadesh" section), and "E Bharate Rakho Nitya Prabhu, Tab Shubho Ashirbad" (Song No. 35 in the "Swadesh" section) are also part of this list.

In fact, although several patriotic songs composed by Rabindranath were initially published under the title "*Brahmosangeet*" in various newspapers and magazines, they were later included in other categories. The song "*Janaganamanaadhinayaka*" (song no. 14, "Swadesh" category) is particularly noteworthy in this context. Although it was originally composed for worship at the *Maghotsav*, this song is fundamentally based on patriotism. Written in December 1911 (Magh 1318 in the Bengali calendar), this song was first published as a "*Brahmosangeet*" in the then *Tattwabodhini* magazine, with a title given by Rabindranath: "*Bharat Vidhata*" (Dispenser of India's Destiny).

Through his songs, Rabindranath seamlessly merges the ideas of nationalism and spirituality. His songs are not limited to praising the nation but also promote self-awakening and collective spiritual growth.

### **Rabindranath's National Anthem and Its Global Context:**

Rabindranath's song "*Janaganamana*", first performed at the 1911 Indian National Congress session in Kolkata, was initially composed for the *Maghotsav*, a Brahma religious festival. Despite being misunderstood by some as a hymn in praise of the British emperor, it is

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<sup>32</sup> Pages 46-47, *Rabindra Sangeeter Chaturanga*, Jyotirmoy Ray, First Published on January 12, 2000, Saptarshi Prakashan, 30/A Sitaram Ghosh Street, Kolkata - 700 009.



fundamentally a song of divine and national praise. The song was later adopted as India's national anthem.

Rabindranath's vision transcended mere nationalism; he saw the nation as a part of the divine universal order. Through his *Swadeshi* songs, he sought to awaken the nation to its spiritual duty, where patriotism became an extension of divine service. According to him, patriotic songs were not just confined to praising the nation or stirring courage but were also songs of self-awakening and self-inspiration. (Tagore First published on behalf of Visva-Bharati Sangeet-Samiti in Baisakh 1373 (Bengali calendar), #)

### **Discussion:**

Now, let us move on to a discussion of the spiritually inspired songs within the “*Swadesh*” parjay, which not only reflect his patriotism but also express his unwavering devotion to the nation as a form of service to God. In these songs, there is a beautiful harmony between the ideas of nationalism and spirituality. His songs are not limited to praising the nation; they also encourage self-awakening and collective spiritual growth. A detailed discussion of these songs is presented below:

1. “Amra sobai raja amader ei rajar rajotwe  
Noile moder rajar sone milbo kee sotwe?” (Song no. 10, “*Swadesh*” parjay)

*Translation:*

("We are all kings in this kingdom of our king;  
How else could we meet the King? /

Otherwise, on what grounds would we unite with the king?")

In this song, Tagore addresses the Almighty, the creator of the world, as "King," symbolizing the omnipotent Lord who guides all. The poet emphasizes that every individual is a "king" in this world, but to truly attain God, one must merge with Him. Whatever we do, we must keep the Divine in our thoughts as the guide for all our actions. Although we might follow our paths, ultimately, it is the path shown by the Almighty that we should tread. Only then can we be liberated from the cycle of failure and attain union with the merciful Divine. Through this song, Tagore calls upon humanity to realize this deeper truth. This song underscores the significance of grace and surrender to the divine will.

2. Amader jatra holo shuru ekhan ogo karnadhar.  
Tomare kori namaskar.” (Song no. 13, “*Swadesh*” parjay)

*Translation:*

("Our journey begins now, O helmsman,  
We bow to You.")



Life's journey is fraught with obstacles, yet if the compassionate Almighty accompanies us, these difficulties become easier to bear. At the start of the journey, the poet offers his reverence to the "Charioteer of Man" and embarks on the path. No matter how stormy the journey becomes, one can overcome all hurdles if guided by divine grace. Tagore urges that we should not seek help elsewhere but remember God as the ultimate support to successfully navigate life. He concludes that with unwavering faith in the Divine, we can conquer life's trials. This song represents the metaphor of life as a journey guided by the Divine Helmsman. The poet reminds the listeners that, with divine guidance, life's obstacles become manageable. It calls for unwavering faith in God's support.

3. "Janaganamana-adhinayaka jaya he" (Song no. 14, "Swadesh" parjay)

*Translation:*

("Victory to you, the leader of the people!")

This song glorifies the eternal protector of humanity, the one who emerges to guide the people of India through every crisis. The poet praises this leader who brings salvation in times of distress and stands as the eternal charioteer of those journeying on the rocky path of life. The Divine, ever-watchful, is the source of hope and comfort during dark and troubled times. Through this hymn, Tagore calls for victory to the divine guardian of humanity. This song was later adopted as India's national anthem. The song reflects Tagore's belief in divine providence, portraying the "Leader of the People" as the eternal guide for the nation's journey through crises. (Bandyopadhyay and Bandyopadhyay Ashwin 1382, #)

4. "He mor chitta, punya teerthe jago re dheere  
Ei bharoter mohamanober sagorteere." (Song no. 15, "Swadesh" parjay)

*Translation:*

("O my heart, awaken in the sacred pilgrimage,  
On the shores of the great souls of India.")

Since time immemorial, the land of India has been blessed with the presence of great souls. Tagore calls upon the inner self of humanity to salute these towering figures, urging all to rise above divisions of caste, religion and ethnicity to purify their hearts and souls. He prays that even the fallen may be cleansed and that the sacred land becomes a place of spiritual awakening for all.

5. Desh desh nondito kori mondriso tobo bheree  
Asilo joto beerobindo asono tobo gheree." (Song no. 16, "Swadesh" parjay)

*Translation:*

("The drums of your triumph sound far and wide,  
Heroes gather around your throne.")



In this song, Tagore prays to the awakened Divine, recalling the arrival of great souls on Indian soil through the ages. Despite their efforts to uplift society, why does the mental weakness and spiritual lethargy of the people remain unshaken? Tagore prays for the awakening of the nation's lost pride and dignity, asking the Almighty to restore India's self-respect and inner strength amidst the world.

6. "Matrimandiro-punyo-angano karo mahojjwalo aajo he" (Song No. 17, "Swadesh" section)

*Translation:*

("Make the sacred grounds of the mother temple resplendent today.")

In this song, the poet prays to all the countrymen to consecrate the sacred grounds of the motherland with the auspicious sound of the conch today. He calls upon the people to dispel the long, dark night of ignorance and light the flame of wisdom. Then, prepared as warriors ready to proclaim heroic tales, the travelers should rise, bearing the blessings of the motherland. The poet calls for all the saints, ascetics and devoted souls who share in the trials and tribulations to unite one by one in this sacred vow. Addressing them as "noble souls," "supreme men," and "kings of renunciation," Tagore invites the wise, the active and the free-spirited members of society, bestowing his victory chant upon them. Through the virtues of heroism and righteous deeds, he prays for the motherland's place in the hearts of the world to be eternal. He wishes for India's sorrows and shame to be dispelled in the sacred radiance of the glorious sun-like heroes. The poet's prayer is powerfully conveyed through this song.

The song is a stirring invocation by Tagore, urging all citizens to unite in making the holy sanctuary of the motherland shine resplendently. This song is a call for awakening, where Tagore envisions a collective effort to dispel the darkness of ignorance that has clouded the nation. He urges everyone to embrace the light of knowledge, as if kindling a divine lamp and to prepare as warriors who are committed to upholding the honor and dignity of the motherland.

In this song, Tagore calls forth the spiritually inclined, those dedicated to self-sacrifice, and individuals who share in the struggles and hardships, to join hands in an unwavering pledge. He addresses them as *Narottama* (the noble soul), *Purushottama* (the supreme man) and *Tapasviraj* (the king of renunciates), celebrating their virtues of wisdom, courage and freedom. Through the strength of heroism and acts of righteousness, Tagore prays that the motherland may hold an indelible place in the hearts of the world. He envisions the blazing courage of the nation's heroes as a powerful sun, erasing all shame and sorrow from India's past, filling it instead with divine splendour.

7. "Banglar mati, banglar jol, banglar bayu, banglar fol—  
Punyo hauk, punyo hauk, punyo hauk he bhogoban." (Song no. 20, "Swadesh" parjay)



*Translation:*

("The soil of Bengal, the waters of Bengal, the air of Bengal, the fruits of Bengal—  
Make them pure, O Lord.")

Tagore prays for the sanctification of the natural elements of Bengal—its soil, air, water and fruits—through the divine touch. He envisions a flourishing land, asking the Lord to bless Bengal with unity and purity. His vision extends beyond the material, calling for the hearts of all Bengalis to unite in love and harmony.

8. "E bharote rakho nityo, probhu, tobo shubho ashirbad—" (Song no. 35, "Swadesh" parjay)

*Translation:* ("Keep your eternal blessing on India, O Lord.")

Tagore prays for the Almighty's constant blessing upon India. He calls for unwavering faith in God, even in times of crisis, urging the people never to lose their trust in the Divine, no matter how challenging the situation.

9. "Byartho praner aborjona puriye fele agun jalo." (Song no. 42, "Swadesh" parjay)

*Translation:*

("Burn away the refuse of a failed life,  
Light the fire of renewal.")

Even in the face of failure, Tagore encourages individuals to rise again, shedding the weight of despair. He speaks of an inner awakening that leads to renewed vigor and purpose, urging humanity to fight life's battles with renewed determination. This song, composed during the *Swadeshi* movement, was meant to inspire courage and hope among the people.

### **Conclusion:**

Through these patriotic songs, Tagore moves from a narrow sense of nationalism towards a broader, universal worldview. In his poem '*Bharat Teertha*', he eloquently describes the unification of different races and cultures in India, saying, "Here the Aryan, here the non-Aryan, here the Dravidian, the Chinese... all have mingled." This inclusive vision reflects Tagore's progression from nationalism to a more expansive humanism.

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## **The Subaltern Sings: Analysing Some Select Tea Garden Songs of Darjeeling Region with the Female Gaze**

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### **Abstract**

*Darjeeling is widely known for producing world class tea across the globe but the colonial history associated with the tea heritage of Darjeeling region is thought provoking and appeals an insightful introspection in respect to the pathetic plight of women tea workers. Over the years, Darjeeling tea has gained distinct reputation for its quality and flavors however the heart wrenching and deplorable condition of women tea workers has often regarded Darjeeling tea as a Blood Tea marking the unjust and exploitation imposed on them by the forces of capitalism. These voiceless subalterns have been the subject of multilayered exploitation and subjugation agelessly whose representation have been recorded in the form of songs to express their treacherous struggle and survival story. This paper intends to examine the songs composed on tea workers to suggest how songs are used as the medium of expression and instrument to raise the voice against exploitation, discrimination and unjust against all forms of colonization. This idea would be discussed in the light of the critical writings of Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, Ranajit Guha and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.*

*Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak in her seminal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' has rightly marked that, 'if given a chance those marginalized can speak and know their conditions'. My paper therefore will highlight this idea executed in songs in order to offer the voice to voiceless, to investigate and identify their problems of how colonial discourse has misrepresented reality. These select songs will be analyzed as an initiative towards deconstructing colonial history and rewriting its own possibilities and impossibilities. By focusing on women tea workers, it is intended to establish a perspective that Feminism is not a foreign or a western concept but it's the universal phenomenon and we should be able to embrace and analyze it like all other contemporary postmodern concepts.*

**Keywords:** subaltern, Darjeeling tea, Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak, Ranajit Guha, Chimamanda Adichie, feminism

Darjeeling and Tea are synonym to each other. Darjeeling's identity and glory has been deeply associated with the natural scenic beauty of tea gardens of this region establishing Darjeeling as one of the heritage teas producing region across the world. However, the painful colonial history and aged long struggle of the tea workers of Darjeeling Himalayan region still claims for deep introspection and strong intervention at many spheres of academic research and analysis. The history of Darjeeling tea takes us back to the colonial past of 19<sup>th</sup> century when the British colonizers planted tea for the first time with the purpose of increasing colonial



capital. The commercial tea plantation brought with it further division of classes, the capitalist and the working class or the tea garden workers whom we identify as ‘the subaltern’ in course of this paper. The word ‘subaltern’ stands for ‘inferior rank’ or status. Subordinate, hence, of rank, power, authority and action. In other words, it refers to the subordination of class, caste, gender, race, language and culture. All non-European countries have experienced the painful colonial pasts at times and have emerged out of the suppression of some kind of colonial forces. At present when critical thinking and theories are advancing day by day some issues remain unchanged at the core just like the colonial history of struggle of tea garden workers of Darjeeling region and exploitation they have been facing since many years. According to Marxist theory on class, there exist only two classes, the dominant class who controls the state, power and the economy and the other one is dominated class exploited and voiceless. Until almost the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, workers were forced to accept remuneration for their labour which corresponded to mere subsistence. Surplus was fully appropriated by the dominant class. But this has remained unchanged with the tea workers of Darjeeling region. The voices are made silenced, their existence have been marginalised and they are being treated as a mere object of profit making. The colonial narratives have been repeating the romanticized stories of tea gardens which may cloak the mirky reality. These narratives focus on the Green Beauty but not the Dark Truth about the sad plight of tea workers. In a more pathetic condition, more than 70% of the total tea workers are women who work in the field and have been the object of oppression. This paper intends to deal with the plight of ‘Women Workers’ and the lyrical narratives based on their struggle, considering them as the subject of oppression as in the framework of women as doubly marginalised subalterns. Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak opines; *‘Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly affected..... If in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow....’* (Spivak 1989). This paper therefore will attempt to examine the plight of women tea workers of the region in light of different seminal works and the songs on and from tea garden with the female gaze highlighting the idea that women are more vulnerable and the subject of exploitation as a tea worker and seek larger recognition and discussion in academic domain.

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak in her seminal essay *“Can the Subaltern Speak?”* (Spivak 1988) argues that a core problem for the poorest and marginalized in society is that they have no platform to express their concerns or demand. She therefore suggests to provide an agency to the subaltern class to express themselves debunking the hegemonic colonial discourses. Their voice will be identified and heard when they speak for themselves as there is a huge difference between allowing subalterns to speak for themselves, and imposing a mode of speaking on them that however well intentioned. Spivak in her work suggests possible intellectual form of oppression and marginalization by portraying manipulated facts. When Spivak talks about the subaltern term in reference to Western versus Eastern or European versus Non-European in larger context of postcolonialism this study takes it to the narrow structure of tea garden versus colonial narratives and the songs as an agency to raise one’s voice. It further seeks to focus on women labourer considering their large contribution to build the Tea Industry of this region. To begin with the discussion, there is an iconic song of 1970’s sung by legendary singer Narayan Gopal, written by poet Bhupi Sherchan, composed by Amber Gurung which represented reality of tea garden life



setting a milestone, debunking the colonial narratives which always highlighted the scenic green beauty of tea garden but never spoke of the harsh reality. The song created history as it resembled the voice of the subaltern class especially of a woman shackled in the chain of exploitation in name of earning money and livelihood. It is always a woman figure that could be visioned when one thinks of a tea worker which is very much indicative to the fact that women are largely associated with the tea industry and eventually construct the larger part of the colonial narratives. The subaltern sings in pathos like this;

*‘Aljhecha kyare pachyawri timro chiyaako buttama  
Baljhecha kyare soonako kaada kalilo khuttama.....  
Anwchinki chelli vanera aama dobato dhayeki  
Teejama pani birsicha kyare garib maiti...’*

The song replicates how a young woman sacrifices her youthful life working in tea garden. She is so much caught up in her work that she fails to visit her maternal home, an ailing mother and an aggrieved brother even during a significant festival called Teej. Teej marks the significant festival in the life of a married woman. It is a specific occasion when a married woman gets an opportunity to pay a cheerful visit to her maternal home in celebration which was rarely offered to a woman by her in laws of its time. The song evokes a deep sense of pathos about a woman who fails to visit her home during this significant event due to her engagement as a tea worker in tea garden. The employment here metaphorically addressed as ‘soonko kaanda’, a golden thorn suggesting how the basic needs and poverty in tea garden leads a woman to suffer the plight of exploitation by the hands of capitalists and how a woman submits herself to the colonial oppression. The song very symbolically tries to portray the life of a struggling woman in tea garden which clashes with the romantic representation of female beauty plucking tea leaves in photographs and cinemas. Their hard work and struggle are often covered within the periphery of economic surplus and glamour exercised by the tea industries. For many of such instances the ‘tea’ stands as the symbol of ‘blood’ as it heralds within an untold saga of tea workers beyond the words can ever express. From a green bush to a sophisticated cup of world class beverage it absorbs the blood of all those tea workers who works tirelessly and silently. The song can be treated as an agency to speak and express themselves, the voice which can be heard.

Ranjit Guha a pioneer figure of Subaltern Studies has referred to this term subaltern to indicate a kind of deprived class or section which ensemble within the representation of the oppressor and oppressed. The subaltern studies focus on retaking the history for the suppressed classes whose voices had not been heard earlier and intended to get rid of colonial legacy of elitism and giving a way to the subaltern voices. The songs on or from tea garden which came into existence during late 19<sup>th</sup> century and afterwards are basically the retelling of the realities and claims to represent the voices of the subalterns. Guha in his seminal essay *‘Subaltern Studies I’* (Guha 1982) affirms that historiography cannot perhaps convey, examine or recognize the kind of transformations or inputs carried by common people themselves, this further suggests that the representation must have been done by the subalterns themselves to eradicate diversions and suppositions. The diversions and suppositions may lead to the confusion as the lives portrayed in fictional stories and films can often be treated as an imposed reality. To elaborate this idea



incorporated by Guha there is one popular song on tea garden which somehow can be treated as the specimen of such imposed reality. The song titled as Chiyaabaarima in Nepali film 'Lahure' (1989), a film by legendary director/ writer Tulsi Ghimire, the heroine is filmed as a tea worker who rejoices her alluring beauty and womanhood amidst the green valleys of tea bushes singing and dancing along with her friends probably leaving the impression that life of a woman labourer in tea garden looks like a heroine in the song. The harsh reality is not explored here and it has been used in a very commercial manner irrespective of reality. The song projects the idealised version of a woman tea worker having no resemblance to the facts. Analysing the song at present time when the concept of feminism is no longer the foreign idea or bound by geo-political boundaries, as a female observer one can trace the misrepresentation or the romantic representation of the plight of women worker in tea garden in this song. The women workers experience double layer of marginalization, one determined by the class and the other by gender however, song is a romantic disposition of the sad reality of tea garden. There is an utter need of speaking the harsh truth and it cannot be spoken by an observer or a mere thinker but it should be spoken by the one who experiences it and has encountered the reality. Eventually the time has come when the subaltern can just not speak rather sings about her own problems, and tells her own story indeed. The lost space between the ever silenced 'Centre' and exploited 'Margins' seems to be travelled by literary narratives and lyrical outburst of an era. In this context one song needs a specific mention which is written and composed by Dr. Pushkar Parajuli and sung by Anupama Pradhan, produced in the year 2022.

*Bihaandekhi belukisamma Chiyaabaarima*  
*Hariyo hariyo sapana dekhchu chiyaabaarima*

This song tends to debunk all the preconceived romantic notion of working woman of chiyaabaari highlighting the fact that how their aspirations and dreams remain unfulfilled even after working tirelessly for entire day. A woman in a tea garden continues working even in unfavourable weather condition, drained by rain, soaked in perspiration, sick or tired never being excused and still under paid and unacknowledged for bringing up world class tea into production. Life of a woman in tea garden is never so simple and beautiful as it is shown in the romantic films and stories. The song indicates the gap often occurred in historiography about the reality and its representation further opening up a new window to see through.

