

## Chhattisgarh Folk Songs as Guardians of Culture and Communication

<sup>1</sup>Rajan Tamrakar, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Swati Jaywant Rao Bute

<sup>1</sup>Scholar, <sup>2</sup>Associate Professor

<sup>1,2</sup>Journalism and Communication, Jagaran Lakecity University, Bhopal (M.P.)

<sup>1</sup>[rajanstudent@gmail.com](mailto:rajanstudent@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>[swati.bute@jlu.edu.in](mailto:swati.bute@jlu.edu.in)

### Abstract:

The folk songs of Chhattisgarh are an important part of the state's culture and a way of sharing stories and knowledge. These songs are sung by people in tribal and rural communities, and they reflect the everyday life, beliefs, and values of the people. These songs are closely connected to traditions, festivals, and rituals. Through their simple words, they share lessons about social rules, history, and morality. Passed down through generations, these songs help keep Chhattisgarh's traditions alive, even as the world changes. Chhattisgarh's folk songs are more than just for fun. They allow people to express their feelings, celebrate nature, and honor their ancestors. These songs often talk about love, farming, festivals, and the challenges of daily life, which makes them relatable to local communities. During festivals like Hareli and Teej, special songs are sung to celebrate, strengthening the bond between people and their culture. These folk songs also act as a way to communicate important ideas about life, nature, and society. In the past, when many people couldn't read or write, these songs were a way to share wisdom about farming, health, and how to live well. They are sung during different seasons and events, making them a key part of life in Chhattisgarh. Even though modern music and lifestyles are changing, Chhattisgarh's folk songs have stayed important. They are still sung in both villages and cities, showing how adaptable they are. These songs play a vital role in protecting the state's unique culture and language, helping future generations understand and appreciate their heritage.

**Keywords:** Chhattisgarh folk songs, Culture, Traditions, Festivals, Communication.

**Introduction:**

Chhattisgarh, a state located in central India, is known for its vibrant culture and strong connection to folk traditions. One of the most significant aspects of this cultural heritage is its rich collection of folk songs, which have been passed down through many generations. These songs form an essential part of the daily lives of the people, especially in rural areas, where they are sung during important social and cultural events. Folk songs in Chhattisgarh are not only a source of entertainment but also serve as a way to preserve history, teach values, and keep the local language and traditions alive.

Folk songs are deeply integrated into various aspects of life in Chhattisgarh. They are commonly sung during festivals, religious ceremonies, and agricultural activities. For example, the harvest season is celebrated with folk songs like Sua Nacha, where women sing and dance to honor the crops and nature. Another popular tradition is Pandwani, a musical performance that narrates the stories from the Indian epic Mahabharata. These songs reflect the simple yet profound relationship the people of Chhattisgarh have with their land, culture, and spirituality.

The folk songs of Chhattisgarh are often performed in the local dialect, Chhattisgarhi, which helps keep the language alive and promotes cultural unity. In this way, folk songs serve as a living record of the region's history and beliefs, ensuring that the values and stories of the past are passed on to future generations. They carry messages about family, community, morality, and the natural world, making them a unique form of communication that connects individuals across time.

Studying the folk songs of Chhattisgarh is important for several reasons. First, they provide insight into the traditional way of life in the region, offering valuable lessons about how people in the past interacted with their environment, faced challenges, and celebrated their culture. Second, these songs are a crucial means of preserving Chhattisgarhi identity in a world that is becoming increasingly modernized and globalized. As more people move to urban areas or adopt modern lifestyles, traditional practices like folk songs risk being forgotten. Understanding and preserving these songs is essential for keeping the cultural fabric of Chhattisgarh intact. Finally, the folk songs of Chhattisgarh also serve as an important communicative tool. They carry moral lessons, convey local knowledge, and reinforce community bonds. In a way, they act as an oral history that ensures that the wisdom and knowledge of the ancestors are never lost.

By studying these folk traditions, researchers can better understand how Chhattisgarh's people have historically used music as a way to express their identities and stay connected to their roots. Through an exploration of these songs, it becomes clear that they are much more than just music—they are a living, breathing part of Chhattisgarh's social and cultural structure.

