



A Study For The Revival Of Folk Musical Traditions Of Kolis Of Maharashtra

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Abstract:

Every region in India has its own form of folk music. Folk culture is the expression of people living a way of life, and folk-music is a living source of speaking out their hearts in a language known to them. Maharashtra has a very vast folk culture. There are three major forms of music at the core of the musical history of the state such as folk music, Natya Sangeet, and the poetry of the Saints. Village folk such as Povadas, Owi, Bhaleri, Palane and Artya are common to mass listeners. Several other forms of simple devotional music like bhajans, bharud, gondhal, kirtans, lalita, abhanga, and popular dance styles like Lavani, Tamasha, Koli etc. have contributed immensely to the rich musical canvas of Maharashtra. Koli dance is performed by the fishermen community of Maharashtra. It showcases the vivacity of the community and is therefore termed as a 'dance of joy'. Both men and women, either standing together in a single row or by forming pairs perform dance movements, depicting activities performed during fishing such as rowing boats, casting nets, symbolically forming waves, swaying oars in forward and backward motions, and so on. Like other regional folk traditions, Kolis have their very own unique music traditions in the coastal regions of Maharashtra. Due to advancement of civilization and changes in the society and cultural practices, the flame of this popular form of music is at its lowest level. The present research paper explored the ground reality to revive and promote this famous regional art form along with recommendations to popularize it among present and future generations.

Keywords: Folk music, Natya Sangeet, Abhanga, Kirtan Lavani, Tamasha, Regional folk.

Introduction:

The phrase 'folk music' is a German compound applied exclusively to peasant songs originally. Renowned musician and critic Cecil Sharp expressed her opinion that the creation of folk music is a spontaneous process of pure natural instinct. According to Henry Edward Krehbiel, folk songs are echoes of the heart beats of the vast folk and in them are preserved feelings, beliefs and habits of antiquity. The main characteristic of folk song is transmission by oral tradition, not written down and as a result it develops variants and the original form rarely known. Folk music normally is created by untrained, unprofessional musicians and performed by singers and players with little or no theoretical background. Song is old; style is archaic. But folk cultures do have a history; they allow their music to change, their

compositions to be altered and their repertory to be turned over. It is the musical expression of a whole people or tribe or a significant portion of a culture; folk song must be performed and accepted in order to remain active. The power of music as a means of communication is much more pronounced and evidenced in folk music. Alan Lomax, the great ethnomusicologist states that folk song is multi-leveled communication that combines the signals carried by many systems into a single evocative message **(Barma, 2008:17)**.

On a comparative study of folk and classical music in India, the following facts are revealed. Some of the remarkable features of the folk-music, for instance, the harmonization of notes, the syncopation of the swaras the changing of ragas in the same song etc., though adopted spontaneously in the songs are undoubtedly noteworthy. It is again highly surprising to realize that some of the rare ragas and talas mentioned in ancient literature, although lost their place in the sphere of classical music, are still preserved in the folk-tunes in the remote corners of India **(Raghavan, 1964: 15)**.

As per researchers of music, folk music is a mere rustic reflection of the larger Indian society. The music is an integral part of celebrations such as weddings, engagements, and births. There are plenty of songs for such occasions. There are also many traditional songs composed for planting and harvesting **(Gupta, 1964: 13)**.

We have inherited lots of unique folk instruments which are in use since many decades. India whose major inhabitants are rural population is now realizing that her folk-songs can throw a flood of light on the gradual development of our cultural heritage **(Bhattacharya, 1968: 18)**.

Folk music and songs are the integral part of everyday life of the distant districts of Maharashtra. Nautanki, Lavani, Koli and Tamasha (Folk musical traditions) are mostly famous in villages. However, these traditional art forms are slowly extinguishing and the artists are struggling to maintain their daily needs. Tukaram, Namdeo, Jnandev, Soraya and Jani are the revered and significant poet- saints of Maharashtra. These poet saints infused devotion (Bhakti) and knowledge (Jnana) in their preachings **(Barma, 2008: 48)**.