In an early discussion of this paper, it is mentioned that, this study would have a female gaze on the tea garden songs. In certain way this paper has been influenced by the popular Nigerian feminist Chimamanda Adichie and her take on feminism. Chimamanda in her seminal essay '*We Should All Be Feminists*' (Adichie 2015) attempts to define feminism in layman's words saying that gender stereotypes and ingrained ideas to support gap between men and women have to be challenged. She explains how a cultural shift is necessary to achieve gender equality and how every one of us may play certain role in bringing transformation. We should all be feminists to support women's emancipation and encourage males to have discussion on these issues. Feminism is misunderstood by both the sexes considering it the movement against each other. In true sense advocating for women's right and making world better place for them is what feminism stands for. This paper may be charged and counter attacked for not speaking



much on male labourers and speaking more about women labourers however, this would generate new space for discussion and pursuance on men tea workers.

The songs which have been taken into discussion largely highlight the fact that women are not dependant on men for their livelihood and earn for family. This is apparently breaking down the social taboos on gender roles where men are treated as the head of the family organization or any other social or commercial organization on the basis of their physical strength and gender role. Men and women differ from one another in terms of hormones, sexual organs, and biological capacities and this is universally accepted fact. Physical strength was once considered as the significant quality of being superior but at modern context this doesn't imply. If in case the physical strength is a crucial quality of being superior then we cannot overlook the physical strength a woman worker put in the field of tea garden. Considering this fact the social acknowledgement is expected from all class of people regarding the women's ability to run her household by earning and sharing the equal burden with man serving the family needs. The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than how we are. Chimamanda suggests, Feminism is also attached to human rights in general. In short, to be possessed with feministic approach on certain social issues is not unethical or biased. The time has evolved and so the societal norms too. The new world has emerged out of the differences set on the gender roles which has been seen in acknowledging the existence of woman as crucial as man in constructing better society and better world and have started empathizing with them in their journey of protest against the exploitation and social oppression. There is nothing wrong in being feminist, feminism is a global phenomenon which shall be claimed and practiced by male and female both like all other theoretical disciplines. In this regard it would be appropriate to mention a song which frames men's empathetic gesture towards women tea workers encompassing the idea that we all should be feminist. The song is written by Amir Sundas and composed by Kumar Sundas which has fuelled the protest rallies led by tea workers in various tea gardens, the recent of which is witnessed at Longview Tea Estate where workers are seen voicing for their basic rights. The song says;

*M- Kalam kaati haataima thela ni*  
*Chaatti dukhcha sakinna mela ni*  
*Chiyaako botaima baini khoi timro haasno othaima?*  
*F- Chiyaabarima ke sharo hela ni*  
*Hami hasne chaina hai bela ni*  
*Haanshu kasari? dukha sahera baanchu kasari?*

This song is a predicament of tea workers, basically of women whose happiness has been long lost despite of their tremendous hard work and dedication towards their work. The amount of physical labour they put in bringing up large demand teas across the globe has confined themselves into the tea bushes. Many of these workers experience health problems due to excessive work and malnutrition. The substance of money they get for their hard work is not enough to fetch them proper meal and nutrition, there is no proper medical facilities, no allowances, nothing at all. They are just surviving, have no expectations and hopes regarding anything. They are the mere object for profit making, the unconditional source of manpower



for the capitalists and industries. One can find ample of references to such crisis faced by tea labourers across the region and can validate their own assumptions on it.

In a concluding manner the song written and composed by Basanta Thapa and sung by Bhawana Thapa will speak up about a grieving woman worker who seems to be lamenting about her own plight as a tea worker. A tea worker's life is full of crisis and they are struggling for the basic necessities of life since ages. The price hike in Darjeeling tea is causing high profit for its owners whereas tea workers are still very much deprived of getting required amount of wages. Song says;

*Chiyako vaaw badera soonai vaisakyo*  
*Jyaanko vane mol ghati shunyai vaisakyo*  
*Aaa hai kamaaneko patti tipne haatai baiguni*  
*Aaa hai jatti dukkha garepani sukhai nahune.....*

The song is a burning satire on the exploitation taking place in the tea garden. The men from tea garden areas have migrated themselves to other part of the nation in search of employment. The women left with no option have sacrificed their youth and entire life plucking tea leaves and serving ruthless companies. Women have no escape from this injustice and exploitation therefore suffer a lot to run their livelihood inside and outside home. A woman has always been the centre of suppression and subjugation to the power and patriarchy both.

The songs from tea garden are the voices of all those subalterns who have started singing for themselves to make themselves heard. They retell their own stories of struggle, injustice and exploitation through songs. Songs are not just a medium of entertainment in current scenario but it is all about representing the reality which can be considered as a step ahead towards deconstructing colonial narratives and reconstructing postcolonial narratives. Any form of art can be considered as an institution to bring social reforms. The songs are also considered as an instrument to revolutionize the preconceived romantic notion associated with the portrayal of tea workers' plight. In recent times there are many songs written, composed, sung and filmed which speaks of the truth but not the idea. There are bulk of Indian-Nepali writings that forms a specific space for tea garden literature however, it still demands our acute seriousness towards forming tea garden songs writing as the separate literary genre in the literary domain of Indian Nepali writings. If taken an initiative this could further lead to an emergent of new lyrical genre not only in regional language but also in English language too making it a global read. In view of subaltern studies to have a female gaze on these songs would possibly surface the recurring idea of women as an object of exploitation at one hand and women as an epitome of perseverance, resilience, strength and sacrifice at the other hand. All these songs have highlighted the untold saga of women's struggle for survival as a human being first and then a social being the later. Henceforth there is an utter need of understanding the fact that all women are subalterns but all subalterns are not women and to justify this idea the subaltern sings and must sing for themselves to the world, the world which is full of differences and discriminations imposed upon women.



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## **Tunes of the Hills and the Indian Classical Music: An Analytical Study**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the rich tapestry of hill tunes in relation to Indian classical music, emphasizing the intricate connection between traditional folk music of the Indian hills and classical traditions. It aims to identify and analyse the melodic, rhythmic and structural characteristics of hill tunes, particularly their links to classical music in North India. The music of the hills features compositions that have influenced the creation of ragas in Indian classical music. This paper focuses on how the melodic structures of hill tunes have been absorbed into Hindustani classical music. It examines how these folk melodies enrich and diversify classical traditions, highlighting their significance in shaping musical expressions.*

*Using qualitative methods like field recordings and comparative musical analysis, this research uncovers significant findings on scale usage, ornamentation and thematic material. Many hill melodies display notable parallels with classical ragas, particularly in their specific intervals and improvisational techniques. Additionally, the study reveals how cultural narratives within hill music resonate with the emotive expressions in classical compositions, highlighting a mutual influence that enriches both genres.*

*The conclusion highlights the importance of recognizing these similarities to enhance appreciation for India's diverse musical landscape. By advocating for the integration of hill tunes within the classical music framework, this research promotes a holistic approach to understanding and preserving India's musical heritage. Acknowledging the contributions of hill tunes broadens appreciation for regional diversity and encourages their inclusion in contemporary classical practices, enriching the classical repertoire and deepening our understanding of India's vibrant musical landscape.*

**Keywords:** Hill tunes, Indian classical music, musical similarities, melodic analysis, cultural heritage.

### **Introduction:**

India's musical heritage is a blend of classical and folk traditions that coexist and influence each other. The Indian classical music system, with its elaborate ragas and rhythmic cycles (taals), has evolved over centuries, while the folk traditions have remained deeply rooted in the everyday lives of people, often passing through oral transmission. The Himalayan region of India—comprising states like Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh—has a unique cultural and musical identity, shaped by its geography, history and diverse communities.



India as a land of diverse cultures, its music reflects this diversity, with regional folk traditions playing an integral role in the country's musical fabric. The folk music of the hill areas in India, including those from the Himalayas, Western Ghats and the North-Eastern regions, displays unique characteristics influenced by geography, spirituality and local traditions. While these folk traditions are often viewed as separate from classical music, an analytical examination reveals a significant overlap in terms of melodic structures (ragas) and rhythmic patterns (talas). This paper explores the connections between the folk music of India's hill regions and Hindustani classical music, focusing on the similarities in the musical forms, modes and rhythms. By comparing the melodies, modes and rhythms in the folk music of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and the North-Eastern states with the corresponding ragas and talas, this study highlights the profound interrelationship between these two musical worlds.

### **Geographical and Cultural Landscape of the Hills of India:**

India's hill regions are diverse in geography and culture, each offering a distinct reflection of the environment and traditions of the people who inhabit them. However, the musical traditions of the hills and Indian classical music are not entirely separate entities. There are fascinating overlaps and mutual influences between the two. The hills of India stretch across various parts of the country, from the northern states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh to the Northeastern states and the eastern Himalayan regions of Darjeeling and Sikkim.

### **Uttarakhand:**

Uttarakhand, nestled in the northern part of India, is a state rich in natural beauty and spiritual significance. Known as the "Devbhoomi" (Land of Gods), Uttarakhand is home to the Garhwali and Kumaoni communities, whose folk music and cultural practices are deeply intertwined with their environment.

### **Cultural Features-**

The region's culture is shaped by its mountainous terrain and its association with the sacredness of rivers and forests. Historically, the state had accommodated different ethnic societies like the Garhwalis, the Kumaonis and the Jaunsaris who enriched their mountainous land with different forms of songs.<sup>33</sup>

### **Music-**

Garhwali folk songs are typically accompanied by traditional instruments like the dhol, damau, turri and bhankora. The instruments used in Kumaoni music, such as the *hurka*, *dholki* and *masakbeen*. These instruments produce a rhythmic, meditative sound, creating an atmosphere of reflection during religious ceremonies, harvest festivals and local celebrations. The songs often center around themes of devotion to deities, nature and life in the mountains.

### **Melodic Structures-**

The melodies of Garhwali and Kumaoni folk music often align with classical ragas like Phadi, Madhmad Sarang, Megh, Pilu and Gara which are known for their simplicity and emotional

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<sup>33</sup> [Folk Songs of Uttarakhand: A Journey in Music Through the Himalayas | Orchids International School](#)



depth, reflecting the spiritual themes prevalent in Uttarakhand's music. The melodies of Uttarakhand's folk music are characterized by simple, repetitive and pentatonic structures that emphasize emotional depth, especially themes of devotion to nature and deities.

### **Rhythmic Patterns-**

Folk songs in Uttarakhand often use instruments like the 'Dhol & Damoun', 'Daur & Thali', 'Turri', 'Ransingha', 'Dholki', 'Masakbhaja', 'Bhankora'. Nowadays, Harmonium and Tabla are also in use. Folk rhythms in Uttarakhand often mirror rhythms like Dadra and Kaharwa, with repetitive and simple patterns, complementing folk dances and religious rituals.

For example, Garhwali Folk song *Basant Ritu ma Jaiye*, *Ghughuti*, *Fyondaliya* and many folk songs has flavour of Raga Madhmad Sarang, *Tu Dikhyandi* song is close to Raga Shuddha Kalyan.

Kumaoni Folk *Naina ho ya* in Taal Deepchandi, *Thando re Thando* in Taal kaharwa, *Chana Bilauri* in Taal Rupak or *Deepchandi* beautifully reveals the Raga Pahadi. Kumaoni Holi *Basanti Narangi* in Taal Deepchandi depicts flavour of Raga Gara and Pilu. *Bedu Pako Baramasa* famous Kumaoni folk in Variations of Taal Dadra is in Raga Durga.

### **Himachal Pradesh:**

Himachal Pradesh, located to the west of Uttarakhand, is another hill state in northern India with a distinct cultural and musical identity. The state is known for its breathtaking landscapes and a rich diversity of ethnic groups, such as the Kullu, Chamba and Lahaul-Spiti communities.

### **Cultural Features-**

The music and dance of Himachal Pradesh are deeply integrated with religious rituals, agricultural practices and seasonal cycles. The state's folk music often involves themes of devotion, love and daily life in the hills, with a strong connection to local festivals and celebrations. Additionally, Himachal Pradesh is known for its vibrant Nati and Chamba dances, which are performed alongside the music during social gatherings and festive occasions.

### **Music-**

The Musical instruments which are frequently used by the folk artists of Himachal Pradesh are Ranasinga, Drums, Karna, Turhi, Flute, Ektara, Kindari, Jhanjh, Manjara, Chimta, Ghariyal and Ghunghru.

**Percussion Instruments:** This is one of the main instruments for the Himachalis. A variety of drums are played like Dhol, Dholku, Dolki, Nagara, Damama, Damanght, Nagarath, Gajju, Doru, Hudak and Dhaunsa. In the Kinnaur, Lahaul, Pangl, Sirmaur and Kullu areas, drums of different shapes and sizes are played at different festivals.

**Idiophones:** Instruments like Jhanjh (large cymbals), Manjira (small cymbals), Chimta (tongs). Ghanta (gongs), Ghariyal (large gong), Thali (platter), Ghunghru (bells), Kokatha Murchang (a stringed instrument played with a bow with bells) are very popular in folk dramas like Jagarata, Bhagat and Kariyala etc. The folk singers of the Chamba valley known as Ghurai sing to the accompaniment of cymbals.



**Wind Instruments:** Rana Singha, Karnal, Turhi and Flute or Bishudi, Algoja (twin flutes), Shehnai or Peepni are popular wind instruments.

**String Instruments:** Ektara, Kindari Davatra, Gramyang or Rabab, Sarnagi, Jumang and Ruman are some stringed instruments, commonly used by professional singers. Gramyang, Rumals, Jumang are tribal instruments of the Lahaul and Kinnaur areas.<sup>34</sup>

In Himachal Pradesh, folk music beautifully captures themes of love, bravery, devotion and the changing seasons through a rich variety of songs and instruments. The romantic Jhoori of Sirmaur, the longing tones of Kullu Valley's Laman songs and the energetic Gangi and Tappe reflect love in its many forms. Seasonal transitions are celebrated with lively songs like Dholru, while ceremonies are marked by the deep resonance of Ghanta and Ghariyal. Traditional string instruments like the Ektara and Kindari add emotional depth to the melodies. The valor of warriors is immortalized in Bare-Haren ballads, while Alhaini songs offer solace in grief. Devotional songs like Karak express reverence for deities, reflecting the region's spiritual richness. Folk traditions from various districts, such as Fulmu Ranjhu (Chamba) and Hari Singh Raajeya (Kangra), are accompanied by percussion instruments like the Dhol and Nagara, creating a vibrant musical landscape across Himachal Pradesh.<sup>35</sup>

#### **Melodic Structures-**

Himachali folk songs feature simple, emotive melodies with three to four notes and distinctive "standing vowels" for vocal resonance. Rhythmic patterns like Dadra, Kaharwa and Rupak add structure, while classical ragas like Pahadi, Bhupali and Tilak Kamod convey a range of emotions. The music blends folk and classical elements, creating a unique style that resonates spiritually. Songs from regions like Kullu, Chamba and Lahaul-Spiti reflect community life, devotion and nature, with melodies evoking longing, joy, or melancholy, often drawing on ragas such as Brindabani Sarang, Durga and Tilang.<sup>36</sup>

#### **Rhythmic Patterns-**

In Himachal Pradesh, rhythmic patterns (taals) shape the mood and enhance cultural experiences. For instance, the Mujra Taal sets a serene tone for devotional songs, while Banthra Taal adds emotion to folk dramas. Naati Taal, central to the Kullu Nati dance, varies in tempo (1, 2, 4 or 8 matras) to match the dance's energy. Specific taals like Gugga Puja Taal (4-matra) and Haran Taal (6-matra) accompany festivals and folk theatre. These rhythms, often aligned

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<sup>34</sup> <https://abhipedia.abhimanu.com/Article/State/NTE2NjQEEQQVV/Folk-Music-of-Himachal-Pradesh-Himachal-Pradesh-State>

<sup>35</sup> Swar Sindhu: National Peer-Reviewed/Refereed Journal of Music, Volume 12, Issue 01, January-June, 2024, Pg. No. 456

<sup>36</sup> IJCRT, Volume 11, 2023, c40



with classical talas like Jhaptal and Dhamar, give Himachali folk music its unique sound and cultural depth.<sup>37</sup>

Laman in Taal Rupak and Raga Mishra Pahadi, Amma Puchh di in Taal Rupak, the composition looks similar to phrase of Raga Desh. Songs of Folk Dance Nati are generally in Raga Pahadi. In Himachali folk music, the melodies are often connected with specific ragas, taals (rhythmic cycles) and rasas (emotions). This association with classical music elements not only elevates the songs but also enhances their expressive power. The shadow of ragas such as Pahari, Durga, Sarang, Peelu, Bhimpalasi, Malgunji, Hanskinkani, Jhunjhoti, Des, Megh, Khamaj, Bhupali, Jaijavanti, Sindoor, Tilak Kamod, Shivranjani, Bilawal, Kalyan and Bihag indicates the rich diversity and variety present in Himachali folk music.<sup>38</sup>

### **Jammu & Kashmir:**

Jammu & Kashmir, located in the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent, is a region where music and culture have been deeply influenced by centuries of diverse traditions, including Sufi mysticism, Persian influences and local Kashmiri folk elements.

### **Cultural Features-**

The cultural landscape of Jammu & Kashmir is rich with history and the music of this region often evokes a sense of longing, spirituality and melancholy, much like the state's picturesque and sometimes tumultuous mountainous surroundings. Sufi influence, in particular, has led to a tradition of mystical music that emphasizes emotional expression and introspection.

### **Music-**

It typically features a variety of instruments, such as the sarangi (a bowed string instrument), the sitar (a plucked string instrument), the tabla (a pair of hand drums), the harmonium (a keyboard instrument) and the dholak (a two-headed drum). In Jammu & Kashmir, music is both devotional and reflective, often revolving around themes of longing, spirituality and divine love. Santoor, rabab and tabla are the principal instruments used in Kashmiri music, producing delicate, resonant tones. The region's music is deeply intertwined with its religious practices and often accompanies Sufi rituals, religious festivals and other spiritual gatherings. The melancholic tunes of the Rabab or the haunting resonance of the santoor evoke the region's rich spiritual and cultural heritage.

### **Melodic Structures-**

Chakri, a popular traditional folk music form in Jammu and Kashmir that is performed by both Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandit<sup>39</sup>, is sung in Dadra or Kaharwa Taal, but the Dugun is in special Rhythmic pattern and composed in Raag Kafi. It is accompanied by Rabab, Sarangi,

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<sup>37</sup> Swar Sindhu: National Peer-Reviewed/Refereed Journal of Music, Volume 12, Issue 01, January-June, 2024, Pg. No. 457

<sup>38</sup> IJCRT, Volume 11, 2023, c42

<sup>39</sup> [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_of\\_Jammu\\_and\\_Kashmir#:~:text=the%20hafiz%20nagma.-,Chakri,'enzi%20raat\)%20during%20weddings](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Jammu_and_Kashmir#:~:text=the%20hafiz%20nagma.-,Chakri,'enzi%20raat)%20during%20weddings)



Pitcher, geger, harmonium, tumbaknaer and chimta. Rouf Folk Music has different songs some of which resembles Raga Malgunji, Raga Bhairavi, Raga Desh and Raga Pahadi also.

Hafiz Nagma a rare folk, whose concept came from South east Asia, is sung in Kaharwa (vilambit and after that in drut) has its composition in Raga Bhairavi.

Sufiyana Music is Classical Music of Kashmir, brought from Iran, Sout East Asia or Greece.<sup>40</sup> Its structure resembles from Hindustani Classical Music in many respects. Santoor is the major instrument of this music. The counterpart to Indian Raga System is ‘Maqam’.

