

Folk Music

The distinctive geographical environment of Rajasthan lends colourfulness to its folk life. The history of its people, social and moral ideals are all treasured in its folk music. Folk songs of Rajasthan express every context and aspect of life.

Folk music is a reflection of natural outpourings of the felt experience of the common people. The basis of the folk music are the folk songs, which are sung on various festivals and ceremonies in chorus. Use of folk instruments enhances their melody.

Rabindranath Tagore has called folk music that art of culture, which is a carrier of a pleasant and delightful message. In words of Gandhiji, 'folk songs are the language of people, they are custodians of our culture.'

In the Standard dictionary of folklore, mythology and legend, folk song is defined thus: Folk songs are the musico-poetic compositions of that group of people whose literature is enshrined in the oral tradition.

Folk music cannot be compared with the classical music as the former is for almost every occasion – family and social functions, seasons, sacraments, festivals, gods and goddesses, ceremonials and rituals. Classical music is canonical and is required to be learnt whereas folk music is a spontaneous outpouring of the sentiments and emotions.

We can divide folk music into three categories. The first category of folk music includes those songs which are sung by people on different occasions. Second category includes those songs which evolved in a feudal environment. Many castes sang songs in praise of their patron king or feudal lords etc. to earn their bread and butter. The third category consists of songs in which regional features are abundantly visible.

Folk Songs of Men

Most of the folk songs are sung by females on the occasions of ceremonies, festivals, and celebrations. Songs associated with birth and marriage are by far more numerous than the songs for any other occasions. On the occasion of marriage, songs related to various ceremonies—sagai, badhava, chaak-bhaat, ratajaga, mayra, haldi, ghodi, bana-bani, var-nikasi, toran, hathlewa, kanwar kalewa, jeemanwar, kankandora, jala, jua-jui are sung.

The desire of love of bride and bridegroom post marriage is reflected in bana-bani songs. Before marriage, bridegroom is invited by relatives and while returning, song related to 'bindola' (bindoli) is sung. On the departure of bridegroom, at the time of ghudchadi, 'ghodi' is sung. Females of bride's family going to see the location of janvasa finds mention in 'jala' songs. The songs that are sung on the birth of a child are called 'jaccha' songs. These songs sing the praise of the expectant mother, joy of growth of family and blessings for the child.

There are many festival and celebration songs which are sung on the occasion of Gangaur, Teej, Holi, Raksha Bandhan, Deepawali, Navratri, Makar Sankranti. Gangaur and Teej are the important festivals of Rajasthan. The festival of Gangaur is organized in ritualistic manner by unmarried girls and married women for sixteen days in the month of Chaitra. The famous song of Gangaur is as follows –

*“Khelan do gangaur bhanwar mhane khelan do gangaur,
Mhari sakhiyan jove baat ho bhanwar mhane khelan do gangaur”.*

Ghoomar dance-song sung on the occasion of Teej and Gangaur, has become identical with Rajasthan. Song goes this way-

“Mhari ghoomar chhe nakhrali e maa gori ghoomar ramava mahai jasya”.

On the occasion of Teej, Teej songs are sung depicting the natural beauty of Shravan month. In the month of Falgun (last month of the Hindu calendar) at the time of Holi, groups of men singing songs like Rasiya, Hori, Dhamaal etc. can be seen in every region of Rajasthan. Among the seasonal songs of Rajasthan, songs related to winter, summer, rainy and spring season like faag, beejan, shiala, barahmaasa, holi, chaiti, and kajli, jaada are important. Songs of sawan month include choumasa, papaiyo, badli, mor and songs in praise of Indra.

Among the folk deities, Tejaji, Devji, Pabuji, Gogaji, Jhujarji, etc. had sacrificed their everything for the sake of charity, so many hymns in their praises are sung immersed in devotion. Among the folk goddesses, Sati mata, Seetla mata, Diyadi mata are worshipped with great reverence. Hymns are sung in their worship.

The verses of Meera, Kabir, Dadu, Raidas, Chandrasakhi, Bakhtawarji and

hymns of Nathpanthi and Nirguni are part of the folklore. Due to the influence of Brij culture in Bharatpur and Kaman, songs related to 'Krishna Leela and 'Languriya' songs sung by the devotees of Kela Devi are very popular in the Karauli region.

Songs pertaining to various other facets of the folk culture of Rajasthan have also been found. Through them, aspirations, emotions and contexts or incidents are presented by making certain things or objects the vehicle of expression. Such songs include Indoni, Kangsiyo, Gorband, Panihari, Loor, Olun, Supna, Hichki, Mumal, Kurjan, Kajaliya, Kaga. The krida songs of children and Kaman songs related to witchcraft also reflect the beauty of the folk music.

Folk Songs of Professional Castes

In Rajasthan many castes adopted music as their profession. These castes are Dholi, Mirasi, Langa, Dhadi, Kalawant, Bhat, Rav, Jogi, Kamad, Vairagi, Gandharva, Bhopey, Bhawai, Kalbeliya, Kathik etc. Their music is refined, emotional, varied and wide ranging. Like khayal and thumri they are adorned with short taans, small embellishments (murkiyan) and jhataka. These songs bear resemblance with many ragas like Mand, Des, Sorath, Maru, Paraj, Kalingda, Jjogiya, Asawari, Bilawal, Peelu, Khamaj etc.