Famous Folk Music of Maharashtra Povada, Koli and Lavana are the main and admired folk songs to amuse the rural community of Maharashtra. Folk music also includes some other kinds of performances like Koli, Lavani, Lalita, Tamasha, Povadas and Gondhal for public entertainments **(Ranade. 2008. 42)**

Even though Maharashtra has many tribes, the Koli stands one among the famous tribes. Kolis are settled in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and rest of India. They are also one of the original inhabitants of Greater Mumbai, which comprises of seven islands namely Kolaba, Old Woman's Island, Mumbai, Mazagaon, Sion, Worli and Mahim (all of which have now been joined by bridges and reclamations).

The prominent among these are Mangela kolis, Vaity kolis, Mahadeo kolis, and Suryavanshi kolis. Folk song and dance form an important part of the Koli community's identity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

During the last 20 years there has been a growing revival of indigenous art in India, which has suffered eclipse for over a century. Owing to political dominations and economical struggles, India is not having the full vigor or energy to create something new out of the old. The ancient spirit of the mass has to be interpreted to the new India. Today India is realizing the necessity for the revival and regeneration of her folk arts, which beautify millions of

humble homes, glorify the lives of her peasants and enlighten the dark corners of their lives. With the help of enthusiastic workers, it is possible to collect from the different corners of India, the innumerable types of folk-music, of which some are fast fading out of society. It is our immediate duty now to bring to light these gems which lie hidden in the muddy corners of the country. A mere collection of folk songs will not suffice the demand for the revival of the folk music. The collections must be made use of. Their historical, social and educative values must be revealed to the younger generation. The simple catchy folk-tunes, conveying the feelings and sentiments of our ancestors, their lives and philosophies, their activities and achievements their morals and discipline, are of great value in the educational and cultural development of the nation.

Considering all these educative and cultural aspects of the folk-songs of these Kolis of Maharashtra, it should be stated that proper importance must be attributed to these songs and that equally important place be set aside for the folk –songs in the educational system of our country. The steps taken by the Indian Folk-culture Research institute will surely help to a large extent the revival of the folk-music in India. Let us hope and pray that in the near future every child of India will look back with pride at the rich realm of folk-music which alone can shed luster on the life and feelings of our society.

Review of Literature

Manorama Sharma in his book “A Comprehensive Study of Indian Folk Music and Culture” makes a very interesting attempt to say that the cultural diversity, the agricultural practices, community groups, religious and social organizations, fairs, festivals and seasons account for an enriched folk traditions in India. An attempt has been made through a comprehensive survey of the contemporary folk forms to illustrate the salient features of this rich, complex, multilayered and multi dimensional picture of the folk traditions which co existed together since decades. These forms embody man`s innate universal desire to express his feelings through music.

Smita Tewari Jassal, an anthropologist in her most recent book, “Unearthing Gender: Folksongs of North India” explores women`s lives in rural north India using the Bhojpuri folksong as an analytical frame. She conceives of songs as communicative platforms, as cultural discourses on emotion,” recognizing that the women experience greater psychological strength through individual and collective singing.

Mohan Pandey, in his book ‘Dynamics of Indian Folk Music’ states that every public ceremony and every important act in an India`s life was accompanied by song. Some songs have no words; vocabularies being used instead and when once set to a melody, they are never changed.

Sukhbilas Barma in his book “Indian Folk Music Bhawaiya Ethno musicological Study” deals with the folk genre and socio-cultural history of the folk community and the region namely the Rajbanshis and the then Kamrup The book contains a theoretical analysis of Folk Music and Ethno musicology.

Ashok Kumar Tetarbe in his book “Kolís and Mumbai: The spirit of Kolís” deals with past, present and the expected future of the kolís in Mumbai. the book begins from the era of portugese British Period – versesof refreshing glory of Kolís and encouraging renewals of the lost era. Though I appreciate the content of the book, but I am not that satisfactory about the author who some time becomes illogical in his thoughts.