A Sufiana Mausiqi performance begins with a Shakal, an instrumental prelude similar to Hindustani music’s Chalan or Alaap, but focused on introducing the Maqam’s structure rather than the melody, typically played on the Santoor by the ensemble’s leader. This Shakal lasts from half a minute to two minutes and sets the foundation for the performance. Following the Shakal is the Nasr, a short, unaccompanied recitation of Lalle-Vaakh couplets by Lalleshwari, performed without rhythm to prepare the listener for the poetry (Bathe) that follows. The Bathe consists of verses set to specific Maqams and Tala cycles, with each verse linked to a distinct rhythmic pattern. Notably, the longest Tala cycles, such as Hejaz (14 Matras), are performed first, followed by shorter ones like Yektala (12 Matras), Sehtala (12 Matras) and Duyeka (8 Matras), shaping the overall rhythm and progression of the performance. This structure combines melodic, rhythmic and poetic elements to create a spiritually immersive experience.<sup>41</sup>

### **Rhythmic Patterns-**

Kashmiri rhythms, often slow and measured, resemble Kaharwa and Dadra, typically played with tabla and pakhawaj. The Khemta Tal, unique to Kashmir, is smooth and graceful. Rabindranath Tagore innovatively incorporated this rhythm into Bengali music, adding a new dimension to its expression and blending regional styles.<sup>42</sup>

### **North-Eastern India:**

The North-Eastern states of India, including Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, are a vast region of great ethnic and cultural diversity, home to many indigenous tribes and communities. These areas are not only geographically remote but also culturally distinct, with each tribe and region possessing its own unique musical identity.

### **Cultural Features-**

The music of North-Eastern India is deeply connected to the agricultural cycles, religious ceremonies and festivals of the indigenous communities. The landscape—characterized by rolling hills, dense forests and rivers—shapes the music, which often incorporates themes of nature, life and seasonal change.

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<sup>40</sup> <https://youtu.be/UzDlf0TQI9k?si=HXfoqnwF1G3yJtq9>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.jkpi.org/music-of-kashmir-past-perfect-future-uncertain/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.tablatheka.com/2022/07/kashmiri-khemta-taal-6-beats.html>



### **Music-**

Folk music in the North-Eastern states is diverse and includes a wide range of traditional instruments, often made from bamboo. The bamboo flute is especially prominent, alongside instruments like the sarinda (a stringed instrument), drums and gongs. The music of these regions is often complex, with rhythmic patterns and pentatonic melodies that reflect the cultural richness and traditions of the indigenous people. The music is frequently performed during agricultural rituals and community festivals.

### **Melodic Structures-**

Many folk songs from North-Eastern India use pentatonic scales, akin to ragas like Bhupali, Madhmadh Sarang, which also utilize five notes, enhancing the emotionally evocative nature of the music. The songs of Assamese Folk Dance *Bihu* are in Raga Pahadi. Folk dance *Galo of Arunachal Pradesh* has Raga Malkauns scale. “Lawei Ban Phyrnai” Khasi song of Meghalaya is in Raga Pahadi. Folk song of Molsom community of Tripura resembles Raga Shivaranjani.<sup>43</sup> Many folk songs of Tripura are like the other folk compositions of hilly area in Raga Pahadi. For example- *Bolongoni Toksa* and *Lebang Bumani*. Most of the Nagaland’s folk Music resembles the scale of Raga Bhupali.

### **Rhythmic Patterns-**

The complex rhythms in North-Eastern music align with classical talas such as Teental, Dadra, Kaharwa and Rupak, which are irregular and suited to intricate dances and songs. The use of bamboo instruments like the flute and drums adds to the syncopated rhythms.

### **Darjeeling and Sikkim:**

The hill stations of Darjeeling and Sikkim, located in the eastern part of the Himalayas, are a blend of diverse cultural influences. These areas reflect a fusion of Nepali, Tibetan and Bengali cultural elements, particularly in music and dance.

### **Cultural Features-**

The culture of Darjeeling and Sikkim is influenced by their proximity to Nepal and Tibet, with strong Buddhist traditions, alongside elements of Nepali and Bengali communities. The region is known for its scenic beauty and its fusion of different cultural influences, which is particularly evident in its folk music and dance forms.

### **Music-**

The folk music of Darjeeling and Sikkim is lively and joyful, often performed with instruments like the madal (a drum), dhol (a larger drum) and flute. The music is often characterized by its vibrant rhythms and simple, yet emotive melodies. It reflects themes of longing, separation, devotion and celebration and is frequently performed during religious ceremonies, social gatherings and community celebrations. The dance forms associated with this music are equally colorful and expressive, often involving large groups of dancers.

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<sup>43</sup> <https://youtu.be/z6UdHzNW0WA?si=S-EnVfI3KtdjO3mm>



### **Melodic Structures-**

The folk melodies in Darjeeling and Sikkim draw from ragas such as Bhupali, Durga known for their light, playful and emotive qualities, reflecting the joyful and celebratory nature of the region's folk music. Interestingly, the folk music traditions of regions like Darjeeling and Sikkim in the northeastern Himalayan belt also share thematic and emotional similarities with Raga Pahadi. While the folk songs of these regions are not strict renditions of the classical raga, they often reflect the same mood and emotional landscape that Raga Pahadi seeks to evoke.

In Darjeeling, folk songs like "*Sim Sim Sa Ke*" or "*Rato Rato*" (a popular folk song of the region) might reflect the same emotional qualities as Raga Pahadi, such as calmness and devotion. Similarly, in Sikkim, songs sung during the *Lhosar* (Tibetan New Year) or Buddhist rituals are filled with spiritual longing and peaceful reflection, similar to the mood mostly of Raga Bhupali and Pahadi. Sikkim Folk song *Lungpo Chung Chung* has five notes – S g m P n. If we want to fit it in a Raga, then it's close to Bhimpalasi, *Khungsang Gaato*, *zhiche zhiche* folk songs resembles Raga Bhupali. Traditional Lepcha romantic song *Renjyongmu Anum*, *Bayul Mi Cha*, *Denjong Charab*, *Kayusa* are some of the folk songs in Raga Pahadi.

### **Rhythmic Patterns-**

The rhythms of Darjeeling and Sikkim's folk music mirror classical patterns like Dadra and Teentaal, which are often used in energetic dances such as Nepali Chhewar and Bengali Baul songs.

### **Analysis of Melodic and Rhythmic Structure of Folk Music of Hills:**

The music of the hills, associated with regions like Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kashmir and the northeastern states of India, is deeply intertwined with the geography and culture of these areas. These regions are characterized by mountainous landscapes, distinct climatic conditions and isolation from major urban centers, which influence not only the musical instruments used but also the overall sound and structure of the music.

In all these states in the Himalayan Belt, one melodic structure of pentatonic notes in their folk song is common. Along with it there are also folk tunes comprising only three to four notes. It should be noted that while these folk tunes featured 3 to 4 notes, a raga required a minimum of five notes. As a result, these folk tunes were gradually assimilated, refined and modified to give them a classical raga structure before being granted a place in Indian Raga music.

On the other hand, Indian classical music is more formalized, with a rich theoretical framework rooted in texts like the 'Natya Shastra and 'Sangeet Ratnakara', which provide a structured approach to ragas (melodic frameworks) and talas (rhythmic cycles). While classical music in India has its own set of rules, it is not entirely disconnected from the regional folk music traditions. Both systems share a common heritage, and their interaction is often evident in the music of the hills, where classical elements are adapted and incorporated into local folk forms.

Most of the folk tunes are sung in different variations of Taal Dadra and Kahawa. In Kashmir there is Persian effect on their Folk as well as their Classical Music. The folk music of India's



hill regions shares certain similarities with classical music, especially in melodic structures and rhythmic patterns, while also retaining unique regional characteristics.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the folk music of the hill regions of India, particularly from states like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir and the North-Eastern states, reflects a rich blend of geographical, cultural and spiritual influences. Rooted in the natural beauty of the mountains and the sacred connection to the land, these musical traditions often combine simple, emotive melodies with rhythmic patterns that echo classical Indian music while maintaining distinct regional characteristics. Instruments like the dhol, sarangi, bamboo flute, santoor, pungi, channash, khajari, rabab and tambura create resonant soundscapes that enhance the spiritual and communal themes found in the music. These instruments, handcrafted from locally available materials, contribute to the unique tonal qualities and textures of Himalayan folk music, whether accompanying dances, rituals, or devotional songs.

While the folk traditions are deeply tied to local customs, agricultural cycles and religious practices, they also exhibit a seamless integration of classical influences, particularly using ragas and talas. The rhythmic structure of Himalayan folk music plays a crucial role in shaping the mood and energy of the performance. Rhythms such as Dadra, Kaharwa and Rupak are commonly used, with simple yet repetitive patterns that complement the dances and rituals of the region. In Himachal Pradesh, the Naati Taal, central to the energetic Nati dance, reflects a lively and communal rhythm, while in Kashmir, rhythmic cycles like Kaharwa and Khemta Tal provide a slow, meditative flow that enhances the spiritual atmosphere.

As the music towards the northern part of the Himalayan region in Kashmir is influenced by Southeast Asia, similarly, as we move towards the northeastern regions, we see a similarity in the folk music of these areas with Chinese music, given their proximity to China. The influence of Raga Bhairavi, an impact of Persian music, is apparent in the region, while Chinese pentatonic scales like Raga Bhupali are also heard in Northeastern folk music. Along with the use of shades of various ragas from Hindustani classical music, Raga Pahadi remains common across the Himalayan region's folk music, adding a distinctive touch to the compositions. Whether it's the devotional songs of Uttarakhand, the vibrant rhythms of Himachal Pradesh, or the soulful melodies of Jammu & Kashmir, the music of these regions forms an integral part of their cultural identity, connecting the people to their environment, their deities and each other.

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## **Traditional Music of Sikkim as Soft Power in Improving Cross-Border Interactions with China**

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### **Abstract**

*Sikkim is strategically located and is surrounded by three countries, China in the north, Nepal to the west, and Bhutan to the east. It is also very close to India's Siliguri corridor, which is near Bangladesh. Considering its international boundaries and complex long-standing territorial disputes with China, it becomes necessary to reorient Indian diplomacy through the plenipotentiaries of folk music and by inculcating Cultural diplomacy as an important element of the country's soft power. This paper focuses on the mountainous traditional music of Sikkim for instilling vibrant and everlasting friendly relations with our neighbours, which is considered a global language connecting people across cultures, borders, and beliefs while folk music forms a significant part of the cultural heritage of India. It is imperative to portray India's folk music which forms an important part of foreign policy and cultural diplomacy and use of the folk music of Sikkim, an important aspect of cultural and political diplomacy to strengthen relations between India and China. Political relations between the two are at a deadlock, in the Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh region, especially after the Doklam crisis and Nathu La clashes in Sikkim. Despite many diplomatic negotiations to resolve territorial confrontations peacefully, tensions between the two have run high but as of today, the two nations have come to a peaceful nexus on withdrawing their troops from the borders in the recent international meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit at Kazan in Russia, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2024, which makes it relevant and exigent to explore the power and use of the traditional music of Sikkim as an important national soft-power resource, to improve our cross-border interactions and peaceful coexistence with China. This will facilitate the cultural exchange of ideas, beliefs, and traditions that can foster mutual understanding between the two. The objective of this research is to bring to light the vibrant parameters of the folk music of Sikkim as an important component of cultural diplomacy and promoting people-to-people relations. This study will also focus on various strategies that can be employed concerning the use of the traditional music of Sikkim as Soft Power, to bridge the gap in relations between India and China. This study will use analytical research methodology to understand the complex long-standing Indo-China border dispute through bilateral talks and diplomacy, by disseminating the folk music tradition and education of Sikkim.*

**Keywords:** Folk Music, Indo-China Relations, Cultural Diplomacy, Plenipotentiaries, Soft Power, Strategy, militarized.



## **Introduction:**

Sikkim is a small mountainous state of the eastern Himalayas fixed on its North by Tibet, on the East by Bhutan and Tibet, and, on the West by Nepal for India its proximity to the Siliguri Corridor is very vital. The population of Sikkim is composed of three major ethnic groups, the **Lepchas**, the **Bhutia**, and the **Nepalis** wherein the **Lepchas** are considered indigenous inhabitants of the state, while the **Bhutia**, previously known as **Khampas** are the migrants from Kham, a Tibetan province who entered Sikkim from Bhutan and settled at higher altitudes of the region, bringing along with them the Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism. The Nepali community is believed to have migrated from the Tsong province of Tibet to Sikkim by the way of Nepal to the west<sup>44</sup> (Gajrani 2004, 330). The inundation of immigrants from the neighbourhood along with the earliest inhabitants Lepchas, played a significant role in shaping the cultural diversity of the state and fabricating a quintessential Sikkimese culture.

Throughout the year Sikkimese are known to celebrate festivals with enthusiasm and indulge in fascinating and lively music and dances. Each of the ethnic communities carried their unique traditional folk music. The lives of some Sikkimese are dependent upon folk music demonstrations. India's Foreign and Neighbourhood Policy with Sikkim and other neighbouring states is intended to maintain international peace and security by safeguarding national interest, to strengthening its cross-border relations. Emphatically culture, dance, music, and traditional art forms have always been embedded under soft power, and folk music being the core and brain of the foreign policy of India, also has been an integral part of Sikkimese culture which goes hand in hand to pacify Indo-Chinese relations.

## **Indo-Chinese Territorial Dispute at Sikkim International Border:**

India and China relations are often perceived as longstanding territorial disputes at the western zone in Ladakh, the Middle zone in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, and the Eastern Zone in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh of the Sino-Indian border with numerous clashes and military standoffs between the two nations succeeding the Sino-India War of 1962. Although peace treaties have been signed between the two nations, in vain, they remain objectively ambiguous.

The tiny Indian state of Sikkim is located in the eastern zone, and witnessed the fiercest clash with China in 1962 since its occupation of Tibet, India's geostrategic importance of Sikkim has been a growing concern for its security the reason behind it, is the Chinese road access to the Doklam plateau which would in turn threaten and destabilize the strategically vulnerable Siliguri corridor that links India with the North-Eastern states. Moreover, Indian military experts are prudent over Sikkim which is the only Himalayan stretch heavily fortified with military installations and with its topographical and tactical advantage by which India could give an impenetrable blockade to the Chinese intrusion.

Doklam is a narrow plateau located at the tri-junction of India, Bhutan, and China, and is very close to Chicken's Neck. The issue began when India obstructed the Chinese road

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<sup>44</sup> Prof. S. Gajrani, *History, Religion and Culture of India- History, Religion and Culture of North-East India, Volume 6*, (Delhi: Isha Books, 2004), pp. 320-359

construction at the Doklam plateau, which India and Bhutan consider as a part of Bhutan, whereas China's claims over it were internationally nullified and subsequently China also refrained Indian pilgrims from traveling to Kailash Manasarovar through the Nathu La pass in Sikkim. Given the disturbed scenario on the border settlement with India being positive on many issues, are at loggerheads without a solution. But India has to wait and see if the peace talks between the Indian Prime Minister and the Chinese President at the **16<sup>th</sup> BRICS Summit** held on Oct.22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> 2024 in Russia between India and China will work out positively.

### **Connections Between Traditional, Socio-Cultural, and Agricultural Folk Music of Sikkim:**

Folk music occupies a predominant place in Sikkimese culture. Different ethnic communities migrated to Sikkim from nearby areas carried their distinct customs, rituals, and cultural patterns, performing their folk songs and dances on different occasions, thus displaying a gradient of folk culture yet, living in harmony. *Tamang Selo* is a Nepali folk song that holds philosophical thoughts and traditional faith in God sung by the *Tamba* community accompanied by the traditional musical instrument, “*Damphu*”. These are traditional songs expressing themes of joy and happiness of people. Some folk songs of the Tamang community are the workmen's songs that reflect the pain and suffering of the laborers<sup>45</sup> (Chettri and Sharma 2021, 39).



*Figure 1. Tamang Selo Nepali Folk Dance (Photograph: Octave 2019, Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre, Ministry of Culture).*

*Sorathi* is a traditional folk music and drama of the Nepali community Gurungs. It is a religious oral style accompanied by traditional musical instruments like *Maadla* and *Jhurma*. It has sociocultural roots because it is based on the story of Sorathi Rani and the Magar ethnic group of the Gurung community. Every performance in the dance form begins with a prayer to

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<sup>45</sup> Lokesh Chettri and Bishnu K Sharma, “Some Traditional Folk Songs and Dances of Sikkim Himalayas”, *Asian Mirror-International Research Journal* 8, no.2 (2021): pp 32-42.

Goddess Saraswati<sup>46</sup> (Kumar and Napal 2024, 210). We can comprehend that Sorathi folk music holds religious, traditional, historic, and sociocultural significance. *Baramasay* is an agricultural folk song sung during agricultural activities like fodder cutting, collecting firewood, and tilling the soil. *Denjong Chha-Lu* is a folk song and dance performed by men and women of the Bhutia community. *Silok and Ratteuli* are marriage songs sung as a traditional practice during the marriage ceremony. *Deusi and Bhaili* are sung by the women in the Tihar or Deepavali festivals of Nepali communities. *Dhan Nach* is a popular paddy dance as well as holds socio-cultural significance because, after threshing paddy, young unmarried males and females of the community gather together and dance to the folk song. By this, they end up finding the right partner in the group of dancers. *Juwari* is a traditional folk song of



*Figure 2 and 3. Agricultural Song Ku Ku Ku Sung by Singers- Dawa Lamhu Lepcha and Group. 2016. (Photograph: Agricultural Folk Song of North Sikkim- Indian Council of Agricultural Research Agricultural Technology Application Research Institute ICAR-ATARI-Zone III).*

Nepali communities which is sung in gatherings like marriage and festive occasions. It is also sung during agricultural activities like weeding, planting, thrashing crops, and harvesting. *Dhan Nach* is performed by singing *Juwari* song<sup>47</sup> (Chettri and Sharma, 2021).

### **The Synchronization of Folk Music of the Neighbourhood Nations of Sikkim- Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet:**

India's relations with Nepal hold special significance in its foreign policy not only because they enjoy ancient historical, cultural, religious, and traditional linkages, but also because it acts as a buffer state against any future aggression by China from Tibet. Both nations have already built friendly ties based on trust, goodwill, mutual understanding, and cooperation. Nepal and India with their unique folk songs also share a close similarity in cultural tradition and folk music with religion and music as symbiotic agents of soft power. Nepal is a complex mix of different cultures and traditions housing many ethnic groups and

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<sup>46</sup> Santosh Kumar and Sheela Napal, "Sorathi: A Folk Music of Sikkim", *Sangeet Galaxy e-Journal* 13, no.1 (2041): pp.207-218.

<sup>47</sup> Lokesh Chettri and Bishnu K Sharma, "Some Traditional Folk Songs and Dances of Sikkim Himalayas", *Asian Mirror-International Research Journal* 8, no.2 (2021): pp 32-42.

great cultural diversity and the tribal, ethnic, and social groups sing folk songs in Nepali during various festivals, rites and rituals, social events, ceremonies, and agricultural activities. Nepalese women are musicians who perform their duties to the rhythm of nature



*Figure 4. Chutkay- Group Romantic dance of Nepali performed during harvesting season and happy occasion (Photograph: Tourism Department, Government of Sikkim, 2020).*

and on the lap of it. They sing melancholic songs at the event of birth, and naming ceremony<sup>48</sup> (Ghosh 2004, 186). Folk songs and dances are performed by traditional singers and dancers like *Hudkyas*, *Dholis*, *Badis*, *Gandharvas*, and *Damais*. Prayer songs like *Bhajan*, *Baalan*, *Silok*, and *Aarti* are sung by aged men in temples and pilgrimage sites. Folk songs like *Jhyaure*, *Sangini*, *Selo*, and *Deuda* are sung by men and women across eastern and western hill regions, whereas Tamang Selo is in the central hill region. Songs of Nepal *Deusi* are performed by men and *Bhailiny* by women during the *Tihar* festival to wish good health and prosperity to the family. Agricultural songs like *Ropain Geet* (plantation song), and *Dain Geet* (harvesting song) are also performed<sup>49</sup> (Baral 2019, 52). Ritual songs like *Mangal and Sagun* are performed by women or professional singers<sup>50</sup> (UNESCO 2019). Western Nepal has a popular folk song *Sorathi*. With China and India being sandwiched, Nepal is a multi-cultural and multi-diverse country that inhabits a great number of folk songs unique to its ethnic diversity reflecting an aesthetic sense of locals and preserved by oral traditions analogous to Sikkim's culture.

