

Music in Madhya Pradesh

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This largest state in the Indian republic borders on seven other states: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan. Since the country was reorganised along linguistic lines in 1956, Madhya Pradesh has included seventeen Hindi-speaking areas as well as the former Rajasthani-speaking Sironj district. The state comprises twenty former princely states and 1,300 smaller estates (jāgīr). These had been seats of patronage for many diverse performing arts traditions, all of which over time contributed to the region's rich musical and theatrical culture. The seven river systems (Chambal, Betwa, Som, Narmada, Tapi, Mahanadi, and Indravati), together with the imposing Satpura and Vindhya mountain ranges and the tropical forests covering one third of the state, have also had a perennial influence on artistic expression.

The northern territory is populated largely by people of Aryan origin. In the southern and eastern parts live many tribal groups (ādivāsī) of Dravidian origin, including the Mudia, Madia, Paraja, Bhatra, Pando, Korwa, Oraon, Muṇḍa, Korku, Gond, Baiga, Zabua, Bhīl, and Bhilal. The state has the largest concentration of scheduled tribes in the country - and consequently a considerable range and variety of tribal music.

The Haihaya people of India's epic tales reportedly held sway here in ancient times; their centers were Avanti and Ujjain, both still culturally well known today. From the fourth to the second centuries B.C. the Mauryas resolutely ruled over the region. During his reign, the great Mauryan emperor Ashoka constructed the famous Buddhist stupa at Sanchi. Shungas, Satavahans, Kushans, Guptas, and Huns followed, all culturally different and all influential dynasties. In 1020, Mahmud Ghazni invaded Gwalior; this began the phase of Muslim rule, although the land remained under Rajput influence for another three hundred years. From the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, the Marāthās were in ascendancy, until they were overwhelmed by the British.

The four major religions of South Asia - Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, and Islam, each with its subjects and cults-have profoundly shaped life in Madhya Pradesh; this includes music as much as any other aspect of life. A major example from the Hindu pantheon is the way Lord Shankara (Shiva) and his derivativedeities have influenced performing traditions.

The region's music history can be dated from 500 B.C., when King Udayan taught Princess Vasavadatta to play the vina. Milestones of the fourth and fifth centuries C.E. include the musical insights of the great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa as they appear in his dramatic works; Emperor Samudragupta's love of the vina, which he played himself; and the renowned arts patronage of his successor, Emperor Vikramaditya. From the Middle Ages up until modern times, more and less expansive dynasties ruled the region, including Gwalior, Chanderi, Kalinger, Malwa, Nimad, Gadha, Bundelkhand, Ratanpur, Raipur, Rayseen, and Asirgadh. Royal support from such families aided both the performing arts and scholastic traditions.

Tribal Music

Diverse musical traditions exist among the state's large tribal population. Several features of this tribal music, however, are common not only in Madhya Pradesh but throughout the Indian subcontinent. First, musical performance generally combines dancing, singing, and instrumental playing: singing or dancing alone is rare. Second, general participation in music making is encouraged to such an extent that there is virtually no distinction between performers and audience. No one is entirely engaged in listening. The cultural group or community, not a solitary composer, is responsible for creating music.

Tribal music tends to respond to three great natural cycles, which in India largely determine the course of life: day and night, birth and death, and the seasons. Tribal populations make music not for its own sake, but for communion with some higher power. This evocative function of tribal music is used to the fullest in various tribal rituals. Tribal populations also use everyday objects and activities in symbolic ways, as well as tactile elements such as holding hands, stamping feet, and body thumping.

The following discussion serves to highlight the richness of tribal music in Madhya Pradesh.

Influence of agricultural and seasonal cycles

The thandahar dance of the Bastar tribe, in which both men and women take part, consists of body movements typical of agricultural work. The dance illustrates the constant collectivity of tribal music making not only by its non-gender-specific performance, but also in the tactile strategy of holding hands. The expression of collectivity, however, does not prevent individual initiative: in many of the less ritualistic performances, individuals modify and change musical features, without claiming individual credit. This kind of musical improvisation in tribal music, together with the absence of individualism, is sometimes described in India as the "copyright" element.

Tribal groups celebrate all the seasons with music and dance, but go to special lengths to mark those connected with fertility and productivity. Among the Gonds, one of the largest tribes in the state, the bhīmūl pandum dance and music festival takes place prior to the monsoon, harapu and bijja pandum occur during the spring, korta pandum during the rains, and jata pandum and kara pandum in the postharvest autumn.

Sacred dance and music

For some tribal groups, including the Madias, music and dance are regarded not as recreation or a game but as a means of creating a bridge to an omnipotent god. Music and dance represent a form of prayer, and a duty. The bhīmūl pandum, for example, is a pre-monsoon dance and festival of prayer for timely and adequate rain. Dance is thought to be a creation of Lingo (reminiscent of the Shaivite Linga), the Madiagod who plays eighteen musical instruments. Madiadancers wear headdresses of decorated horns, believed to be gifts from the god Lingo. Great care is taken to ensure that the headgear does not fall off during the dance, for this would be considered extremely inauspicious. Other sacred seasonal dance events among the Media are irpu pandum, which celebrates the harvest in February; marka pandum held to solemnize the pounding of the first corn in April; nukana-rendana pandum, observed upon eating

the new corn during the October autumn festivities; and kara pandum, preceding the cutting of bamboo.

The Gonds, who constitute almost one third of the tribal population in India, have dance and music associated with every occasion from birth to death. Their main music and dance forms include the collective dance known as karam, as well as the dadariya, sajani, jharpat, and jhumar. The Mudia Gonds celebrate young girls reaching puberty with a ceremony of body tattooing accompanied by singing and dancing. News of the event is announced with drumming on the ḍhol 'large double-headed cylindrical drum', and family members and friends travel long distances to witness girl's entry into a new phase of life.