Objective of the study

Although studies on Indian folk music had been done by a few scholars, a detailed study of the different traditions of the Kolís of Maharashtra had not been provided by any one author. Moreover, very small amount of data on folk music of kolís has been found in the University of Mumbai or any other library. We have to make several visits to Koli Samaj at Uttan and interview some of the elders of the koli tribe in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the folk culture and traditions of these kolís. There are no books, journals or articles available in English. We are proud to say that this research may be the first one to deal with the folk traditions of Kolís. Fr. S. Salaiyathu, one of the researchers is living at Vasai surrounded by the kolís. and working for the development of this tribe by preserving the cultural treasures of these art form, training the younger generation in the divine arts of folk music and dance and promoting peace and harmony through these folk songs and dances.

Methodology

Preservation and promotion of folk music traditions practiced by the Koli communities in western Maharashtra.

This study is based on secondary data which was obtained from several libraries from Mumbai (Institute of Indian Culture, University of Mumbai, and St. Xavier’s College), Pune (Ishvani Kendra and Jana Deep Vidya Peeth) and Vasai (Jeevan Darshan Kendra & Koli Samaj of Uttan). Data from various published books, encyclopedias, journal and magazines has been used to study the folk traditions of the kolís in Maharasthtra. Since the resource materials are less, hence I need to go for the interview of the elders of the different Koli communities.

Findings and Analysis

Marathi folk lore is a vast subject. There are many dialects of Marathi that are spoken by so many communities settled in Maharashtra long ago. The substantial and valuable materials regarding folk literature are available more in these various dialects. The Marathi scholars and writers such as Shri Ghorphade, Shri Borse, Ms. Anusuya Limaye and Ms. Sanjana Babar have made tremendous efforts to collect and publish the treasures of Marathi folk literature before. But due to lack of planned initiative these efforts have very little effects on the revival of this art form. Through analyzing these literatures and data collected from our long efforts, the following points are found:

- These literatures handed down to us traditionally
- Authors are unknown for almost 90 percent of the literatures
- There are several misinterpretation regarding the period of compositions
- These compositions have the capabilities to attract the mind of people due to their simplicity, naturalness, beauty and realistic depiction of human nature.

At times, we are convinced that it is composed by the group when they have common experiences while dancing and singing together or during rituals such as child birth or marriage **(Roy,2003:210)**

There are two types of folk songs. (1) Song sung by the ladies and (2) Song sung by the males.

The following songs sung by the ladies:

- songs sung at the time of grinding corns
- songs sung while narrating some stories
- Nursery songs
- songs of nature
- songs sung at the time of festivals such as Akhaji, Nagapanchami, Diwali Utran, Holi etc.
- auspicious songs sung at the time of pregnancy or the birth of a child
- religious song sung by the ladies
- play-songs sung by the time of playing Zimma, Fugadi, Tiprya, Hindoli etc.

During all these above mentioned songs, males do not take part in it.

The following songs sung by the males:

- Ballads-sung by Charans, Brahma Bhatt,and Gosavis
- Riya and Pie songs are sung by the Bhils and Todas
- Golvanas, a type of song sung by male, contains either some erotic elements or philosophic elements
- songs of deities such as Kanbai Ganapati
- mystic songs like Kalgitara
- Songs of the cowherds and shepherds etc.

These songs are rhythmical and onomatopoetic **(Sayeed,2012:78)**

Conclusion

The impact of social changes on folk traditions depends upon the social advancement and social situation of a country. At present, young generation is much more distracted from their origin by the influence of cross cultural elements due to globalization factors. Hence, there is an urgent need to preserve the musical heritages of Koli's through restoration and preservation of its originality and purity. there are still some people who perform maintaining its traditional style. There are different institutes like Koli samaj which is trying to promote the Koli traditions. In this connection, we must acknowledge the role of Uttan folk and Tribal cultural center (Koliwada Samaj) of the State govt. of Maharashtra and Lok Sanskriti Parishad for their encouragement and promotion of Koli folk tradition. As part of the awareness programmes, various seminars and workshops were held throughout Maharashtra. All available data including audio-video recordings of the old masters should be transferred to the digital platforms to increase its accessibility. Well-equipped training centers are also necessary for propagating and maintaining the folk traits. The government

or any non- government organization should take the responsibility to create huge data base for archival work under the initiative to revive the glory of Koli Folk traditions.