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<sup>48</sup> Mandira Ghosh, *Folk Music of The Himalayas*, (Delhi: Shubhi Publications, 2004), pp. 159-203.

<sup>49</sup> Sujata Baral, "Nepalese Culture: Special Reference to Folk Music and Dance", *Rainbow Journal* 8, no. 1 (2019): pp. 50-55

<sup>50</sup> UNESCO, "*The Intangible Cultural Heritage of Nepal: Future Directions*", (2007)  
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf000156786>



*Figure 5. Chyap-Brung (Nepali) Traditional Musical Instrument of Limboo Ethnic Group (Photograph: Tourism Department, Government of Sikkim 2020).*

Bhutan is a beautifully isolated landscape in the Himalayas with their hereditary folk songs and dances embedded historically in their rituals and occasions and their folk music comprises traditional genres *like boedra and zhungdra*. Folk songs of Bhutan are influenced mainly by *Drupka Buddhism*<sup>51</sup> (SAARC 2015) with varying singing folk tunes in their rituals and festivals meant to socialize and express knowledge and experiences. Folk music lyrics are usually in *Dzongkha, Bumthangkha, and Khengkha* languages and their *Cham dance* is a lively dance performed in masks to folk music.

Tibet is the land of snow mountains, isolated at high altitude sharing its border with Nepal and Sikkim. Since Mahayana Buddhism is practiced in Tibet, music plays a significant role in their festivals and religious ceremonies, and on the eve of the Tibetan New Year attaining the ultimate truth by chanting rhythmic mantras accompanied by cymbals and beating drums the local groups were their unique characteristics. *Black Hat Dance, a popular Lama dance performed annually on saints' days opens with music and chanting by Lama musicians*. Some Tibetan saints, including *Milarepa*, used folk songs for teaching which influenced Japanese *Kumuso* to play the bamboo flute to spread the Buddhist doctrine to street corners, monks composed songs and sang on occasion, or communally sang moralistic songs<sup>52</sup> (Baral 2019, 198).

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<sup>51</sup> SAARC, "Music", SAARC Cultural Centre Sri Lanka (2015) <https://saarcculture.org>

<sup>52</sup> Sujata Baral, "Nepalese Culture: Special Reference to Folk Music and Dance", *Rainbow Journal* 8, no. 1 (2019): pp. 50-55



### **Impact of folk music on society and nations:**

Folk music represents regional tradition and the aesthetic sense of the people and is an integral part of the social milieu with its unique folk songs and dances performed at various festivals and social events. Sikkim is surrounded by a diverse cultural landscape of three nations, Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibet, each of which boasts its distinct performing style, composition, instruments, occasions, and festivals showcasing their unique traditions and practices. Its Folk music encapsulates the joys and sorrows, struggles, and aspirations of people and acts as a *unifying force fostering harmony and integrity that transcends the boundaries of nations, religions, languages, and ethnicities not only of the Himalayan region of Sikkim but of the globe*. These events provide space for intercultural dialogue and exchange of ideas, traditions, customs, and practice thus fostering deeper appreciation among the diverse landscape of folk music tradition.

### **Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power as an Instrument to Foster Sikkim Music in The International Platform:**

Culture has become a vital tool to influence diplomacy as it can promote peace and prevent conflicts. Culture refers to traditions, values, beliefs, customs, rituals, art, and language that are passed down through the generations. *Sikkim's matrix of peace and creativity is found in its deep-rooted folk songs, music, and dance* which has its distinct cultural practices and art, and the exchange of these cultural traditions between nations can heal the ruptures created by politics. Cultural diplomacy is defined as the “exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their people to foster mutual understanding”<sup>53</sup>(Cummings, 2003,1).

Historical references suggest that Indian art and culture have a global impact when Cultural diplomacy adds blood and muscles to the country's soft power with traditional folk music as the fifth pillar at its heart. The *five pillars of soft power*, used in a strategic sense are *Samman* (dignity), *Samvaad* (dialogue), *Samriddhi* (shared prosperity), *Suruksha* (regional and global security), *Sanskriti Evam Sabhyata* (culture and civilizational links)<sup>54</sup> (Ministry of External Affairs, 2023) can wipe out the bitter animosity with China, hence India should therefore consider reshaping its neighbourhood policy with China by emphasizing Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power concerning Sikkim folk music, attributable to the aforesaid strategic significance of Sikkim. *India and Sikkim should continuously influence China to trade on Cultural pathways through mass media internet and other sources and to influence them heavily on the political and ideological side to acclimatize them to the people's language of peace, dance, music, traditions, religion, and other forms of art although it's a tough task because the regimented communist regime of China does not believe in culture and religion*.

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<sup>53</sup> Cummings Milton C., “*Cultural Diplomacy and the United States Government: A Survey*”, (Washington D.C: Centre for Arts and Culture, 2003), pp.1

<sup>54</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, “*India's culture Diplomacy and Soft Power*”, (New Delhi: Government of India, 2023), <https://www.mea.gov.in>



India and China already share ancient cultural roots providing important tools for soft power. Today, the Chinese foreign policy is focused on expanding and popularizing its art and culture, architecture, and cuisine for promoting Chinese cinema, business, literature, and educational institutions to position its good image abroad, but the efforts couldn't do much to soften its image *but if its culture is blended with that of Sikkim can promote mutual cultural exchange programs and by bringing Sino-Sikkimese cultural forms and manifestations at the doorstep of Sikkim will offer a meaningful identity and definition.*

When India enjoys its rich cultural diversity and worldwide popularity from classical music and dance to spirituality, cinema, healthcare, and others, *soft power is not working along with economic investments* but should consider *employing the folk music of Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan being sisterly states and culturally close to China strengthening cultural ties as a soft power resource shall mean more on a global platform.* It will help preserve the already threatened oral traditions of Sikkim in this modernization era which also promotes mutual understanding and socio-cultural cooperation among people transcending national, cultural, and language barriers.

### **Sikkim's Tourism with Mountainous Music as a Harbinger to Improve Relations with China:**

Sikkim has attracted tourists mainly due to its captivating hilly region amidst Himalayan mountains, with its subtle and divine airy music and melody all over the hills of the subtropical and alpine climate, rich biodiversity, Kanchenjunga Peak, and its rich cultural heritage.

Even under the ASEAN -INDIA summit proposal, we can encourage tourism in the festival state of Sikkim, to promote Sikkim's traditional mountainous music on an international platform, especially with China to deescalate tensions. In Sikkim, the promotion of culture and tradition should focus on providing improved information to the Chinese tourists about their local culture and traditions, and the historical significance of traditional, agricultural, and socio-cultural folk music and dance that is performed during festivals and rituals. Joint initiatives of cultural exchange programs along with sustainable tourism with China can also strengthen their ties.

### **Role of Government in Preservation and Promotion of Sikkim's Traditional Music:**

Sikkim is a wealthy state because of its rich cultural diversity and with its pasture new tangible and intangible heritage assets. The State government under the Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department, North East Zonal Cultural Centre (NEZCC), and Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC) have been making efforts to preserve oral traditions by documenting them and organizing festivals, exhibitions, and workshops. Sikkim is a member state of both these zonal centers. These ZCCs have organized cultural events within and outside the state, to encourage and showcase the cultural heritage of the North-East. Song and Drama Unit section of the Cultural Affairs and Heritage Department organized the Folk Festival on January 14-16, 2020, in Jhargram, West Bengal where the Singhi Cham dance of Sikkim was presented. The Vadya Vithika Museum of Musical Instruments designed by EZCC showcases instruments of



Sikkim. EZCC has made efforts by interacting with artists, identifying rare and indigenous musical instruments, and displaying them in the museum with detailed descriptions of the instruments. It has also organized the National Cultural Exchange Program, Bharat Lok Parv- National Festival of Folk Arts, ADI VIMB- Festival, Seminar and Exhibition of Folk and Tribal Arts, to encourage folk artists and preserve the folk tradition. EZCC organized OCTAVE- A Festival of Art and Culture at Port Blair (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), Puri (Odisha), and Patna (Bihar) in 2019 which provided a platform for folk artists to exhibit and showcase the rich cultural heritage and diversity of North East India (EZCC, 2024). All such folk arts and music mentioned above can be propagated to China via Sikkim.

### **The Role of Act East Policy of India in Diffusing Tensions Between India and China**

Today *India's Act East Policy (AEP)* has completed ten years in operation and has many accomplishments to its name, but challenges and threats also remain. Engagements with our immediate neighbours are a top priority *but India's concerns remain clouded about the expansion policy of China* as long as India is using AEP to forge relations along its periphery for an active engagement in the sphere of strategic and cultural ties along with security cooperation and economic integration in the broader region that includes the Association of South-East Asia Regions (ASEAN) and Indo-Pacific countries are justified. South-East Asian countries are worried about China's economic ambitions and militarization with land and sea grabbing has compelled them to look to India as a prominent actor to counter the rising power of China. AEP's economic integration policy emphasizes strengthening partnerships by 4C's: *Culture, Commerce, Connectivity, and Capacity Building* and prioritizes the Soft power pillar of AEP to emphasize cultural diplomacy this will materialize only if the government of India, China, and Sikkim come together with a *common blue Print manifesto for assimilating culture, peace, democracy, and a holistic human endeavour just to foster a healthy cross border interactions for the actor involved in this paper and for the global citizens to speak.*

### **Recommendations:**

The Sikkim traditional music is a powerful instrument of soft power and cultural diplomacy to improve our relations with China with the following recommendations:

1. Amalgamating, investing, and collaborating resources by organizing cultural exchange programs of folk music through the diplomatic and embassy relations of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and Cultural organizations of China. *The Sikkim state can also set up exhibitions and Musical artists, instruments, and religious and tribal manifestations, as part of International cultural Expos as a long-term investment in enhancing Pan-Sikkimese.*
2. Encouraging and promoting tourism in the state, with a focus on employing the best tourist guides to provide updated information to Chinese tourists about Sikkim's local history, arts, iconography, culture, and traditions, and the historical significance of traditional indigenous folk-art forms.



3. Provide scholarships, sabbaticals, and exchange programs and invite cultural and music ambassadors and research scholars from China to encourage research studies on the traditional music of Sikkim.

### **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, therefore cultural diplomacy and soft power of India do not seem to balance the potential of China, which is the need of the hour, as China is misusing soft power and pushing territorial claims by engaging in militarizing small reefs and shores with the Exclusive Economic Zone of countries, which have been overly dependent on it. *They are worried at this stage and see India as a rising power to establish deterrence or balance of power in the region.* Having its deep cultural, spiritual, and historical roots in Southeast Asia, India's Cultural Diplomacy in Southeast Asia needs to be strengthened and *bring all South Asian nations together on a common platform for mutual dialogue.* No doubt, the countries of the Southeast Asian region have aligned themselves with India due to China's expansionist policy and territorial aggrandizement, yet India's Soft power initiatives and cultural diplomacy driven by the traditional music of Sikkim will play a significant role in shaping our cultural and political landscape on mutual trust and friendship with China and by fostering intercultural dialogue, cultural appreciation, and mutual understanding which will diffuse tensions in the region under study. *Nevertheless, the racial, cultural, traditional, and religious affinities of Sikkim with China will magnetize the Indian and Chinese cultural Panorama. Despite the symbiosis and synchronization factor and other cultural agglomerations of Sikkim folk music with its neighbouring cultures and people, there is a strong indigenization concept found in its syncretized traditional folk music which is truly a historical legacy of this peaceful and melodious mountainous land of Sikkim.*

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## **Contribution of Bhai Bakhshish Singh in Spiritual and Religious Influences on Music**

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### **Abstract**

*Music is a precious gift of God. Music exists in every particle of creation. Music is a medium through which soul and God are united. If we talk about the musical effect, then the whole universe moves according to the rhythm, be it human beings, animals or plants the effect of music can be seen on all. With music, the mind of man remains in a stable state and mental stability comes in devotion. Music is considered to be the main means of attaining God. Brahma invented music and Saraswati mata is known as the goddess of arts and knowledge. Shivji worshiped God with his Tandava. Shivaji originated music from the combination of singing, dancing and playing. Among all those arts, singing has got the best place, which is the main source of Lord Bhakti. Music is an integral part of life, apart from devotion, music is included in all the activities of life, happiness, war and religious events.*

*Whatever the religion may be, God's form is one and the source of his worship is music. In Sikhism, music has been given the highest place. The holy book of Sikhs Sri Guru Granth Sahib is base of on 31 rages. Its singing act is called Gurmat Sangeet. According to Gurmat Sangeet, the verses composed by the Gurus are to be sung in the ragas based on them. Gurmat music has preserved the rich heritage of Sikhism and ancient singing. Gurmat Sangeet is the preeminent of words. It has raga and taal as supporting elements and the central unit of Gurmat Sangeet is shabad.*

*In Sikhism, Bhai Bakhshish Singh was an artist who worked a lot on spirituality and religion, so his work should be highlighted.*

**Keywords:** Sikhism, Gurmat Sangeet, Spiritual music, Shabad-Kirtan, Ragi, Verses.

### **Introduction:**

Music is such a unique art that helps in expressing human emotions. Presenting spiritual feelings through music creates a special atmosphere. Music plays an important role in human being from birth to death. Spiritual music has historically kept music active in Indian culture. People of different religions live in the world like Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christian etc. Every religion has its own characteristics and the method of worshiping is also different. Whatever the religion, music is the instrument of worship for all, which is common to every class and every religion. Singing and listening to music soothes the mind. In the modern era, music is not only used as a means of entertainment but also as Music Therapy. The



effects of music have been seen on many diseases like insomnia, obesity, high blood pressure etc. Music Therapy plays an important role in curing a terrible disease like cancer. Music has a psychological effect on humans, which has shown positive results; so in this way music has influenced very field and contributed to enrich the culture of India. In which Sikhism also comes.

If we talk about Sikhism, it is a religion that has created its own identity in the whole world. Sikhism was born with the birth of the first Guru of the Sikhs, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469 AD). Guru Nanak Dev Ji sang the Gurbani and Bhai Mardana Ji played the Rabab (Harp). The first Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the second Guru Angad Dev Ji, the third Guru Amar Das Ji, the fourth Guru Ram Das Ji and the fifth Guru Arjan Dev Ji were born. These Guru Sahibs composed Bani and applied it in Sikhism. After them, the verses of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji and Guru Gobind Singh Ji are recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib. In Sikhism God is worshiped with music. The holy book of Sikhs is Sri Guru Granth Sahib. It is based on 31 main Ragas. There are some unique ragas recorded in Guru Granth Sahib which are not mentioned in Hindustani Music. All Guru Granth Sahib is based on Ragas, except 'Japuji Sahib', the hymn of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. These 31 main ragas are as follow:

1. Raga Sri 2. Majh 3. Gowdi 4. Asa 5. Gujri 6. Dev Gandhari 7. Bihagra 8. Vadahans 9. Sorath 10. Dhansari 11. Jayasari 12. Todi 13. Bairadi 14. Tipang 15. Suhi 16. Bilawal 17. Gond 18. Ramkali 19. Nat Narayan 20. Mali Gauda 21. Maru 22. Tukhari 23. Kedar 24. Bhairo 25. Basant 26. Sarang 27. Malhar 28. Kanra 29. Kalyan 30. Prabhati 31. Jaijavanti.<sup>4</sup>

Guru Granth Sahib was established in 1604 AD by Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. He collected the verses of the first Guru Sahib to the fourth Guru Ramdas ji. Guru Granth Sahib is the symbol of the entire humanity. Guru Arjan Dev Ji included the hymns of devotees of every religion in the Guru Granth Sahib, giving equal rights to all humanity. Apart from the verses of the Sikh Gurus, the hymns of Sheikh Farid, Sant Kabir, Bhagat Namdev were recorded in it. The historical music of Sikhism is so great that from the very beginning the Gurus composed the verses in ragas. In Sikhism, the singing of Bani's word compositions in raga is called Gurmat Sangeet.

The word (Shabad) kirtan is an essential part of Sikhism. This tradition comes from the birth of sikh to his death in every function. In Shabad kirtan special attention is paid to Shabad, Raga and Taal are the later processes. Pronunciation of Gurbani is very important to be pure and clear. The Guru Granth Sahib contains verses of the Guru and Bhagats in addition to the verses of Ashapada, Pde, Partalan, vara, salok etc. The act of singing the verses of Guru Granth Sahib started from the time of the Guru Sahibs and continues even today. In Gurmat Sangeet, a person who performs kirtan according to Guru's standards is called Ragi. Ragis sang the ancient bandishas and preserved them for future times. One such Ragi Bhai Bakhshish Singh ji has happened. Those who spent their entire life singing the devotion of the Lord. He contributed to spiritual and religious activities through music.

### **Significance of the study:**

There is a need to research this topic because very old bandishes were sung by Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji. In this research work, notation will be prepared by listening to his singing so that the coming generation can be familiar with the singing of Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji. Let the whole know that Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji preserved the ancient tradition of kirtan in Sikhism and handed it down to the next generation.

### **Methodology:**

An attempt is made to analyze the subject through survey, interview, description, comparative and historical methodologies.

### **Introduction:**

The name of Shironmani Ragi Bhai Bakhshish Singh, the precious diamond of the twentieth century, is held Sikhism with great reverence and respect. He was a person of spiritual inclination. He was born on 29 June 1933 AD at village Saida Laylo, District Amrtisar Sahib, Punjab (India). His father's name was Kirpal Singh and mother's name was Ram Kaur. His father and grandfather were great ragi. Bhai Sahib is previous generations used to perform kirtan in Gurmat Sangeet, so he got his first musical education from his father and grandfather who contributed significantly to Bhai Sahib mastering the finer points of music.<sup>1</sup>



**Shiromani Ragi Bhai  
Bakhshish Singh Ji**

He was married to Bibi Mahinder Kaur at the age of fifteen. She was a resident of Shakhira village. Two sons and four daughters were born in their house. The name of the eldest son is Kuldeep Singh who is a tabla player. The name of the second son is Sukhmander Singh who is an M.D medicine doctor. His eldest daughter's name is Jasbir Kaur who has retired as a principal. They used to do kirtan too. One daughter's name is Manjit Kaur who is an officer in a Bank. One daughter's name is Surinder Kaur who was a professor. The name of the fourth daughter is Rajinder Kaur who was a professor in the Music department at Girls college Patiala, now retired. She served music like his father. Bhai Sahib was a wise father despite being a high class kirtani, those who trained their children according to their interest and helped them reach a good place. In this way he made his children good citizens. Shiromani Ragi Bhai Bakhshish Singh made many trips for the promotion and dissemination of Gurmat music. He propagated



Sikhism in foreign and country. He was given special invitation in many annual functions at Sachkhand Harmandir Sahib, which is matter of great pride for kirtaniya.

He used to sing the verses of Guru Granth Sahib ji on raga based on them. He used to sing ancient bandishes in which spirituality and God were reconciled through music. He served Sangat and Sikhism by singing Shabad kirtan. His style of kirtan was above the mundane color and had a divine color. He used to interpret the verses effectively; his voice had a special kind of charm and passion that would keep the sangat engrossed for hours. Bhai Sahib ji serving Gurmat Sangeet passed away on 27<sup>th</sup> November 1991 after completing his worldly journey, with his departure, the music world suffered an irreparable loss<sup>2</sup>.