Mand singing of Rajasthan is famous the world over. The song padharo mahare des by famous mand singer Padma Shri Allah Jillai Bai is an open invitation to tourists to visit Rajasthan. Various types of mand are prevalent in different areas with some variations, e.g., Udaipur Ki Mand, Jodhpur Ki Mand, Jaipur-Bikaner Ki Mand, Jaisalmer Ki Mand etc.

Most of the couplets here are based on ragas Des and Sorath. The heroic songs sung by the commercial castes during wars are based on Sindhu and Maru ragas.

Regional Folk Songs

In Rajasthan, geographically, various kinds of landforms – desert, hilly region and plains are present. Songs of desert regions like Barmer, Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Jodhpur etc. are very melodious. Due to free and unrestrained environs, the folk songs here are sung on high octave and full throated with long taans. Kurjaa, Pipli, Rattan Rano, Mumal, Ghughri, Kevda are some outstanding folk songs of this region. Kamad, Bhopey, Langas, Mirasi, Kalawant are the major musician castes of the region.

In the southern hilly region of Rajasthan like Udaipur, Dungarpur, Banswara, Pratapgarh, Sirohi and Abu, group-singing is favoured more than solos or duets. This region is inhabited by Bhil, Meena, Girasiya, Sehriya tribes. The tunes of their songs are simple, short and with limited notes. The main songs of Mewar area are geet

patelya, bichhiyo, lalar, machar, nokhila, thari unta ri aswari, navri aswari, shikar etc.

The famous song of the Bhils of northern Mewar is humseedo which is sung by male and female together.

Jaipur, Kota, Alwar, Bharatpur, Karauli and Dholpur make up the flat plains of Rajasthan. Here, linguistically and compositionally diverse songs are prevalent; there is predominance of bhakti and shringar ras songs in these regions.

All in all, Rajasthan has had a rich tradition of folk music. Shringar rasa songs, especially those depicting the pangs of separation of the beloved who has gone to foreign lands (viyog shringar) to earn livelihood, are the most popular and more numerous than the songs of any other kind. In popularity, after the Shringar rasa songs come the shanta rasa and veer rasa evoking songs.

Sport Songs of Children (Bachchon ke Khel Geet)

Sports form an important part of day's routine of boys and girls. Song and poem make the sport more interesting. The tunes of these songs are simple and yet melodious.

1. Kaan katarni, kaan katarni chabbak chaiya chabbak chaiya, bol mera bhaiya
2. Tempo ghodi phool gulab ro
3. Kakad vail matira pakya tindsiyen ka tora lagya, Rajaji Rajaji kholo kunwad (for small kids)
4. Machli machli ktno pani? haan miyaji itno pani (for small kids)
5. Mhara mahailan pache kun hai ?

15 days before Deepawali, boys and girls often go from house to house singing. Songs of boys are called 'lovadi' or 'harni' and songs sung by girls are called 'ghadalyo'. This practice is prevalent in Mewar.

Folk music of Rajasthan: Devilal Samar; page-57-58

Do You Know?

1. Occasions for the songs of men – bhajans, chang songs on Holi, dhamaal, pernoctation (ratri jagran) in temples, keertan etc.
2. Occasions for the songs of young boys– chowk chyanani (Ganesh Chaturthi festival), songs of dhaff, dhamaals, bhajans sung on

pernoctation (ratri jagran) in temples.

3. Occasions for the songs of female– Holi, Teej (Chomasa), Gangaur (Ghoomar) marriage, birth of a boy, ratijage, harjas, bara masiye, sheetla, on the arrival of guest, kartik snan, jaccha, jaat, jadule and fairs.
4. Occasions for the songs of young girls – Gangaur, arrival of brother-in-law, festival of chanachat, teej (songs of swings), holi and Deepawali.

Exercise

Multiple Choice Questions

1. What is Pateliya, Bichhiyon, and Lalar ?
 (a) Folk Dance (b) Folk Songs
 (c) Folk Drama (d) Playing Instruments
2. Languriya song is related to which god / goddess ?
 (a) Jeen Mata (b) Khatushyam ji
 (c) Kaila Devi (d) Shree Mahaveer ji
3. What is the reason for the popularity of Allah Jillai Bai ?
 (a) Maand singing (b) Dance
 (c) Kurja singing (d) RavanHathha

Very Short Answer Type Questions

1. Name four folk songs that are sung on the occasion of marriages.
2. Write two lines of the song sung on the occasion of Gangaur.
3. Name the folk songs sung by men on Holi.
4. Mayra, haldi, ghodi, etc. folk songs are sung on what occasion?
5. On what occasion is the folk song ‘Jaccha’ sung?

Short Answer Type Questions

1. In how many categories are the folk songs of Rajasthan divided? Explain.
2. Describe the major castes of Rajasthan, which have adopted music as a profession.

3. Name the different songs which represent the folk culture of Rajasthan.
4. How is folk music different from classical music? Throw some light.

Essay Type Questions

1. Write an article on the folk songs sung by common people/general public.
2. Write an essay on the folk songs of the commercial castes and regional folk songs.

Project work :

1. Attend a wedding ceremony in your area and write about the different folk songs in your notebook.
2. What are the different folk songs sung in different regions of India? Find them and locate them on a map.

Imagine :

1. Your elder brother is getting married, which folk songs will be sung on this occasion?