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Online other references: <http://> video links for Koli song and dance

1. Song : Dol Doltay Varyavar https://youtu.be/MSMaR6j_uFI
Singer : Shrikant Narayan
Music : Vesavkar Ani Mandali
Lyrics : Vijay Kathi
2. Mi Hai Koli Sorilya Hori Song https://youtu.be/ga-H_bIGGAE
Singer : Shrikant Narayan
Music : Vesavkar Aani Mandali
Lyrics : Vijay Kathin
3. Song: Aai Tuz deul <https://youtu.be/BRHlEt213uY>
Singer: Yogesh Agravkar
Music: Yogesh Agravkar
4. Koligeet <https://youtu.be/u4s5CsESXDk>
Singer: Shahir Vitthal Umap
5. Singer : Shaila Chikhale <https://youtu.be/8DxSIobmOjM>
Lyrics : Vesavkar & Mandli
Music : Vijay Kathin.
6. Song : Paru Go Paru <https://youtu.be/69EbENqMgRU>
Singer : Veena Bamne & Santosh Nayak
Music : Vijay Kathin
7. Song : Dongrache Aarun <https://youtu.be/zi6Yww2Nfas>

Singer : Vina Bamne, Santosh Nayak
Music : Vijay Kathin

8. Song - Agin Gadi Boltay <https://youtu.be/8ughrB39G6k>
Singer - Archana Nagvekar
9. Singer : Shaila Chikhale, Shrikant Narayan <https://youtu.be/pNXYY5xCDcg>
Song: Amrutacha kara Gheun
Music : Vijay Kathin
10. Song: Mi Hai Koli Sorilya Hori <https://youtu.be/ga-H bIGGAE>
Singer : Shrikant Narayan
Music : Vesavkar Aani Mandali
11. Singer - Vitthal Umap https://youtu.be/x_1wbjYRrhc
Song: Fatki Not
Lyrics - Vitthal Umap
Published by - Saregama India Limited
12. Singers: Asha Bhosale, Hemant Kumar <https://youtu.be/T-EMyII4iYo>
Song: Gomu Sangatina
Music Director: Hridaynath Mangeshkar
Lyricist: Sudhir Moghe
13. Song: Shingala Navra · <https://youtu.be/3O8DRmai0iQ>
Singers: Shrikant Narayan, Shaila Chikhale
14. Song: Ang Pori Sambhal <https://youtu.be/sDFBH2lpWGg>
Singers: Mohammed Rafi, Pushpa Pagdhare
Music: Shrikant Thakre
15. Song : Aai Mazi konala Pavli https://youtu.be/Aq_Bto8vwcQ
Singer : Shahir Sadanand Patil
16. Song: Lal Lal Pagote
<https://youtu.be/IoxrmCcnPg8>
Singer : Jay
17. Song: Vadal Vara Sutala Ga <https://youtu.be/YwKDuGYr2Z0>
Album: Geet Shilp Marathi Geete
Singer: Lata Mangeshkar

18. Song: Gomu Sangatina

<https://youtu.be/T-EMyII4iYo>

Music Director: Hridaynath Mangeshkar

Singers: Asha Bhosale, Hemant Kumar

19. Song: Ekvira Aai Tu Dongaravali

<https://youtu.be/SVU-PuwuQbM>

Singer : Shaila Chikhale

Music : Vijay Kathin

20. Song : Pori Jaraas Lavshil Ka <https://youtu.be/IrsNolk8PCs>

Singer : Mahendra Kapoor & Shaila Chikhale. Music : Ram, Laxman