### **Study of kirtan style of Bhai Bakhshish Singh-**

Bhai Bakhshish Singh's name is taken from the great ragis in Gurmat music. Their voices were very loud. His voice could be heard clearly while explaining Gurbani. His voice easily reached the three saptals. He used to make a new bandish in moments. He had a great grip on every notes and every tone. He used to expand the kirtan with Tanas. Apart from these he used to expand kirtan with meend, murkian and Alap. When he used to chant "Asa di Var" at that time there was a union between the soul and God. Bhai Sahib sang Gurbani in classical music apart from the ragas of Gurmat Sangeet. He was also proficient in playing the harmonium.

### **A study of Ragas and Talans used by Bhai Bakhshish Singh-**

He sang kirtan in almost all ragas according to Gurmat Sangeet. He sang thousands of Bandishes in 31 ragas. His favorite raga was Basant. Apart from this, Jaijevanti, Sorath, Jayatsari, Sarang, Yaman and Dhanasari were his favorite ragas. Bhai Sahib was also proficient in playing tabla. Bhai Sahib's grip on hard rhythms was very strong. He loved to sing words (Shabad) in difficult rhythms (Tala). He sang Shabad on the rhythms of taal Kehava, Dadra, Teentaal, Rupak deep chandi, etc.

### **Bhai Bakhshish Singh's service timings and related place-**

After completing his education, he performed the service of Hajuri Ragi in different Gurudwara Sahib which is as follows:

- In 1972 AD, Bhai Sahib performed kirtan service at Gurudwara Tuti Gandhi Sahib at Muktsar Sahib.
- After this, Bhai Sahib started performing kirtan at Gurudwara Kesgarh Sahib at Anandpur Sahib which spread his famous far and wide.
- The Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee gave him the service of doing kirtan at Sri Darbar Sahib Amritsar Sahib on Februry 3, 1975.
- In 1980 AD, Bhai Sahib personally started service the sangat at Patiala through kirtan.



### **Award and honors received by Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji:**

Seeing the works done by Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji in the field of music, he was honored many times. Bhai Sahib was given special honor by the government, religious organization, foundation and administrators present at that time. The details of which are as follows:

- In 1954 AD, Bhai Sahib obtained the degree of Gaini from Punjab University Chandigarh.
- Bhai Mardana Award from Punjab Govt.
- Shiromani Ragi Award from Department of Language Punjab.
- Honored by Canadian Singh Sabha Vancouver Canada.
- Special honor from Pakistan Gurdwara Management committee.
- At the inauguration of Guru Nanak Dev University in 1979 AD, Bhai Sahib was specially honored by the Governor of Punjab.
- Special honor to Bhai Sahib from Baba Farid Memorial Society Punjabi University Patiala.
- Special honor to you from the Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee.
- Special honor to Bhai Sahib from Shiromani Akali Dal.
- Awarded by Guru Ramdas Seva Society Patiala.
- In 1979, he was specially honored at Faridkot.
- In 1988, Gurudwara Mitha Tiwana Hoshiarpur was specially honored by the devotees.
- Special honor from Singh Sabha Seva society Bathinda.
- The Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak committee has given special honor to Bhai Sahib and his picture has been installed at the central sikh Museum at sri Amritsar Sahib, Punjab.

Shiromani Ragi Bhai Bakhshish Singh's recordings and contributions as a Radio artist. Singing Gurbani with purity used to be an important endeavor of Bhai Bakhshish Singh Sahib According to Principal Jasbir Kaur. Bhai Shahib has special expertise in singing a bandish in different ragas and in raga mala<sup>3</sup>.

He was "A" grade artist at Jalandhar radio station in Punjab (India). His singing collection is still present on the archive. Even today his songs (Shabad) are heard on YouTube channels and are liked in large numbers<sup>4</sup>.

- From 1962 to 1984 AD the Radio station Jalandhar used to sing "Asa di Vaar" by Bhai Bakhshish Sahib every Sunday.
- Many recordings of Bhai Sahib were made by Delhi Doordarshan.
- The famous music company HMV made many recordings of his Shabad.
- Shabad was also recorded by SV company.
- A recording of Bhai Sahib's interview is available from the Amrit Bani collection. It was conducted in 1988.



**The list of famous Shabad of Bhai Sahib ji is as follows:**

Sr.	Famous Shabad	Site	Time	Seen Date
1.	Sab kich jivat ko bivhar ਸਭ ਕਿਛੁ ਜੀਵਤ ਕੇ ਬਿਵਹਾਰ	ws3ks3	13y ago	20 July 2024
2.	Tu kahe jole praniya ਤੂੰ ਕਹਿ ਡੋਲਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀਆ	sewapanthi	10y ago	20 July 2024
3.	Nar achet paap to dar re ਨਰ ਅਚਿਤ ਪਾਪ ਤੇ ਡਰ ਰੇ	Shabadgurbani Audio	3y ago	20 July 2024
4.	Dhan Dhan Ramdas gur ਧੰਨੁ ਧੰਨੁ ਰਾਮ ਦਾਸ ਗੁਰ	Seapanthi	10y ago	15 August 2024
5.	Ja tu mere wal hai ਜਾ ਤੂੰ ਮੇਰੇ ਵਲ ਹੈ	Kirtan sewa Canada	4y ago	20 August 2024
6.	Mata poota ki asses ਮਾਤਾ ਪੂਤਾ ਕੀ ਅਸੀਸ	Sewapanthi	10y ago	21 August 2024
7.	Har ko naam ਹਰ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ	Sewapanthi	10y ago	22 August 2024
8.	Pati tore malini ਪਾਤੀ ਤੇਰੈ ਮਾਲਿਨੀ	Ws3ks3	13y ago	25 August 2024
9.	Ram bhaj Ram bhaj ਰਾਮ ਭਜ ਰਾਮ ਭਜ	Prasar bharati archives	4y ago	25 August 2024
10.	Dhan so vela ਧਨ ਸੁਵੇਲਾ	Bhai Bakhshish singh ji – topic	9y ago	25 August 2024
11.	Satgur pura betia ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪੂਰਾ ਭੇਟਿਆ	Shabad gurbani	8y ago	25 August 2024
12.	Thir ghar baiso ਥਿਰ ਘਰਿ ਬੈਸਰੁ	Shabad gurbani	8y ago	25 August 2024
13.	Mai mero pritam Ram ਮਾਈ ਮੇਰੇ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ ਰਾਮ	Shabad gurbani	8y ago	25 August 2024
14.	Tere banke loyan ਤੇਰੇ ਬਨਕੇ ਲੋਇਨ	Shabad gurbani	8y ago	25 August 2024
15.	Bijliyan chamkan nanak ਬਿਜਲੀਆ ਚਮਕਣ ਨਾਨਕਾ	Ws3ks3	13y ago	25 August 2024
16.	Kiya jana kiya hoya ਕਿਆ ਜਾਨਾ ਕਿਆ ਹੋਇਗਾ	Ws3ks3	7y ago	25 August 2024
17.	Tu kahe dole ਤੂੰ ਕਾਚੇ ਡੋਲਹਿ	Sewapanthi	10y ago	27 August 2024
18.	Sajnra mera sajnra ਸਾਜਨੜਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਾਜਨੜਾ	Shabad gurbani	6y ago	28 August 2024



Those are the Shabad sung by Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji which sung by Bhai Bakhshish Singh ji himself. Then these Shabad were presented through YouTube. Even today these Shabad are loved by a large number of people. Its record is on YouTube. It is necessary that a notation of their sung works (Shabad) be made and kept safe for future. So that future generations can know how Gurmat Sangeet was sung in ancient times and what were its nuances. So my research work is also to collect the Bandishs sung by Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji and prepare their notation system. So that Bhai Bakhshish Singh's singing can be preserved for the future. This will be true tribute to Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji.

### **Research Objectives:**

This study aims to:

1. Document and showcase Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji's life achievements and contributions, promoting awareness and appreciation.
2. Transcribe, analyze and publish his musical compositions, facilitating comprehension and preservation.

These objectives emphasize the importance of preserving cultural heritage and making it accessible.

### **Conclusion:**

This study is based on the biography of Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji. It tells about to his entire worldly journey from childhood to the end. How Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji worshiped God in Sikhism by singing kirtan all his life. He sang Shabad Kirtan in simplicity and sikh manners. When Bhai Bakhshish Singh used to perform kirtan, the devotes used to sit for a long time without getting tired. Bhai Bhakhshish Singh Ji performed selfless kirtan service. Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji received many honors while singing kirtan. He traveled for kirtan in the country and abroad. Their popularity can be seen on social media. The Shabad of Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji are heard even today and are liked by a large number of people. Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji's style of kirtan is a precious gift in Sikhism. This kirtan traditional was going on from the time of the Gurus and was maintained by Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji. This is Bhai Bakhshish Singh Ji's in valuable contribution to the kirtan tradition that cannot be ignored. So there should be such a research so that the whole world can know about the great works done by them. Similar research inspires others to do something different and good in their lives.

This study completely depends on Bhai Bakhshish Singh is singing style. This research will present the important role of Bhai Bakhshish singh is giving Gurmat Sangeet and preserving the rich traditional music. Bhai Sahib worshiped God through music all his life. His personality was completely spiritual. So, this study aims to collect their ancient records and preserve them for the future.



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## Echoes of the primordial legacy: A Study of the Folk Songs of the Moran Community of Assam

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### Abstract

*Music is a universal language that touches every human with its rhythm and melody. The villages and hills of Assam are enriched with songs and poems which are transmitted orally generation after generation. Kakopather is a small area of Tinsukia District situated at the Eastern most part of Assam. This naturally beautiful area is the home of many indigenous tribes. Among those tribes, one of the ancient tribes is the Moran tribe of Assam. Though scattered in various parts of Assam, the highest distribution of the tribe can be found in the Tinsukia district of Assam. The tribe has been claiming the status of scheduled tribe (plain) since 1965. One of the criteria required for the inclusion of a tribe as scheduled tribe (plain) is the tribe should possess distinctive culture. The tribe has an immense treasure of folk songs and poems that represent their values and way of life. The aim of this paper is to study the folk songs of the Moran Community and to explore the primordial legacy reflected in the songs. It will also analyse how these folk songs are different from the songs of the mainstream Assamese culture. The study is carried forward by using descriptive method and by taking interviews of fifty cultural activists of the tribe.*

**Keywords:** Folk songs, Primordial Legacy, The Moran Tribe

### Introduction:

Assam is a land of low hills and greenery which is also enriched with the colourful culture of its tribes. Nature has showered its blessings on Assam and people living here are very liberal, accommodative and jolly. Since the tribes live amidst nature, their culture is related to the mysteries and miracles of nature. Prominent Anthropologists Verrier Elwin talked about the tribal people of Assam in an interview of All India Radio, Guwahati-

“You have a great treasure there. Good taste, the sense of colour and form, the delight in beauty, the love of rhythm, the right tone in music.....they grew out of the ancient soil and once they are gone, they can never be recovered.”

Kakopather is a small area of Tinsukia district of Assam which is situated at the Easternmost part of Assam. The area shares boarder with Arunachal Pradesh and it is a home of ancient Moran tribe. The tribe has been living in the “Soumarpeeth” of Ancient Kamrupa since the pre-historic period. They are still living on the fertile banks of the mighty river Brahmaputra.



Perhaps the tribe is as primitive as the river itself. The Morans are culturally very rich. From time immemorial the rich culture and customs possessed by the Morans have deep relation with nature. The mysterious elements of nature fueled their culture and the customs are formed to face the obstacles that come on their way of living.

Initially, they build upon fruits, hunting and fishing to make their living and subsequently shifted to cultivation. They started worshipping mother earth for a good harvest. Some festivals are organized to get rid of diseases and epidemics. In the festivals songs are performed and those songs are transmitted orally from one generation to another. In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the folk songs of the Moran tribe and also to find out the primordial legacy reflected in the songs.

### **Review of Literature:**

**Moran, Mridul** (2017) a Research Scholars of Dibrugarh University conducted a study on “The Bihu Festival of the Morans of Assam, India.” In this study, his main aims was to study about the characteristic of Moran Bihu and its rituals and custom. The findings of the paper highlight the unique natures of Moran Bihu which is different from other tribes of Assam and hence it shows cultural identity of Moran of Assam. The paper described the main part of Moran Bihu are Bihu Namuwa and Bihu Uruwa, Gasor Talar Bihu, Husari and Dharma Husari, Bar Moga Utsav, Rati Bihu etc.

**Deka, Bhrigu** (2020) a research scholar of Gauhati University, Assam conducted a study on “Tribal Folk Dance of Assam: Tradition and Transmission.” In this paper, He studied traditional Folk Dances of tribal communities of Assam. His aim was to study Folk Dances and its traditional perspectives. The paper highlights Rati Bihu a traditional Folk Dance of Moran Community performed during Bohag Bihu. The findings of the paper revealed the rich cultural tradition of Assam, where tribal Folk Dances plays an important role.

**Moran, Montu** (2020) conducted a study on Folk Literature of Moran Community in his paper, “Sources of History in Moran Folk Literature: A Brief Study.” In this paper He studied Bihu Naam, Bihu Geet, Kheri, Proverbs, Montro Literature, Nichukoni Geet, Luko Geet etc of Moran Community. His aim was to study historical origin of Moran Folk Literature and Folk Songs. The findings of the paper revealed that Folk Literature of Moran Community have not yet been studied scientifically, vast and deep study is needed for more new information of Moran Tribe as well as Assam history.

### **Methodology:**

This study is based on qualitative research method and interview schedule is used for collection of primary data. Secondary data have been received from various sources like magazines, journals etc. Cultural activists and workers of the community have been interviewed.

**Study Site:** The study is carried out in the villages of Kakopathar. There are many villages in the Kakopathar area. Tongana , Dirak, Uban, Hatigarh and Kachijan villages are selected as sites for data collection.





chakchani (a bamboo stick used to create music). It is mesmerizing to see dancers dance at night in the light of bamboo tubes lit with fire and singing songs that reflect the original human feelings and values. However, a unique trail of the Moran folk culture is Rati Bihu which is performed as a part of Moran Rongali Bihu celebrations. Preparations for Rati Bihu is started from the month of 114aishna itself. Young boys of the villagers build a house like structure with bamboo and wood. It is known as 'bihu ghar'. It is 114aishnavi that the Bihu ghar should be built in the outskirts of a village near the paddy fields. There are two rooms in the bihu ghar – one is for the boys and the other is for the girls. The roof of the Bihu ghar is built with the leaves of gerguwa tree, jengu tree and tokou tree popularly known as Assam Fan Plam. A few days before Rati Bihu, the young boys seek permission from the guardians of the young girls and request them to allow the girls to perform Rati Bihu. They also give firm assurance to the girl's family that they would protect the girl at any situation and hand over their 'precious treasure' at the end of the celebration. Bamboo tubes lit with fire are used for enlightening the place where they perform Rati Bihu. At night the boys accompany the girls to 'bihu ghar'. They take pledge to obey all social norms during this period. Boys and girls perform bihu in two in the rooms moving in a circle and singing bihu chants. Musical instruments like dhol, pepa, xutuli, toka, gogona are used in the performance. The crucial feature of Rati Bihu is that the young boys coming from different villages make the girls dance in the rhythm of dhol and penpa. They composed some songs instantly to make the girls dance. The songs represent a changing season which is vibrant and associated with budding feelings of love and affection of the teenagers – Jautenu dekhung moi Ahungtenu dekhung moi Kolianu jamukar Koli Khuwauje noholi Pindhauje noholi Sakur purania holi There are thousands of such bihugeets that are transmitted orally generation after generations. There are enriched with vivid imagery, metaphors, similes and other figures of speech.

**Social significance of Rati Bihu:** Society and culture are interrelated. The Morans love to live amidst nature and the cultural element are taken from the 114aish of Mother nature. Being a part of the agrarian society, the Morans believe that fruit bearing trees are symbols of fertility. Therefore, they dance bihu under fruit bearing trees to evoke fertilization in the paddy fields. With the arrival of the spring festival 'Bohag Bihu', preparations for the upcoming sowing season also start. The Morans celebrate the first day of Bohag bihu as 'garu Bihu'. On that day, they bathe the cattle and sing throwing pieces of water gourd, brinjal and bitter gourd to them – Lou Kha bengena kha Bachare bachare barhi ja. (Eat water gourd, brinjal and bitter gourd and grow bigger in every year) Thus, the cattles are expected to remain strong and healthy for the process of a good harvest. It is said that the origin of Rati Bihu can be traced back to the initial stages, when they worshipped the goddess 'Kesaikhati'. It was customary to dance continuously for seven days and nights, offering sacrifice to the goddess. The ritual was performed to get rid of natural disasters epidemics and super natural powers. In the later period, they become followers of Moamoria Vaishnavism fabricated by Sri Sri Aniruddhadeva and certain changes in the rituals occur due to the influence of 114aishnavism. The Rati Bihu performance clearly depicts celebration of the antiquity of creation. But at the same time it is celebrated in a very disciplined manner. The dancers follow strict social norms without any chaos. The healthy and beautiful young girls wear Kalia Riha, Boga Mekhela, Kapou Phool



and dance in the rhythm of chakchani (a bamboo stick used to create music). It is a quite mesmerising view to see the dancers dance at night in the light of bamboo tubes lit with fire and in the slow leisurely tune of bihugeet. The ambience becomes serious as well as mystical. The celestial light of the moon, the shadow of some ancient giant trees and young boys and girls singing worldly affairs, make the situation quite unearthly. Culture is the identity of particular tribe or community. Therefore, it is very important to preserve culture and keep it unbranded. But as we know culture is like a flowing river and it changes slowly which could not be noticed easily. The custom of Rati Bihu has also undergone certain changes. This is acceptable as change is inevitable. It is a matter of pride that in spite of many threats, the indigenous tribe has tried their level best to keep Rati Bihu original. The aura should be maintained for the sustenance of unique identity of the tribe. Besides the bihunaams, the morans have lullabies, nursery rhymes for children and kheris for different social and religious occasions where the ancient traditions and primitive traits are revealed-

“Tupani e tupani tu kala tolot gha  
Atai bhun moinao tupani ahi  
Amo Moinake dha.” (Lullaby)

(In the above song the mother is invoking goddess of sleep to come from under the banana tree and make the baby sleep.)

The Morans are nature lovers and forest dwellers. Therefore, references of natural elements are clearly found in the folk songs.

Kulaburhi nach is performed in marriage ceremonies and in puberty rituals of the Moran Tribe. The song of Kulaburi nach goes like this-

“Nang jang lakhuti o kulabui  
Pahao epoa o kulabui  
Ahe bhaiyumloi nami kulabui”

(An old woman from the hills comes down to the plain area wearing black dress).

It is believed that the performance of kulaburi nach in auspicious occasions protect the bride and the groom or the girl who attained puberty from evil eyes and bad omen.

The Moran society is an agrarian society. Paddy is the main crop for cultivation of the Morans. They regard paddy as the Goddess Laxmi and sing kheri to welcome her home-

“ Hatat khora kachi(sickle) murate urani  
Laxmi aike anunge aji  
Ajjiye Lakhimi ai nibole ahichung  
Amare ghale jabi.”



The Morans are fighters. During the Ahom rule they were appointed as warriors and trainers of elephants. They practiced the martial skills to protect their land from aggressors. At present those skills are performed as dance to recollect the vigor and bravery of the ancestors. An extract of the song of this dance is given below-

“Gaguwang oi gaguwang

Baladhi hanchai gaguwang.”

(The meaning of the above extract is-the fighters encourage other fighters to pick up their sword and spears against their enemies.)

### **Conclusion:**

The folk songs are an account of the social life of the Morans- the saga of their indigenous soil and the way of their life. They have a separate dialect and all the songs are found in their dialect. The Morans have been struggling hard to achieve the status of scheduled tribe (plain) since 1965. But due to lack of leaders they were left out Kaka Kalelkar Commission in 1935. The primitive traits are found in the songs and dance forms of the tribe and they are lagging behind in different spheres of life. Extensive study on the folk songs of the Moran community of Assam will surely open new vistas in understanding the society and culture of the Moran tribe.

