
Influence of folk Music and Art on our Culture

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Abstract

Folk music, folk dance, and folk drama constitute an invaluable part of India's cultural heritage, reflecting the traditions, values, beliefs, and collective experiences of communities across generations. Emerging through oral tradition and anonymous authorship, folk arts serve as important mediums for entertainment, social communication, cultural preservation, and education. Folk music, in particular, mirrors the emotions, aspirations, and everyday lives of ordinary people and remains dynamic by adapting to changing social contexts. South Indian folk music exhibits distinctive musical characteristics, including simple melodic structures, limited tonal range, and the use of traditional ragas and rhythmic patterns. Folk songs can be classified according to their musical construction, mode of performance, and subject matter, encompassing moral, philosophical, ceremonial, occupational, agricultural, devotional, tribal, historical, and epic themes. Beyond preserving cultural identity, folk music promotes cultural exchange, social cohesion, and mutual understanding by transcending linguistic and regional boundaries. Its influence is evident in contemporary music, film, dance, fashion, and other art forms, where traditional elements are creatively blended with modern styles. Thus, folk music and related folk arts continue to play a significant role in sustaining cultural continuity while inspiring innovation and cross-cultural dialogue in contemporary society.

Keywords: *Folk Music, Folk Dance, Folk Drama, Cultural Heritage, Oral Tradition, Folk Songs, Cultural Identity, South Indian Folk Music, Cultural Exchange, Traditional Arts, Indigenous Knowledge, Folk Culture, Contemporary Music, Social Cohesion, Cultural Preservation.*

Introduction

Folk music, folk dance and folk drama have a distinct place in the cultural heritage of a country. They play an important part in the life of common folk. They develop Spontaneously. The folk music of all countries possesses certain common characteristics. Intended as they are for being

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sung by rustic folk with untrained voices their compass is limited. They are characterized by simple music and easy rhythm. Folk Music, Folk Dance and Folk Drama are older than classical music, classical dance and classical drama. Folk music comes mostly through anadi sampradaya or unknown authorship as opposed to art music which is the contribution of known vaggayakaras. It is the music which gives indefinite delight and pleasure to the housewife and the householder. It is the music which is sung daily in the homes of hundreds of millions of men and women, old and young. It is the music of the masses. The function of folk music is primarily entertainment.

Folk music and art has been an integral part of Indian culture, reflecting our rich heritage and traditions. They influence our culture in many ways.

*Preserve traditions and stories

*Shape Social and culture identity

*Influence modern music and art forms.

*Promote cultural exchange and understanding.

In India, Folk music and art have inspired many movements and continue to be a source of inspiration for artists.

Folk songs are perhaps the one means of discovering the real feelings and ideas of a people. The up-to-date inner feelings of a people always find expression in their folk songs. The folk songs are thus kept dynamic.

There is a profusion of folk songs in the South Indian languages. Their dhatus or musical settings dhatus or musical stings have a peculiarity of their own. With the exception of the Prati Madhyama, all their other eleven notes of the Sthayi figure in them. In some pieces even subtle Sruthi's can be heard. The notes are sung can in a plain, unadorned manner and as the compass of most of the tunes is limited, it is not possible to assign specific ragas to many of the songs. Some songs are very crude, uncouth and primitive and comprise only three or four notes. But marriage songs and folk song of a refined nature are in well-known old and popular ragas.

Some of the recognizable ragas in folk music of the refined type are Punnagavarali, Nadanamakriya, Ananda Bhairavi, Saindhavi, Kuranji, Navaroj and Nilambari of the time measures, Adi, Rupaka and Chapu inclusive of the Misra, Khanda and Tisra varieties, are frequently met with. Songs in tisragati are also seen. The tunes of the songs used in sorcery, witchcraft, demon worship and kali worship are of an awe-inspiring character.

Themes of folksong

The theme of a folk song is never serious and the language used is not of high order. The laws of prosody are surprisingly enough, adhered to. In south India, there is a folk song for every event in life. The ideas in the Sahityas of some folk songs a highly suggestive and thought provoking. Folk music promotes cultural exchange and understanding. To make this point clear, one must be familiarized with the classification of folk music.

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From the point of view of their musical constructions, folk songs may be classified under two main heads.

1. Rustic type eg. Agricultural, craft and occupation songs.
2. Refined type - eg. Puranic songs and marriage song.

Rustic folk songs are mostly found in rural parts and are current amongst the lower strata of society. The music through crude is nevertheless charming refined folk songs are those which have polished music and are in some of the well-recognized ragas.

