

A Continuum of Music Across Divided Lands : Study of Selected Sindhi and Punjabi Folk Songs

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Abstract :

This paper focuses on Sindhi and Punjabi folk songs as creative outcomes of folk cultures that have shared a long borderless history. Sindhi and Punjabi folk cultures share the traumatic effects of Partition and have suffered dislocation, separation and loss. This work attempts to find signs of cultural continuity in the folk songs of the two blurring the perceived boundaries of language, state and country. In the process it attempts to find shared elements and how both the folk cultures treat this shared material uniquely. The paper begins by looking at folk songs as cultural artefacts and taking a quick glance at the wide variety of folk songs in both the tradition. It goes on to discuss selected folk songs under three categories of songs of deities and gurus, songs of Sufis and songs of tragic love. The paper looks at thematic continuity in Sindhi and Punjabi songs across these sections and notes uniqueness of each tradition. Methodology of textual analysis has been used to conduct a close study of selected folk songs and deduce signs of continuity across traditions.

Keywords :

Folksongs, Folk Culture, Punjabi, Sindhi, Continuity

Introduction :

A song is a complex human activity that combines music and speech and creates an emotional experience shared by the audience, participants and performers. Folk songs are the living cultural heritage of India with every region, tribe, caste and sub-caste having its own unique set of songs. Devendra Satyarthi identifies two major elements of a folk song as poetry

and music.¹ While a folk song retains its images, meaning and visualisation even in the absence of music, it becomes a living organism of a society only when performed in its entirety.

Folk songs are also reservoirs of India's cultural episteme. A study of Sindhi and Punjabi folk songs reveals sustaining strains of continuity that are remains of a bygone time. In undivided India, regions