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## **'Himalayan- Influence' on Hindustani Classical Music & Ravi Shankar: An Analytical Study**

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### **Abstract**

*India is a country rich in its culture, values and heritage deriving its roots from nature. Talking about music, nature and music has always been integral and dependent on each other. The hills have a legacy of many art techniques and folk-art forms. There have been scholarships that analyse folk musical and instrumental forms of the hills navigating their ways into the mainstream genre of music. Raga inspired from the foothills of Himalayas are not specific compositions or album title, they rather possess a descriptive term for music inspired by the hills. This paper investigates intersection of culture, nature, and music, examining the 'Himalayan influence' on Hindustani ragas, focusing on specific ragas, like Pahari, Kafi, Basant and Rajasthani Pahari with its use and influence on the semiclassical genre as well as engagement of artist like Ravi Shankar, gracing their abilities in creating 'Pahar Ke Dhun' or music inspired by the Himalayas with these melodies.*

*The paper intends to find the influence of hill tunes in creating ragas in the Hindustani classical and semi-classical music genre and how they have influenced eminent artists like Pt. Ravi Shankar, referring to his work reflecting pahadi scales. The study aims to contribute to our understanding of India's cultural heritage and its impact on classical music traditions by critically analyzing musical compositions, historical texts, and expert interviews.*

**Keywords:** Hindustani classical music, Himalayan music, Raga Pahadi, semi-classical music, cultural heritage.

### **Introduction:**

It has been evident that nature and music are integrally connected to each other. There's no denial reckoning the influence of regional folk melodies on different genres of music. Being a classical vocal practitioner, I can't help but indulge in finding the raag being the origin of a particular melody has emerged. The Pahadi style, native to the mountainous regions of India, Nepal, and Pakistan, is known for its melodic simplicity, evoking a sense of the natural landscape and tranquillity of the Himalayas. Ragas such as Pahadi, Kafi, Basant, Rjasthani Pahadi has been found its origin rooted into Himalayan melodies. These ragas have also profoundly influenced the genres of Thumri, Chaiti, and Hori in Hindustani music. Each raga and regional style offers distinct musical expressions, especially significant in light classical forms known for their emotive quality and poetic rendition. These ragas, particularly shaped by folk music from the Himalayas and neighbouring regions, bring a unique texture to North



Indian classical music, blending folk influences with classical sensibilities. Raga Pahadi, due to its light and accessible nature, is especially common in Thumri, where it allows for fluid, expressive storytelling that resonates with audiences.

The article is divided mainly into two parts. The first part deals with the detailed description of the ragas influenced from Himalayan melody focusing on the nature of raga, similarities with folk tunes referring examples in the semi classical genre as well. Second part deals with the work of eminent musician Pt. Ravi Shankar and his merit in establishing Himalayan melodies in his creations both inter and cross culturally.

### **Literature Review:**

My resources include books such as “My music, my life” written by Pt. Ravi Shankar, 1968 among others giving me a glance at his journey and use of various forms of music that influenced his work. Another book that gave me a peak into Ravi Shankar’s works was ‘Ravi Shankar and the music of Indian dance’ written by Stephen Slawek. Menons ‘Ravi Shankar: A biography’ also paved ways for better understand and analysis of details. Other books such as C R Bhatt’s ‘ Indian classical music, and its evolution’, Walter Kaufman’s ‘Raga of North, India’, Newman, the life of music in North India, Bhatkhande’s ‘Hindustani, Sangeet paddhati’, and other articles of research, like folk music of Rajasthan by Vasant Bhatt, journal of musicological research, 17, ‘A folk music of Uttarakhand’, ‘Thumri in historical and stylistic perspective’ by Peter Manuel including others have been few primary books whose consultation have made me achieve logistic research results. Though I find a gap where in the linkage of himalayan melodies, and the ragas born out of it, while also being influential in the mainstream and semiclassical genre is concerned. My own knowledge of ragas, as a practitioner of the same, audio references of particular albums and archived artist interviews and their renditions helped me conceal the research question/hypothesis that I had observed.

### **Methodology:**

My primary source of methodology is empirical learning and understanding of ragas, Audios and expert interviews both have also contributed in being primary sources. E-journals, books, library resources, being secondary research material.

Analysis Of Ragas, Semi-Classical Genre and Ravi Shankar’s Compositions Inspired From Himalayan Folk Melodies-

### **Raga Pahadi-**

Introducing the topic as well as the subject-matter, history, and characteristics of the particular raga, ‘Raga Pahadi’ (the gem of Hindustani music) belongs to the Himalayan regions of India. It is termed to be originated mainly from the Himalayan state particularly in Uttrakhand besides Himachal and Kashmir. As the name ‘Pahadi’ means ‘of the hills’ or ‘mountainous’ has been synchronously adopted from the folk music of the region that itself means how much has evolved and how much it has been important in the earlier and modern era. In addition to the musical aspect the raga, it has connections with the heritage of the Himalayan regions in their



broader sense. According to Kaufmann, raga Pahadi has its history back in 16th century during Mughal rule and its transformation into a raga of its category happened in 18-19th centuries. This was the time when the ragas classical tradition synchronized with folk influence which formed the basis of its identity to its roots from the Himalayan foothill's regions of India. The cultural significance of the raga extends beyond music, representing the rich cultural heritage of the Himalayan regions. Raga Pahadis history dates back to the 16th century during the Mughal rule, with its evolution as a distinct raga occurring in the 18th- 19th century. This period marked the conjuncture between classical music tradition and folk elements, shaping the ragas unique character. The Thaant (father raag) of this raga is 'bilawal' which gives character of this raga as peaceful and having a nature of calmness. The raga Pahadi has a melodic structure, which mostly consists of pentatonic structure. The arohana S R G P D S and S D P G R S for avarohana. Its Vadi and samavadi recite closely on Pa and Sa respectively (Raja, 1934). Given above descriptions, it is quite clear that raga Pahadi is mainly connected to shringar (love and longing), bhakti (devotion) and shanta (peace and tranquillity).

Raga Pahadi is one among the famous ragas related with the region of the Himalayas, it has simplicity couple with inherent folk tinge. This is also decidedly part of the Bilawal thaat although it is variably because its usage is quite fluid, and a particular thaat may be employed exclusively depending upon the rendition of the raga. It's the very fact that Raga Pahadi is light and comparatively free of definite restrictions that fits it perfectly for semi-classical forms like Thumri or Hori, where the emphasis is on the word rather than the music. Its most vibrant form is here available with the mishra quality with the semi classical forms in particular. The ragas valourous structure makes this raga most appropriate for portraying pastures, nature and that phase of romanticism, which forms the core of towering Folk tales of Himalayan region. Pahadi's use of ascending and descending note patterns allows performers to infuse the compositions with an emotive warmth that resonates well with audiences. Example: 'Mar dala' a rendition by Pt. Ajoy Chakroborty, 'Tohri teerchi nazariya k baan', 'rangi saree' by eminent thumri performer Shobha Gurtu, 'Lagi re manwa mein chont' sung but Ustad Salamat and Nazakat Ali Khan belonging from shyam chaurasiya gharana. The upgoing swara forms and emphasises a Ga and Ni swara of the raga's pentatonic scale influences a element of tranquility. Both Raga Pahadi and Pahadi folk songs share a pentatonic foundation, creating a natural bridge between classical and folk traditions. The raga's scale (S R G P D S) resonates with folk songs like 'Bedu Pako' and 'Langvir', showcasing strikingly similar melodic structures and ornamental styles. Common themes of love and separation further connect the two traditions, as seen in the folk song Kafal Pako ("My beloved is gone, I am left alone") and Raga Pahadi's bandish Tore Bina Suna Hai ("Without you, it is desolate"). With its evocative simplicity and inherent charm, Raga Pahadi remains an enduring symbol of the Himalayan region's musical and cultural legacy.

### **Raag Basant -**

Basant rang, Raga Basant, is one of the melodic mode from the Hindustani classical music genre and is all about the advent of spring. The Hindustani classical music tradition is said to be the ancestral origin of Raga Basant which indeed began in the 16th century. This raga is play



during Basant season which is celebrated in both India and Pakistan and show the meeting of spring. It is culturally very important of Pahadi region especially in the states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. It is associated with festivals like Basant Panchami: Festival celebrated in the beginning of spring. On the occasion of Holi: A festival of colours: the vivid victory of good over evil. Raga Basant's melodic structure is characterized by arohana: S G  $\bar{M}$   $\bar{D}$  N  $\bar{S}$  and avarohana:  $\bar{S}$  N  $\bar{D}$  P  $\bar{M}$  G ,  $\bar{M}$  G R S. Reference of Vadi Swar as SA to and Samvadi PA, related to the season of spring, raga Basant is playful and festival like and can therefore well be used for the Hori songs which are meant for the festival of Holi.

The NISHADH of this Raga / scale is Komal (flat) and Tivra (sharp) , and the overall feeling it gives is the feeling of new life due to the vibrant connotation of spring. In Thumri and Hori, Basant is used to portray the alive spirit of nature, especially about color, play and love used in Holi. Its dynamic character makes performers deliver the celebratory aspect of music as the listeners are entertained by the performer. Semi-classical song like 'Ketaki gulab juhi' sung by Manna Dey, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, Sankar-Shailendra Jaikishan show significance. The close association of Pahadi folk traditional songs and Raga Basant bring into use pentatonic scales; including similar melodic motifs along with embellishments. Example: First, there is association with Raga Basant in ascending movements and second with Pahadi folk song "Bedu Pako". S G M D N S (Raga Basant) and also the structure of both these musical forms. Both gives clear use of similar melodic mode and notes to leave us with. Natural scenery is one of the frequently depicted themes for both Raga Basant and Pahadi folk songs as Raja and co (1934) pointed out. Some of the recurrent themes dominate both traditions include love, separation and the auspicious signs. Using the same representation of emphasis on portrayal of rasa of the similar kind, we come across corresponding lyrical and aesthetic connotation as in the case of Pahadi folk melody and raag Basant. Eg. "Kafal Pako" "My beloved is gone, I am left alone", bandish in Raga Basant "Tore bina suna hai" (Without you, it is desolate).

### **Raag Kafi-**

Raga Kafi is closer to the folk genre due to its unique ambient, peasant like, feel that less gel well with the classical Hindustani system and has affinity with Bhajans and Sufi music in particular. Raga kafi is one of the major melodic modes of the north Indian classical gharanas, musically and culturally a site of high importance. Recourse to the amorphous origin, declination and artistic significance of the raga brings into the open its link to the Pahadi intonation. Raga Kafi has its lineage in the 16th century; however, the pathway of raga kafi could be traced back to the Hindustani music system. This raga is said to have relations to the folk music of the Himalayas and neighbouring hills and dales. The notes of this launched are associated with feelings of love and dedication and were incorporated widely into Thumri and Hori. This format enables it to be elastic, thus, the craftsman may add some informal style or may capture folk influences. The technicality of the raga enables the performer to get an emotional quality; soft but ardently that may range from sheer delight to sorrow, often used in Thumri and Chaiti. It will be useful to point out that in many compositions associated with Raga Kafi, one can observe overall features of these semi-classical forms that refer to the poetry of rural life and spirituality, the two subjects that dominated the topics of these performances.



Raga Kafi's melodic structure is characterized by arohana comprising S R g M P D n S, Pa being used openly throughout its rendition and avarohana: S n D P M G r S. Pa is recognised as Vadi, the Sa as Samvadi. Raga Kafi holds immense cultural significance in Indian classical music, symbolizing themes of love and longing: This relates to group of rasa which involves issues of betrayal or love and separation in Raga Kafi. Raga Kafi has ornamental form and is intended to portray the beauty of nature and is used frequently in devotional pieces. Pahadi tunes are surprisingly very close to Raga Kafi. Examples of the use of pentatonic scale can be observed both in Raga Kafi and in Pahadi folk music. The Pahadi folk song, "Bedu Pako" in the S R G M P D N pitch and Raga Kafi bear similarities not only in melodic but also in lyrical formulas.

### **Raag Rajasthani Pahadi-**

Raga Pahadi is among the most important ragas of North Indian folk vocals, especially those used in Rajasthani folk music and songs of the adjacent areas. They can be dated back to the working-class people of the hilly areas of North India passing from Kashmir to Aravalis in Rajasthan. The variant Rajasthani Pahadi is editions of the many ragas that fall under the Pahadi raga group and it revives the oral/folk stories and music traditions of Rajasthan. Raga Rajasthani Pahadi is newly developed raga also belong to folk raga of Rajasthan based on Aravali rugged outlook. The raga has its origin in the Pahadi or 'the mountain' Gandharva music that is related to fresh natural surroundings. Unlike Hindustani and Carnatic Ragas, Rajasthani Pahadi has stemmed from folk and thus are played with folk instruments like Algoza, Sarangi and Rawanhatta which gives an earthy feel of Rajasthan and its geography as well as the life. This kind of raga has been patronised for generations by the Manganiar and Langa communities, who have carried on this art form. However, as far as Rajasthani Pahadi is concerned, it was Mozilla to all these regional folklore, devotional songs, and Traditional dance storytelling Traditions, which played an active role in transmitting both cultural values and warrant across generations. The texture of Raga Rajasthani Pahadi is not complex with pleasing form and can be identified by its unique feature of lightness and flow. It has been rendered in the tone of pentatonic scale (audav-audav or five-note), like Raga Bhupali and Raga Deshkar, albeit with minor transformations that put some rusticity into it. Rajasthani Pahadi raga bear structural similarity with other Pahadi ragas but the melodic complexion of Rajasthani Pahadi is quite distinct from that of others. The raga has a descending pattern and it particularly focuses on the notes of third, fifth, and sixth but more so, it is like two waves

or oscillators. The musicality of waves in the Aravali range. Sa, Re, Ga, Pa, and Dha are used coupled seldom with Ma and Ni and the created feel is of waves that are vast like the hills and the sky that the Aravali gives. The raga as a rule is rendered in a moderate speed, invoking the rustic ways of life of the local people. Musically, as far as its rasa being the mood or feeling that it conveys, the raga spells out relaxation or at least suggestion of the pastoral, the sort of simple life.

The magnificent raga has a strong ethnocultural relevance in folk music of Rajasthan. Mostly identified in folk songs that belong to arrangements important in the lives of the people of a given community, for instance, wedding events, harvest festival, and religious festivities. In



fact, the raga finds itself at the center of events that lift society up and unite people to embrace their cultural identity. All the tunes and the shades of raga capture spirit of the people of Rajasthan living in the harsh desert but still grooving to their respective beats. This musical style used in songs is true to the cultural tendencies of people in the region, since songs based on Rajasthani Pahadi are generally a representation of tales of separation and love, bravery and devotion and so on. However, there is one traditional Bhajan “Kesariya Balam” set to Rajasthani Pahadi wherein the Raga gives the feeling of solitary mountain like loneliness that can be enjoyed when two lovers are parted by distance or some other circumstances. It is different from the classical Raga Pahadi named after the mountain region, which should be noted; Rajasthani Pahadi represents the spirit of the folk tradition, which is characteristic of Rajasthan. This style is best identified by employing open and rhythmical forms that are often on offer in Rajasthani folk. On what concerns light classical forms, Thumri is particularly affected by compositions that recall the rhythms and melodies of Rajasthani folk songs. The miraculous asymmetrical rhythms and pursuing notes raga Rajasthani Pahadi engulfs the form of Thumri and amalgamates the two owing to both classical and folk form.

#### **‘Himalayan influence’ in Ravi Shankar’s music-**

Himalayas has always been called the spiritual vertebral column of India and attract innumerable artist, scholars, poets and musicians in search of peace and wisdom. The link to Himalayas is often observed in both Shankar’s spiritual and philosophical inclination of the music. The kinds of music that Shankar creates are ones in which one feels there is a sort of meditative calm most often linked with spirituality and space we find in these mountains.

Himalayan folk tunes and their strong impact can be dovetailed with certain compositions of Ravi Shankar in his classical as well as fusion albums. Shankar himself was interested in these melodies as a part of the project in which he aimed to introduce the international audience to Indian classical at the same time as to presenting personified musical peculiarities of every region. From his compositions that have Himalayan influence the most recognised one is the album ‘Pahadi Dhun’. The album “Fire Night” is another example of complete enculturation with folk mechanical music tradition from the Himalayan area carrying raw beats combined with reflective overtones. Shankar celebrates this by combining Indian ragas with western orchestration, this time using Pahadi ragas with flowing pentatonic melodious tunes. Another one is West Meets East with Yehudi Menuhin in 1967 although still containing generally more classical undertones it does introduce stillness and mood of the Himalayas in pieces such as Raga Piloo.

Some of the other albums includes "The Sounds Of India" (1958): Compositions based on Raga Pahadi – the Raga of Himalayas, “India’s Master Musician” (1963): – Describing The Himalayan Moods specially in ‘dhun’, Kafi-Holi, “The Ravi Shankar collection” (1999): ravishing collection of original works Including the Himalayan inspired Raga. There ‘Song from the Hills’, ‘Dhun Kafi’ among other are important. Illustrating his predilection and deep respect for the melodies of the Himalayas, one can indicate his renditions on “Raga Kafi”- the raga of morning and associated with the beauty of the Himalayas, “Raga Pahari”-the raga, created in the inspiration of the slopes of the Himalayas and “Raga Basant”-the raga of



springtime and the bright colours of the Himalayas. He has also set special Tracks such as; “Himalaya” From the “The Sounds of India” album is an instrumental work that recreates the grandeur of the Himalayan mountains, “Mountain Love” From the “The Ravi Shankar Collection” album is another beautiful composition among others.

The previews of Shankar’s work illustrate his great regard to local music cultures and his capacity to incorporate these into marketable forms to diverse peoples of the world. His rendering of Pahadi fined inspired melodic patterns demonstrate the extent to which Indian classical music has been dynamic with regard to many musicians in the east and the west.

### **Conclusion:**

The study unveils the influence of Himalayan melodies in the folk and classical music tradition delving upon the north western parts of India considering the Aravali regions highlighting the dynamic interplay between cultural, heritage and artistic expression. Raga Rajasthani Pahadi is not only a musical composition but also a cultural emblem of Rajasthan. The connection of Himalayan melodies to the Aravali hills, rich folklore, and the everyday lives of people in the region have made it a cherished and enduring part of Rajasthani identity. The raga's fluid, melodic quality allows it to bridge between classical and folk traditions, making it accessible and endearing to both local and global audiences. The integration of these ragas into Thumri, Chaiti, Kajri and Hori not only enriches the aesthetic quality of Hindustani music but also underscores the enduring influence of regional folk traditions. It is evident with the number of compositions and renditions created by artists like Ravi Shankar, how deeply the Himalayas have been an inspiron in the artists musical realm. This example brings in discussion of other contemporary artists like Shiv Kumar Sharma, Hari Prasad Chourasia and others who have been influenced by the Himalayan melodies.

Furthermore, this study sketches the significance of interdisciplinary approaches in music research, combining historical, cultural, and analytical perspectives to illuminate the complexities of Indian classical music. By examining the intersections between hill melodies and other genres of music and their significance, we gain insight into the dynamic processes that shape musical traditions and the enduring power of music to express and connect with human experiences. Ultimately, this research invites further exploration of India's musical heritage, encouraging scholars and musicians to delve into the rich cultural tapestry that underlies 'Himalayan influence' on Hindustani Classical music.