There are folk songs intended for being sung by

1. Individuals
2. Groups
3. An individual and a group alternately and
4. Two groups alternatively.

There are folk songs intended for being sung by men alone or women alone and also songs for being sung by men and women, alternately or together.

On the point of view of their subject matter, folk songs may be classified into.

1. Moral songs - Teaching morals and principles of ethics and the manner in which one should conduct himself in society.
2. Philosophical songs- Teaching the philosophy of life.
3. Proverbial songs containing adages, proverbs and saying of great sages.
4. Ceremonial songs & Ritualistic or functional songs. Songs sung on occasions like birth, Namakaran cradling, marriage, death and nuptial ceremonies.

Masahkai song are sung during ceremonies of pregnant women.

5. Occupational songs - Under this head come the occupation and craft songs, milkmaids' songs, load carrying songs, fishermen song, songs of the cart-pullers and drawers of water from wells for irrigation purposes and generally the songs of the working classes. The music of the Doli bearers on the Tirupati Hills, which consists of only three notes, (Shadja, Chaturruthi Rishabha and Sadharna gandhara) is an interesting example, under this group and furnish example, under this group and furnish example of primitive music.

The music runs as follows.

(A) SR, B) RS, A) SR C) Rs
(A)GR B) SR, A) SR, B) Rs

The music is just sung to the syllables to

6. Agricultural songs - Under this head, come the songs relating to rainfall, songs relating to the various seasons of the year and songs sung on the occasion of the

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sowing of seeds, ploughing, transplanting, weeding and planting of crops and the harvest songs.

7. Rain songs - In tracts which have no irrigation facilities and which are totally dependent upon rain, rain song are sung in times of drought. On such occasions, It is also the practice to requisition the service of seven oduvars, reciters of Tevaram) to sing the seven hymns of the tevaram in the pan Megaraga Kurinji by way of invoking the seven clouds and produce rain.
8. Cradle songs- Mother's songs (lullabies) composed for and sung to children. There are many such swing songs in the South Indian languages and most of them are in Nilambari raga, Anandhabharairavi or Yadukulakamboji.
9. Devotional & Worship songs - Songs of the prayer and songs in praise of the presiding deities of villages.
10. Tribal songs - Every tribe in India has its own characteristic song which relates amongst other things the origin and history of the tribe, its great ancestors, its, hoary traditions, its time-honored profession etc. These songs consist of a series of stanzas and the tribes take a patriotic delight in singing them.
11. Craft songs - The sahitya here in realty to the technique of their calling like the process of mat-making etc.
12. Historical songs - These are in the style of the ballads and are of popular interest. Their themes relate to historic events of great significance.
13. Epic and puranic songs- These are songs celebrating the valorous deeds of the great epic and puranic heroes like Rama.
14. Songs in praise of local heroes; Every important village has its own hero and there are songs in praise of such heroes.
15. Congregational songs - Songs for group- the Kummi, kolattam and Pinnal Kolattam Song.
The Rustic and Refined folk songs promote cultural exchange and understanding by
 1. Sharing stories and traditions- Folk music shares community stories, values and history with others.
 2. Connecting people: Common themes like, love struggle, and celebration resonate across cultures.
 3. Breaking barriers - Folk music transcend language and regional boundaries, fostering unity.
 4. Inspiring collaboration - Artists from different background collaborate blending styles and creating something new.

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In India, folk music has influenced many genres and artists, promoting cross-cultural understanding.

Eg. Folk fusion bands: - Bands like 'The Bare foot Band' blend Indian folk with western styles, promoting cross- cultural understanding.

Film music - Bolywood songs often incorporate folk elements from various regions, showing India's diversity.

Influence of Folk music in Modern music.

*Folk story telling and themes influence modern song writing, focusing on social issues, love and nature.

*Traditional instruments like sitar, tabla or dharbuk are incorporated into modern music

*Art and fashion - Folk art and motifs inspire contemporary art, fashion and design.

In India, artist like A.R. Rahman and Shankar Mahadevan blend folk with modern styles, creating unique sounds.

Eg. A.R. Rahman - Jai HO.(Slumdog Millionaire sound track) - Blends Indian Folk with electronic and pop elements.

Rakka Rakka - Uses folk rhymes and instruments like the dharbut in a modern context.

Shankar Mahadevan

Breathless (Album) - Incorporate folk elements and traditional Indian instruments.

Collaboration with artists like Vishal

Dadlani :- Blend folk with contemporary pop and rock.

Folk music and art continue to shape our culture, preserving traditions and inspiring new expressions. Their influence is seen in modern music, dance and art, keeping our heritage variant and relevant. As we celebrate our roots, folk forms remind us of our shared humanity and the power of creativity.

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