Among the Baiga, reportedly the oldest community of the Muṇḍa tribe (as Gonds are of the Dravidian tribes), everyone participates in the masked dance karam; dancing has so permeated their lives that the community even has a dance in which members partner ghosts. The dress of Baiga women facilitates dance and music, for they commonly wear ankle bells (ghuṅghrū). Other Baiga dances include the saila, a men's martial dance, and the rīna, a women's dance.

Improvisation

Among tribal populations, musical performances allow ample opportunity for improvisation. In bachelors' dormitories (ghotul), for example, Madia youths may begin to dance and sing at a moment's notice, and may continue their performance throughout the night into the early-morning hours. Such performances are generally unstructured: the performers often fit new words to known tunes. The music is common property, jointly held and changed by collective consent; individual efforts are not seen as such but are viewed as part of the common music-making process.

Instruments

Rhythm instruments are commonly used to accompany a wide variety of dances. They are also used in funeral rituals. Among the Madia Gonds, the priest in charge of funeral rites (hangonda) announces the death of a person by beating the ḍhol. The Korakus erect elaborate death stones, and the ceremony of laying the death stone is accompanied by an ensemble including three ḍhol players and one horn player, among others.

Buffalo horns are the most commonly used aerophones. Flutes are also played by all tribal populations, and are often made from bamboo tube, although gourds with large holes bored into them are also popular. The kingiri is a notable bowed chordophone with a coconut-shell resonator and wooden neck. Among membranophones, the dhol and its varieties are widely distributed, as is the duff 'frame drum'. The damaru, an hourglass drum associated with Lord Shiva, enjoys a special distinction well as dissemination. The Kahars play an hourglass drum called dhudak or dahanki. Tribal peoples also use ordinary objects or domestic utensils as instruments, such as winnowing baskets, water containers, metal dishes, and wooden strips and sticks.

Folk Music

The terms 'tribal', 'folk', 'devotional', 'art', and 'popular' have frequently been used to categorize Indian music. However, they represent not exclusive but overlapping categories of a living tradition. Folk music is closer to tribal and devotional music than it is to art and popular music, yet folk music is distinguished from tribal music by characteristic stylistic features. Of particular importance is the great number of folk-music forms or genres, which can also be divided into categories such as riddles, proverbs and idioms, poetic couplets (doha), women's songs, men's songs and children's songs.

Women's songs

Women's songs outnumber all other types of folk songs throughout India, and Madhya Pradesh is no exception. The major song types specific to women include those related to pregnancy, childbirth, puberty, marriage, and moving into the house of new in-laws, as well as festival and seasonal songs and songs of devotion.

Mixed orientations

Folk-music performance usually combines dance, drama, and music; rarely does one occur without the others. Manch and kilagi-turra, for example, are music- and drama-oriented performances, respectively; the latter also features more competitive

poetry singing. Many dances have accompanying vocal and instrumental music; examples include matkikānāc, adhonāc, ghumar, manchkenāc, and garbā.

Men's and children's songs

Songs specific to men encompass short story-songs; sung tales; Ālhā songs with the predominant sentiment of valor; seasonal songs such as phāgugīt, sairekegīt, and divālikegīt, amorous songs (challa); and devotional songs (khayāl). Songs accompanying agricultural work such as sowing the autumn crops (bilwari) are also notable for their question-and-answer structure. Children's songs are mainly nursery rhymes or game songs.

Song tales

Certain song tales warrant special mention since they blend prose, verse, and recitation. Notable examples are sorath, nihāl de, champa de, and sonarupa de.

Oral epics

An important genre of folk music is the oral epic. Performances may feature recitation, singing, or a sung or danced reenactment of the Ramayana or the Mahabharata, the two enduring epic tales well known throughout all levels of Indian society. In oral epics of the Chattisgadh region, for example, the story of the Pandava brothers (in the Mahabharata) predominates. Lower castes have been the traditional performers and major repositories of the epics. Two main streams are known, vedamati and kapalik. The former features singing in a sitting posture, whereas the latter includes a standing posture as well as the use of more "acting". A third method, involving kneeling, is also in vogue. Sometimes the main singer is joined by a second performer or rāgi 'one who brings color', who participates as a "character" reinforcing the epic performance. Accompanying instruments include the tambūrā 'string drone', kañjarī 'frame drum', kartāl 'clappers', harmonium, and dholak 'barrel drum'; today even the banjo is gaining a foothold.

Rural communities often hold strong views for and against adhering to the "original" epic narratives and modifying or distorting the "folk" versions of these tales. Equally varied opinions are expressed regarding the amount of singing or acting

allowed during the narration. Such debates highlight the changing nature of the form as well as the expressive potential of oral epic singing.

Devotional Music

Devotional music consists mostly of songs of the celebrated poet-saints, such as Surdas, Kabir, and Tulsidas. Their poetic compositions (pada) are musically rendered as bhajans. Bhajans, however, are further classified according to various criteria: for example, naradi bhajan and kañjarīke bhajan are mainly nirgun songs, that is, songs not in praise of any particular incarnation of a deity; ramsatta is a kind of kīrtan danced by youths; and bhadaīya bhajan is sung only on Janmashtami, the day celebrated as Lord Krishna's birthday.

Songs rendered collectively in acts of worship are numerous, such as jas compositions sung in praise of the Mother Goddess. Accompanied by dholak, timki, and jhāñjh, the renderings are expected to bring the priest (ojha) into a trance state. Similar compositions in the Bundeli dialect are known as achari or devīkegīt. Devotees sing songs collectively at festivals and while on pilgrimages to temples or to the banks or confluences of sacred rivers. Bambulia compositions belong to this class.