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## Traditional Music and the Instruments of the hills (Particularly Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram state) of India

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### Abstract

*Traditional music refers to music created in a common manner, often anonymous, that has been popular and frequently performed in its region from the time of its origin to the present day. This abstract explores traditional instruments and music from the hilly states of Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram in India. In Meghalaya, music is inspired by natural beauty and cultural celebrations, with instruments like the ksein nakra, ka bom heh, put sla, ramynken (made of bamboo), and bikur chken commonly used. Manipur's folk music includes rural love songs like Khullang Eshei, rhythmic lai Haraoba eshei with mystical undertones, and pema eschei accompanied by instruments like the pung, pena, dholok, toutri, and pengkult. Mizoram's folk music, passed down orally, features instruments like the khuang, with variations in size, and brass gongs like darkhuang, darbu, and daruang. This study highlights the significance of preserving and understanding traditional music and instruments, contributing to the cultural knowledge of India. Keywords: Music, Instruments, Traditional, Hills, India, Folk.*

### Introduction:

Meghalaya is the home of music and dances; it is also a state of innumerable folklores. Meghalaya have a rich cultural heritage; their history is preserved in the form of festivals. Folk songs, Folk tales, Folk dances and Folk Theatres. In almost all the festivals and ceremonial celebrations there are the involvements of dance and music. The music of Meghalaya is inspired by the natural beauties and the people who are great lovers of music. The dances and songs are always associated with festivals. Meghalaya is divided in three hilly regions: - a) The Khasi hills, b) The Jaintia hills and c) The Garo hills.

**Folk music and folk songs of Meghalaya:** The word „folk“ traditionally refers to the customs and traditions that are passed down through the generations by the common people. Folk music is the roots music and it is the treasurers of which every form of vocal and instrumental music has developed. Folk music acquires the particular characteristics which differentiates it from other forms of music.

Folk music has a different form depending upon the region it belongs. It has a peculiar expression and established a tradition of its own. It bonds people together in language in a way



that has more to do with culture and history rather than entertainment. The Khasi, the pnar and the Garos are great lovers of music, it is believed that they are born with the music in their blood.

Folk music of the Khasis of Meghalaya is an important aspects which is associated with indigenous music of our land. The evolutionary stages of khasi music in Meghalaya evolved from the impulse experienced unexpectedly by man from the nature for example, the dripping of water inside the caves, the chirping of birds, insects, the sound cascading of waterfalls, the cries of animals and indeed every phases of man's life passes musically in the form of clapping, flipping of fingers, beating on the thighs and buttocks, stumping of foot on the ground, whistling, lapping of tongue and all such auditability of bodily actions are what we say Music. After all music means to us cannot be put into words. We can feel that the music expresses joy, or sorrow, gaiety, tenderness, love, anger- all kinds of things and feeling that words alone could never do. Music can be easily understood and appreciated by people of all parts of the world. Music can also be enjoyed just for its beauty, and not for what it is saying. We can get pleasure from even a single tone of voice other than any instrument. We may love a beautiful melody for many years of our lives and always enjoy hearing it.

**Classification:** - Folk songs of the Meghalaya

The following category are the folk songs of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo-

- a) Folk songs of the Khasis
- b) Folk songs of the Jaintia
- c) Folk songs of the Garos

Folk songs travelled a great and different distances and live from one generation to the next, it is not taught, it come down from person to person or parents to children by words of mouth. Folk songs go off with the complete strangers like traders, peddlers who travel from place to place. Each singer shapes impulse a song without really knowing he is changing it like a song. Folk songs unlike popular songs, are songs composed by men who make it a business for a living by making from a written note or sing songs. Folk songs are usually same sort of a story. Folk songs can be made up by anyone unlike popular songs. Folk singers are not trained but ordinary working people who by impulsions create or sing a song to anyone who cares to listen to him and no one pays for the song, and after song has travelled around no one knows who first composed it or bother to know the singer. Folk songs are immortal, simple structured, these songs can be also effectively performed without instrumental accompaniment. Good people always carry the impression that U Hynniew trep under the influence of evil spirit, committed sins resulting to man's withdrawal of allegiance and God to the extent that heaven and earth were severed, the sun shone to more and withdrew herself (Khasi feminine gender for the sun), to the (Lamet Latang) and darkness spread on earth, the Khasis, The Pnar and the Garos are great lovers of music, it is believed that Khasi are born with the music.



In the older days many of the folk songs of Meghalaya are about admiring the nature and its beauty, work songs to stimulate stamina to farmers working in the field, ballads that tells the story of the past in the form of a song, Thanks giving to God. The derivative of tragedy and sorrowful narrative of myths, legends and parables, To keep the traditional integrity, folk music was imparted orally. It has its peculiar expression and emotions and has established a tradition of its own. The people chants prayers, sing devotional songs or render ultimate sound. In Khasi social life we have a number of festivals in which music plays an important role.

Perhaps the khasis and Jaintian and the Garos has a close connection with God. Since man begins to chant till today there has been many changes in the methods of composing the tune and the instrument used in accompaniment of the songs.

### **Folk Songs of the Khasi:**

It is remarkable that the khasis or the khyntians is one of the major indigenous tribes of Meghalaya. The Khasis resides in the central part of Meghalaya and it is distributed into the districts of the entire East khasi hills, the khasi have numerous folk songs with a characteristic rhythm of their own. These songs reflect the characteristics of the people. The Khasis are hardworking and after all hard work been done, they would assemble and sing songs, chants with the accompaniment of „Ka Duitara“ and would recount stories of the past or counselling their children through rhymes and melodic couplet.

**Folk songs of the khasis can be place under several basic groups below –**

- a) Songs on nature,
- b) Story songs or ballads,
- c) Devotional and thank giving songs,
- d) Melancholy songs and pathetic song,
- e) Lamentation or Dirges,
- f) Couplets,
- g) Lullaby,
- h) Work songs, Harvest songs,
- i) Love songs,
- j) Patriotic songs,
- k) Dance Music.

### **Folk songs of the Jaintian:-**

Jaintia, the Pnar, the synteng is the cognate term of Jaintias in Meghalaya. During theatrical nights or Lahoo dance, the Jaintias after coming from the fields they use to organise events in



different types of seasons. The Jaintias according to reliable knowledge, in older days there are only two folk songs i.e. Niaw laho and Pyntho laho. The Jaintia people like any other tribe in the north east are particularly fond of songs praising the nature like lakes, waterfalls, hills etc. and also extolling love for their land. Different types of musical instruments like drum, duitara, and instruments similar to guitar, flutes, pipes and cymbals are used. As a matter of fact the khasi and Jaintia folk songs are similar in nature.

Some of the folk songs of the Jiantias are:

- a. Lullaby
- b. Patriotic songs
- c. Love songs
- d. Harvest or work song
- e. Couplets
- f. Ballads
- g. Devotional

#### **Folk song of the Garos: -**

The Garos or Achick Literally means the hill people. The word A-Chic community is basically an oral community. This oral tradition is a vehicle for passing on historical accounts, other during festivals and other gatherings. They comprise of a large number of songs most of their folk songs depicts ordinary Garo life, God's blessings, beauty of nature, day to day struggles, romance and human aspirations. The Garos generally sing folk songs relating to birth, marriages, festivals, love and heroic deeds accompanied by drums and flutes. Different types of instruments like drums and others are played at the time of singing. The Garos have group song called Ku-dare-sala, Hoaring-a, Ajea, Doroa, Nanggorere gaserang and many others but the popular folk songs of the Garos are: a) Dim dim dimchong datichong and Nanggore re gaserong. The young folks during the ritual of chachat soa (during of incense) they would sit around the fire and sing songs related to Wangala like ajea, Danidoka, Kurama sala, ohomai, kore doka, Doro agana, gosai ringa etc.

#### **Folk songs of the Garos includes many categories of songs: -**

- (a) In vocational incantation,
- (b) Social activities and festives songs,
- (c) Lullabies,
- (d) Ballads,
- (e) Dirges.

#### **The folk musical instruments of Meghalaya:-**

Any object which can produce different musical sounds is an instrument. But as usually understood an instrument is a tool, other than the human body infact human body itself is the oldest instrument particularly the voice produces more tunes than musical



instruments. Musical instruments is but an extension of the body. Musical instruments play an important part in the dance performances.

Folk music stands on its own character. The musicians play the instrument often to a high level of skill, folk music is not popular because its not designed to appeal to the largest group of people or a particular age or demographic first instruments. The instruments that folk musicians used are not refined as glossy as those of the commercially produced instruments of Western and Hindusthani musical instruments. It is found that the instruments of the khasis and the pnars are the same but the only difference is that the instruments called by different names of the instruments.

**Classifications: -**

- a) Musical Instruments of the Khasis
- b) Musical Instruments of the Jaintias
- c) Musical Instruments of the Garos

Folk Musical Instruments of Meghalaya can be grouped on the basis of the material they are made of, the methods of playing, the functional use and so on. The musical instruments are classified as follows:-

**(I) Percussion Instruments:**

Rhythmic: Membranophones or “kijingtem ksing”

**Khasis and Jaintias:**

1. Ka Bom Lane Ka Nakra (big drum)
2. Ka Ksing Shynrang (male drum)
3. Ka Ksing Kynthei (female drum)
4. Ka Ksing Padiah (small drum)

**Jaintia:**

1. Ksein Kynring or drum
2. U thlong or a wooden drum
3. Ka Bom Heh
4. Ka Ksein Sder
5. Ksein Nakra (Bom Khian)

**Garos:**

1. Dama, Ambeng Dama (long drum) Chisak dama, Atong dama, Garaganching dama, Ruga and chibok dama, Dual- Matchi dama, Nagra etc.
2. Natuk or the mini drum
3. Nagra or the drum which is bowl shape.
4. Natic (small drum)



**(II) Idiophones/Aerophones:-**

**Khasis:**

- a) Ka Dymphong
- b) Ka sing phong
- c) Ka Kynshaw (cymbals)
- d) Ka Me rang

**· Jaintia:-**

- a) Ka Chalamen
- b) Ksein siej
- c) Takudiah
- d) Chew chew

**· Garos:**

- a) Kakma
- b) Nangilsi
- c) Guridomik
- d) Kamal jakmora
- e) Rang Local name of gang

**(III) String Instruments chordophones or “Ki jingtem ksai ne jingtem kyndoh”- · Khasis:-**

- a) Ka Duitara
- b) Ka marynthing
- c) Ka Maryngod/Ka Sarong
- d) Saitar

**· Jaintia:-**

- a) Ka Saitar
- b) Ka Ramynthein
- c) Ka Duitara

**Garos:-** The Dotrong, Sarenda, Chigring, Dimchrang or Kimjim, gongmima or Gonggna.

**Dance and Music of Meghalaya: -**

No celebration in Meghalaya is complete without the involvement of dance and music. The dance forms in the state are dedicated to various events such as social, religious, agricultural and recreational. Beautiful dance forms coupled with melodious music is very soothing to soul. Open areas are generally the venues for the dance and music performances in Meghalaya. The land comes alive with wonderful dance performances and great songs accompanied by the sound of traditional instruments.



### **Famous Traditional Dances of Meghalaya are:**

**Nongkrem Dance:** - It is basically a religious festival wherein the heavenly deities are thanked for good harvest, harmony and prosperity. It is celebrated during October-November every year at Smit near Shilong. The people dance away to glory. Unmarried girls dressed to perfection dance within a circle with their men partners holding an open sword in one hand and a white yak-hair whisk in the other.

**Shad Suk Mynsiem:-** This is again a thanks giving festival showing the sense of gratitude of the people of Khasi Hills. It is held during the spring. The dance is accompanied by drums and pipes called „tangmuri“ which is called the queen of musical instruments.

**Bahdienkhlam:-** The advent of monsoon in July brings the celebration of Behdienkhlam. It occupies an important place in the hearts of the Jaintia tribe.

**Lahoo Dance:** - This dance form is high on entertainment. Men and women holding arms together perform this dance.

**Dorsegata Dance:** - It is an interesting dance form wherein the women try to knock off the turbans of their male partners.

### **Manipur: -**

Manipur is a region of North East India. Some varieties of folk music from the area include the rural love songs Khullang Eshei, the rhythmic Lai Haraoba eshei, which contain lyrics with veiled references to erotic mysticism and pena eshei, which is accompanied by a pena, an instrument made from a bamboo rod and the shell of a gourd or coconut. The pena is an ancient instrument that is a sort of national symbol for Manipuri's.

### **Some traditional music of Manipur**

Nat a shortened form of Meitei Nat Sankirtan<sup>1</sup> is a classical form of music of Manipur. It is a product of the Sanskritisation of traditional Meitei culture with Hindu culture by the Brahmanas, having 6 ragas and 36 raginis.<sup>2</sup>

Classical Nat music is performed at various special occasions, the women's devotional nupi pala songs, Gaur Padas, sung in praise of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and dhole, sung accompanied by the jhal, a large symbol. Monohar sai is another important class of songs, devoted to a 19<sup>th</sup> century man of the same name. Khuba Keshai is a kind of song accompanied entirely by clapping. Contrasting to the other forms of Indian classical music, which are performed by sitting, in the Meitei Nata-Sankirtana, artists perform musical instruments as well as sing songs, simultaneously performing the delicate movements of the body and hands, based on the form of Khuthek Anoi (Meitei for language of hand movements), aligning to different footsteps, based on the Khongthang Anoi (Meitei for language of footsteps)



### **Musical Instruments and Sound objects of Manipur:-**

The tribal people in the hills use a wide range of wind musical instruments made of bamboo. Almost all the tribal groups use a musical instrument made of four to five bamboo tubes of uneven sizes that are joined together, the smaller tubes partly inserted into the bigger tubes. The instruments are played like a bugle, with the mouth.

#### **Flutes and Bugles:-**

The Lambang tribal cut tubes from a small variety of bamboo to make a flute like wind musical instrument called Puleh. This instrument has 4 to 7 holes. The Lambang tribals use a peculiar musical wind instrument called Relru which is a one-meter-long hollow bamboo tube with an attached projection in the middle, through which are blows with the mouth to produce musical sound. The Lambang tribals make use of both the hard outer layer or skin of the bamboo and the pulpy inner layer to make a musical instrument. The necessary length of both the layers is 30 cm. Many of the tribal groups configure fine bamboo splits or paya to make an interesting musical instrument that is played with the mouth. The paya must be 15 cm. long and 1.5 cm broad.

- Tingtou Lamgang bamboo musical instrument made of paya or fine bamboo split length 27 cm.
- The Maring tribals use a similar musical instrument called Totri, which is approximately 36 cm. in length.
- Pengkult is a Maring Bamboo musical instrument. The diameter of the mouth is 13 cm. The korns call it theibe.
- The Thandon make a musical instrument is called Theiphit, which consists of three tubes of different lengths cut from the same bamboo. These tubes are blown separately with the mouth to produce different musical notes.
- The Aimols have a flute like instrument called the rot chem, the mao tribals call it khetch and Tangkhuls, marao.

**String Instruments:** - Ubo is chordophonic instrument of the Kacha Naga group. Ubo is manipulated with both the hands. The resonating chamber is formed by a half-cut gourd with a hole, and covered with pig's bladder or goat skin, stretched over with bamboo pins. The bridge is of a piece of wood or just a piece of a raw bark. The single string comprises a sago palm fibre or of a metal, fastened at one end to a spike and on the other end, tightened by a peg twisted accordingly on the neck-hole.

**Pena** is a chord phonic fiddle. It is a bowing instrument without frets consists of a bamboo neck inserted into a half-cut coconut resonating sound box. Horse taid is used as instrumental string and as bow string or cheying. Small bells are tied to the end of the bow



in order to create an ensemble of jingling rhythms. Bow handle is made of wood. The top end of pena beautifully decorated with embroidered cloth and tassels.

The kom use musical instruments like siramdar (astring instrument), rushem (a wind instrument), rushem (a wind instrument), sum (metal gong), Khang(drum) and dar (small gong).

## **Mizoram**

### **About Mizoram Music:-**

Some Indian Cultures have very long musical histories, but Mizo Culture does not have such history. The origin of Mizo Music is a mystery. It is therefore, difficult to trace the origin and to arrange the chronological sequences of the heritage of Mizo Music. However, we have seen some couplets are developed during the settlement of Thantlang in Burma estimated between 1300-1400AD. As recorded by B.Lathangliana, the folk songs developed during this period were darhla (songs of gang); Bawh hla (War chants), Hla do (chants of hunting); Nauawih hla (cradle songs). A greater development of songs can be seen from the settlement of lentlang in Burma, estimated between late 15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> century AD<sup>1</sup>.

As mentioned earlier, couplets are the earliest followed by triplets. Triplets are found during the settlement of lentlang. These couplets and triplets are very simple in nature. They convey no great philosophy. The rational attitude to life is also absent. They are mainly songs of individual experiences.

The Mizo occupied the present Mizoram from late 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The pre-colonial period, that is from 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century AD was another important era in the history of Mizo folk literature. Prior to the annexation by the British Government, the Mizo occupied the present Mizoram for two centuries. In comparison with the folk songs of Thantlang and Lentlang settlement, the songs of this period are more developed in its number, form and contents. The languages are more polished and the flows also better. Most of the songs of this period are named after the composers.

### **Classification of Mizoram folk songs:-**

This Mizos are fortunate enough in having traditional way of classification of their folk songs. A study of their folk songs on the basis of the indigenous system of classification show that the Mizos are having about one hundred different types of folksongs<sup>2</sup>. But it can broadly be classified into ten as follows: -

- I. Bawh Hla, 2. Hlado, 3. Thian hla & dawi hla, 4. Dar Hla, 5. Puipun Hla, 6. Lengzem Zai, 7. Songs named after, 8. Songs named after tribes, 9. Songs named after modulation of the voice, 10. Songs named after individuals. The first three categories are individual in nature. The fourth one is played by musical instruments. The last six categories are meant for group singing. Even though some of them



maybe sung by individual; most of the Mizo folk songs are to sung together by group of people with music.

Major theme:- We have seen different themes in Mizo folksongs. The major themes are War, hunting, love, nature and patriotism.

**War:-** One of the forces which did most to shape Mizo life for nearly three centuries was the frequent wars with the neighbouring tribes or the wars between the villages. As such, they have several war-chants and songs on the triumph over their enemies. If the Mizo warrior killed his enemy, he had to trample the dead body under his foot, declaring his own name and would cry war-chant (Bawh Hla). After doing this, the soul of the enemy would no longer frighten him, and even when he would die, the soul of the enemy would escort his soul to the Pialral (the paradisc) and served him forever<sup>3</sup>.

**Hunting :-** Hunting was the most favourite game among the Mizo. The society honours pasaltha, the successful hunters. When a boy was born, they blessed him to be the pasaltha. They have plenty of songs on these themes pasaltha, the successful hunter was held in high esteem. Therefore, every young man tried to become a successful hunter. These songs also disclosed the manner in which the rich man as well as the commoners achieved fame and prestigious title Thangchhuah. A poor, but successful hunter thus chanted as follows :

On the day the richman performs a grand feast, The village sounds with joy and langhter, But we poor men, achieve fame, when the hills echo chants of our hunted victory.

**Love :-** Love is the principal theme of the Mizo folk songs. The Mizo love songs in the primitive period reflected their natural closeness to the object of nature. In Nilenzai the poet conceives the dove as a living persons:

*Dove of the forest near my jhum*  
*Do cease crying please,*  
*I too spend many a day crying for my beloved.*

They often used different birds as their love messengers. Even the ferocious birds like eagles are used as their messengers:

*Hasn't my tender message reached you.*  
*Hasn't my messenger the eagle told you,*  
*That I love and miss you, my darling.*  
*The young lovers revealed the sensuous.*

Feeling in love, and the projected light upon social and domestic relations and values through their love-songs.

**Patriotism:** As mentioned in the previous section, some of their folk songs are named after villages. These songs are patriotic in nature. One of the Ngente Zai said like this: Our Ngente village delightful village, I will never forget until I die. Saikuti composed several songs encouraging young men to be great warriors, and stimulating them to glorify their village so



that other villagers might not dare to raid it. She also used to praise the warriors for the achievements they had made against their enemies. Mizo traditional music is generally associated with dance and drama.

### **Musical Instruments:**

From time immemorial, the Mizo have been using different musical instruments. Even though we cannot date the origin, the “Mizo of Kabaw valley during late 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> century AD had developed their music as nearly as they have done today”<sup>4</sup>. The traditional Mizo Musical instruments are very simple and crude in comparison to other Indian musical instruments and very out-dated to modern musical instruments. They can broadly be divided into three. Beating or striking instruments, wind instruments and string instruments.

- II. Striking Instruments:** - Most of the Mizo Musical instruments used at the time of festivals and dances are striking instruments such as different types of Khuang and Dar (Gong), Darkhuang, Darbu, Darmang, Bengbung, Talhkhung, Seki etc.
- III. II.Wind:** Instruments: The Mizo have six varieties of wind – instruments such as Rawchhem, Tumphit, Mantawtawrawl, Phenglawng, Buhchangkuang and Hnahtum.
- IV. Stringed Instrumets :**\_\_The Mizo have only three kinds of stringed-instruments such as Tingtang, Lemlawi and Tuiumdar.

All the striking – instruments except Bengbung are used for the group singing or on the festive occasions; while all the three kinds of stringed-instruments are meant for individual. Out of six instruments from wind-instruments only two are meant for public. The Mizo traditional music is performed for its own sake, in its own time and place, and it has its own meaning. Those individual instruments are not popular among the people; and all most all of them are not known by the present generation. The six stringed guitar was introduced during the second decade of the 135<sup>th</sup> century. It has now become part and parcel of the Mizo society. Almost all the Mizo boys know how to play Guitar. The Guitar alone replaced all the traditional musical instruments. There is one popular Mizo saying “Khuang lova chai ang” which means “festival without drum or music”, and this saying shows that without music, the life of the Mizo is incomplete. They sing on all happy and despairing occasions. When condoling bereaved family, they sing the songs of condolence for the whole day and night. When attending marriage party, they sing a song of joyous. They even sing or hum tunes while they are working or walking on the roads. The mizo traditional tunes are very soft and gentle that they can sing the whole night without getting tired. Even without musical instruments, The Mizo can enthusiastically sing together by clapping hands or any materials which can produce complimentary sound. All these informal instruments are called chhepcher. The Mizo in the early period were very close to nature and that music was the tune of their life. As the three states complete a milestone and ready to embark on another journey towards modernisation,



development and growth, it becomes important for all citizens to take forward the legacy of their respective tribes and uphold their traditions. It is necessary to know more about the state's history and culture. More interactive sessions like traditional music (i.e singing, dancing, instrumentation), competitions for youngsters would help in enriching the culture of these three states of hills.

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## **Rabindranath's Holistic View of the Seasonal Festivals Celebrated at Santiniketan and their Composition of Songs**

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### **Abstract**

*A little discussion can be made about the reasons for seasonal festivals introduced and planned by Rabindranath Tagore. As the earth moves around the sun, the seasons change. The change of season brings the taste of variety in people's lives. It becomes green due to rainfall on dry soil. In primitive human society, crop festivals were built around the seasons, religious and cultural festivals were celebrated around the seasons. Even today, in all the countries of the world, the joy of seasonal festivals gives a different dimension.*

*The primary aim and objective of this research paper is to highlight how Rabindranath Tagore was the first to teach us that music is the only medium through which humans can achieve oneness with the universe. To bring nature closer to the human heart, he created countless works by invoking festivals across various seasons. This paper discusses how the songs and core essence of those festivals are expressed throughout the poet's entire body of work. This research paper has been completed through an analytical process by compiling and thoroughly studying various works of the poet. Rabindranath Tagore initiated several seasonal festivals at Santiniketan. Which is religious and not at all for fun. His main goal was to create a harmony between man, nature and music through this festival. He has composed numerous songs for the needs of this seasonal festival. He did not stop at composing music but also composed seasonal dramas. Rabindranath found the melody in the southern breeze of spring, in the memory of the cloud of monsoon or in the serenity of autumn. He has compared the rhythm of nature to the inner world of man. That music is forever and ever. Through this research paper, my aim and objective is to highlight the totality of seasonal festive which was started by Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan. As Rabindranath Tagore received the call of the melody which is close to the nature, he spread that melody again in the nature. Finally, the aspects that will come out of this article is to prepare a list of these festivals, explain the songs in detail and highlight their relevance to the present time.*

**Keywords:** Rabindranath Tagore, Seasonal festivals, Nature, Santiniketan.

In the works of poets, we often find their distinctive views on the universe and life being expressed with remarkable ease. What is usually beyond the reach of the common eye in the creation of the world or in the course of earthly life is, however, easily perceived by the poet's searching eye. If we were to capture the entirety of Rabindranath's poetic life, the one thing that resonates with us is best expressed through his song:



*“Biswasathe joge jethay biharo  
Seikhane jog tomar sathe amaro...”*

(Wherever there is union with the world, there, too, is union between you and me)

Rabindranath infused the life force of poetry into nature's every living element through the melody of his songs. Among the 283 songs in the Gitabitan (Rabindranath's collection of songs) that fall under the theme of nature, the harmony between nature and music forms the very essence of Rabindranath's entire life. My attempt to delve deeper into this theme will be guided by this connection. The songs in the nature section of Gitabitan are further divided into seven subcategories. The song numbers of each Subcategory and their first and last songs are mentioned here.

### **Sadharan(genaral) 9 songs**

*Biswabinarobe biswajonomohiche...*  
*Bekulo bokuler fule.....*

### **Grishma(summer) 16 songs**

*Nai Roso nai...*  
*Chokkhe amar trishna...*

### **Borsha (Monsoon) 115 songs**

*Eso Shyamalo sundoro...*  
*Ogo tumi panchadoshi....*

### **Sharat (Autumn) 30 songs**

*Aji sharatotopone prabhatawapone....*  
*Nabo kundodhabalodolosushitala...*

### **Hemonta (Late Autumn) 5 songs**

*Himero rate oi gogoner dipgulire...*  
*Namo,Namo,Namo.....*

### **Seet (Winter) 12 songs**

*Seter hawar laglo nachon.....*  
*He Sanyashi, himogiri fele niche neme ele.....*



## **Basanta (spring) 96 songs**

Nobo bosontero danero dali....  
Jhara pata go, ami tomari dole....

What is special about the songs of Sadharan(General) subcategory is that they transcend the specific seasons and become relevant to all times, becoming songs for every moment. Monsoon was Rabindranath's favorite season; we can understand that from the number of his songs.

At the age of only eleven, following his upanayan (sacred thread ceremony), Rabindranath began his "Himalayan Journey," a significant chapter in his life memories, initiated by his father, Maharshi Debendranath. From the grand hall of the Jorasanko Thakur Bari (family mansion), Rabindranath was given the privilege of connecting with the free world of nature. His first exposure to the forms, tastes, scents, and the gentle music of the mountain breeze was through his father's guidance. In his life memories, the poet has analyzed his early connection with nature. He writes: "In my childhood, I had a very simple and intimate connection with the world of nature. The coconut trees inside our house all appeared to me as very real truths..."

Through his journey to the Himalayas at such a young age, Rabindranath experienced complete liberation. The teachings of the Upanishads, the mantras of the Vedas, and all the rituals of Brahma Upasana (worship of the divine) were introduced to him by his father, and these would later form the foundation for the creation of the Brahma School at Santiniketan, as well as for his musical compositions. In his book Sangeet-Chinta (Thoughts on Music), Rabindranath expressed his unique vision of music, establishing an inseparable connection between music and the natural world. In the essay 'Antarbahir' (The Inner and Outer), we will understand this spiritual connection he sought.

The nature and environment of Santiniketan were the primary sources of Rabindranath's music for the seasonal festivals. Since 1920-21, the Seasonal Festival has been celebrated annually in Santiniketan, a tradition that continues even today. The song list from the Gitabitan's nature section has been organized chronologically in the book *Gitabitan Kalanukramik Suchi* by Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, which attempts to categorize the songs by age.

### **Songs in the Nature Section Composed at Different Ages:**

- At age 49: 7 songs
- At age 50: 7 songs
- At age 52: 1 song
- At age 53: 9 songs
- At age 54: 3 songs
- At age 56: 2 songs
- At age 57: 1 song
- At age 58: 5 songs
- At age 59: 1 song



- At age 60: 19 songs
- At age 61: 55 songs
- At age 62: 12 songs
- At age 63: 9 songs
- At age 64: 26 songs
- At age 65: 12 songs
- At age 66: 13 songs
- At age 68: 10 songs
- At age 69: 11 songs
- At age 72: 1 song
- At age 73: 1 song
- At age 74: 7 songs
- At age 75: 4 songs
- At age 76: 10 songs
- At age 77: 2 songs
- At age 78: 20 songs
- At age 79: 2 songs

The years in which the number of songs in the nature section is highest can be considered as the years when the poet was likely in Santiniketan during the relevant season. Therefore, out of the necessity and urgency of the festival, the poet might have been inspired to compose these songs. The Ritu Utsav (Seasonal Festival) was first initiated in Santiniketan in 1907, during the Shree Panchami festival. However, it was from 1920-21 that the celebration of the festival became a regular part of the activities at Visva-Bharati. It is worth discussing the reasons behind Rabindranath Tagore's establishment and planning of the seasonal festivals.

As the Earth moves around the Sun, seasons change. The change of seasons brings variety into human life. The dry earth becomes fertile with a drop of rain. In primitive human societies, festivals related to the seasons were celebrated, with harvest festivals, religious, and cultural observances. Even today, in every country of the world, seasonal festivals bring a different dimension of joy. The primary aim and objective of this research paper is to highlight how Rabindranath Tagore was the first to teach us that music is the only medium through which humans can achieve oneness with the universe. To bring nature closer to the human heart, he created countless works by invoking festivals across various seasons. This paper discusses how the songs and core essence of those festivals are expressed throughout the poet's entire body of work. This research paper has been completed through an analytical process by compiling and thoroughly studying various works of the poet. Rabindranath Tagore welcomed each season through festivals in Santiniketan. His main aim was to create harmony between humanity, nature, and music through these festivals. To fulfill this purpose, he composed countless songs. He did not stop at composing music but also wrote seasonal-themed plays, such as Basanta (Spring), Phalguni, Nabin, Sundar, Nataraj Riturangashala, Shesh Barshan (The Last Rain), Sharadotsav (Autumn Festival), and others. Rabindranath searched for melodies in the southern winds of spring, in the memory of monsoon clouds, and in the clarity of autumn. He compared



the rhythm of nature with the inner world of humans and expressed that such music is eternal and timeless.

Rabindranath's educational philosophy was centered on freedom, particularly the freedom of the will and mind. As he wrote, "Dibe aar nibe, milabe milibe..." (Give and take, unite and merge...). The infinite gift of nature and the acceptance of its form and essence, when fully embraced, should be returned to nature for the benefit and welfare of all. In the education system of Santiniketan, we can observe a blend of various seasonal festivals. We can mark 1907 as the beginning of the celebration of the "Rituraj Basanta" (King of Spring) festival in Santiniketan. On January 18th of that year, Rabindranath's youngest son, Shamindranath Tagore, along with a few students, initiated the Rituranga (Spring Celebration) on the day of Shree Panchami. Shamindranath sang the song "Eki labonye purna prana, pranasha he" (O, what beauty fills the soul, O Lord of life). Earlier, the spring festival was celebrated on any convenient day during the spring season, but now it is specifically celebrated on the day of Dol purnima (Holi). In the memoir of the poet's daughter-in-law, Pratima Devi, it is mentioned that a very small-scale celebration of spring, with songs and dance, used to take place at the Jorasanko Thakur Bari (family home). In Santiniketan, the Basanta Utsav used to be held in the Amra Kunj (Mango Grove), where the poet would recite his self-composed poetry. Today, this celebration takes place on the Ashram grounds, where everyone is invited to join in the singing...

*Ore grihashee khol, dwar khol, laglo je dol.*  
*Sthole jole bonotole laglo je dol.*  
*Dwar khol, dwar khol.*

*Ranga hashi rashi rashi ashoke palashe,*  
*Ranga nesha meghe mesha prabhato-akasha,*  
*Nabeen patay lage ranga hillol.*  
*Dwar khol, dwar khol.*

*Benubono marmore dokhino batase,*  
*Projapoti dole ghase ghase.*  
*Maumachi fire jachi phulero dokhina,*  
*Pakhay bajay tar bhikhario beena,*  
*Madhabeebitaane baayu gandhe bivol.*  
*Dwar khol, dwar khol.*

On the evening before the Basanta Utsav (Spring Festival), the song "Nibiro Ama-Timiro Hote" is sung, and on the morning of the festival, the song "Aji Basanta Jagrata Dware" is sung. After this, the Rituraj Basanta (King of Spring) is invoked by circling the ashram, and in the evening, Rabindranath's geetinatya (musical drama) or nrityanatya (dance drama) is performed on the open ashram grounds. Just as there is an arrival announcement for the festival, there is also a period of expansion and, finally, the moment of departure. Through these rituals and songs, Rabindranath has connected the play of arrival and departure in nature with our own lives. In



songs like "Jhora Pata Go, Aaj Khela Bhanga'r Khela, Chole Jay Mori Haay Basantero Din", the melody of sorrow that resonates is a gift from nature itself.

The seasonal festival that began in Santiniketan in 1907 led to the Barshamangal (Monsoon Festival) being organized in 1908 under the supervision of Kshitimohan Sen. Throughout his life, Rabindranath sang the praises of nature, society, and humanity. The monsoon is not merely a harbinger of harm to humans. While floods caused by excessive rainfall are damaging, when the scorching heat of summer has made the earth dry and parched, it eagerly awaits even a single drop of rain. The arrival of the monsoon seems to bring life and nourishment to the thirsty land. As a lover of nature, Rabindranath planned the Barsha Vandana (Monsoon Invocation) ceremony in Santiniketan based on this philosophy, which gradually became part of the educational curriculum.

In reference to the Barshamangal in Santiniketan, Kshitimohan Sen wrote in his article "Vedamantra Rasik Rabindranath" that, "I remember one evening during the monsoon... the abundance of the rains filled everyone's mind with a deep sense. Gurudev said – 'If we can truly perceive each season within our hearts, only then will all the weaknesses of our minds be dispelled, and our inner selves will become divine... What if we celebrated the festivals of each season in new ways, each time?'"

In 1326 Bangabda (1920), the Santiniketan Patrika published an article in the Bhadra-Ashwin-Kartika edition, which reported, "On the 26th of Shrabon, a full moon session of the Ashram Conference was held at the Kala Bhavana. The session was graced by Gurudev. Shri Dinendrababu and Shri Bhimrao Shastri Mahashaya, along with students, sang monsoon songs with tabla, esraj and other instruments, filling the entire gathering with joy." In 1921, on September 2nd and 3rd, the Barshamangal festival was held at the Jorasanko Thakur Bari (family mansion) under the poet's direction. During this event, 18 monsoon songs were sung, with the poet himself reciting his poetry from Kshanika. The new song "Badolo Meghe Madolo Baje" captivated everyone. Since then, the Barshamangal has been regularly celebrated in Santiniketan.

The Barshamangal event in Santiniketan takes place in the drama hall. Students from the University's Sangeet Bhavan (Music Hall) and the Patha Bhavana (Academic Buildings), as well as the ShikshaSatra (School of Education), try to preserve the essence of the celebration through their dance and music. In Rabindranath's songs, a special change in rhythm, meter, and melody can be observed in these events. It is possible that Rabindranath, with great awareness, consciously chose the rhythm of the songs with dance elements in mind, thus enhancing the scale and grandeur of these performances. Some of the monsoon-themed songs, imbued with memories of the season, can be found in the writings of Shailajaranjan Majumdar.

*Aji jhoro jhoro mukhoro badaro dine....*  
*Aji tomay abar chai shunabare....*  
*Aji megh kete geche shokal belay...*  
*Soghono gahano raatri....*



*Ogo tumi panchadoshi....*  
*Mono moro meghero songi....*

In 1315 Bengal Era (1908), in the poet's absence, the **Barshamangal** (Monsoon Festival) was held in Santiniketan at the end of the month of **Shrabon**. The poet came to know about this successful seasonal festival through letters from Dinendranath and Ajit Chakraborty while he was staying in **Shilaidah**. Although he could not attend the **Barshamangal**, he began preparing for the invocation of **Sharad Lakshmi** (Autumn Goddess). In the excitement of the festival, he composed some autumn-themed songs while staying in **Shilaidah**.

These songs were:

*Aj dhaner khete roudra chayay....*  
*Anonderi sagor hote .....*  
*Tomar sonar thalay sajabo aaj dukher asrudhar...*

The demand for a play arose, and the poet quickly composed the Sharadotsav (Autumn Festival) play. Acharya Kshitimohan has mentioned that the poet completed the play in a continuous 18-hour writing session (in 1315 Bengal Era, 1908). Rabindranath's thought was that through these plays, a deep spiritual connection between the children of Santiniketan Ashram and nature would be established, leading to the development of their powers of perception. We can trace Rabindranath's inclination to compose songs for festivals back to his childhood. Everyone in his family made significant contributions to this creative endeavor. He easily understood that the secret to uniting the universe lies within music itself. To welcome the autumn nature, he composed several songs, including "Megher kole rod heseche", "Nabokundodhabalodalo", "Amra bendhechi kashero guchchho", "Amolo dhobalo pale legechhe", and others. He also composed the Nandigaan (a song of celebration): "Tumi nabo nabo rupe eso prane / Eso gandhe barone eso gaane..."

Rabindranath was a guide for us in realizing the unity of the human mind with the various colors and seasonal changes of nature. In 1335 Bengal Era (1928), a significant article titled "Barsha Utsav" (Monsoon Festival) was published in Prabashi magazine, highlighting the importance of the seasonal festivals Rabindranath had started in Santiniketan. The article emphasized that the festivals were not merely external activities. In the open fields of Santiniketan, the touch and realization of different seasons could be felt and experienced. Nature takes on a new form in each season and presents itself to humankind, though not everyone may perceive this manifestation. The poet, however, experiences it both externally and internally, through his songs, poems, and stories. Rabindranath Tagore did not confine himself within the four walls of traditional academic knowledge. He sought to integrate education with society, culture, and nature at the Santiniketan institution. To align education with society, he introduced various cultural festivals and events at Santiniketan, aiming to foster a sense of community, exchange of ideas, ideals, and attitudes among students, leading to the holistic development of their personalities. Tagore awakened the ultimate truth of life—that the full realization of truth comes through unity—within everyone. Moving from the confines of



Jorasanko to the open embrace of nature in Santiniketan, Tagore repeatedly lost and rediscovered himself in the call of nature.

In the essay "Utsaber Din" (On the Days of the Festival), Rabindranath says that on festival days, we forget our smallness and, in the joy of communal celebration, feel a sense of the vastness of the universe. Rabindranath has shown us that humans must return to nature again and again. The gifts that nature gives are the ones we travel with. There is no repayment for these gifts, but we can receive its fullness only when we are able to spread it to everyone. That is why we find Rabindranath's full expression through his songs.

*Sab dibi ke sab dibi paay, aay aay aay.*  
*Daak porechhe oi shona jaay, aay aay aay.*  
*Aasbe se je swarnorathe - jaagbi kaara rikto pathe*  
*Pous-rajoni taahar aashay, aay aay aay.*  
*Khonek kebol taahar khela, haay haay haay.*  
*Taar pore taar jaabar bela, haay haay haay.*  
*Chole gele jaagbi jabe dhonraton bojha hobe,*  
*Bahon kora hobe-je daay, haay haay haay.*

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