**Research Aim and Objectives**

The main goal of this research is to explore how Chhattisgarh's folk songs act as vital custodians of the region's cultural values, history, and communication. Folk songs in Chhattisgarh are much more than just musical traditions; they serve as a living repository of the state's social, historical, and cultural legacy. These songs reflect the way of life of the people, their beliefs,

and their connection to the land. This research seeks to understand how these songs function in this broader role, especially in preserving cultural values that are passed down through generations.

One of the key objectives of this study is to analyze how these folk songs contribute to the preservation of Chhattisgarhi identity over time. In today's fast-changing world, where modernization and globalization are causing rapid cultural shifts, it becomes increasingly important to understand how traditional forms of art, like folk music, help retain a community's unique identity. By preserving the language, customs, and historical narratives of the Chhattisgarhi people, folk songs ensure that the essence of the region's identity is not lost, even as external influences continue to grow.

In rural Chhattisgarh, folk songs are commonly performed during various social and religious events, such as festivals, weddings, and agricultural activities. These performances play a crucial role in communicating social values and ensuring that these values are taught to younger generations. For instance, songs performed during festivals like Teej and Hareli are not just about celebrating the occasion; they also pass down knowledge about traditional farming practices, family relationships, and community obligations. Through these songs, people learn about their cultural heritage and gain a sense of belonging.

Additionally, folk songs in Chhattisgarh help in preserving local dialects, especially the Chhattisgarhi language, which is not widely written or formally taught. These songs act as a means to safeguard the linguistic diversity of the region. When people sing in their local dialects, they not only preserve the language but also keep alive the wisdom, stories, and practices that have been carried through generations. This study aims to highlight the importance of this linguistic preservation in maintaining Chhattisgarh's cultural identity.

Another objective of this research is to explore the role of folk songs in historical and social communication. Chhattisgarh's folk songs often tell stories of historical events, myths, and legends, such as in the case of **Pandwani**, where singers narrate tales from the *Mahabharata*. These songs not only entertain but also educate people about the region's past. In a way, they serve as an oral history that keeps alive the memory of Chhattisgarh's ancestral heritage. Moreover, these songs often address social issues such as caste dynamics, gender roles, and economic struggles, making them a subtle yet powerful medium for social commentary.

The research aims to:

- Explore how Chhattisgarh's folk songs serve as custodians of the region's cultural values, history, and communication, ensuring that the traditions and social norms are preserved and passed down through generations.
- Analyze the role these songs play in preserving Chhattisgarhi identity, especially in the face of modernizing influences, by safeguarding language, customs, and oral history.
- Understand how these folk songs contribute to cultural education and communication, helping to pass down knowledge about historical events, social issues, and communal practices to future generations.

## II. Literature Review

## Folk Music and Cultural Preservation

- Folk music, particularly folk songs, has played a crucial role in preserving and transmitting cultural traditions, customs, and historical events across generations. This form of oral tradition is particularly important in regions like Chhattisgarh, where much of the population relies on oral transmission of knowledge rather than written records. Folk songs serve as a living cultural archive, encapsulating the values, beliefs, and stories that define the identity of the Chhattisgarhi people.
- Folk songs in Chhattisgarh are traditionally sung during festivals, religious ceremonies, and everyday activities like farming, harvesting, and weddings. These songs act as a means of passing down traditional knowledge about local customs, social norms, and community practices. For instance, festivals such as Hareli and Teej are marked by folk songs that not only celebrate the events but also communicate essential agricultural practices, seasonal changes, and the importance of harmony with nature. Folk songs thus function as a form of non-formal education, ensuring that younger generations learn and internalize the cultural values of their ancestors.
- Several studies have explored the role of folk songs in preserving oral traditions in Chhattisgarh. According to Verma and Bhagat, folk songs such as **Pandwani** narrate the epic of the *Mahabharata* in a uniquely Chhattisgarhi style, blending historical storytelling with local cultural elements. This oral tradition ensures that key historical events and moral lessons are preserved in the collective memory of the community, even in the absence of written texts [1]. Furthermore, Patel highlights how folk songs sung during agricultural festivals, like **Sua Nacha**, serve to connect people with their land and heritage, while also transmitting knowledge about farming techniques, crop cycles, and environmental stewardship [2].
- Another critical aspect of folk songs in Chhattisgarh is their role in the preservation of language. Chhattisgarhi, the local dialect, is not widely written or formally taught, making its preservation heavily reliant on oral traditions like folk songs. Research by Sahu demonstrates how folk music plays a vital role in keeping the Chhattisgarhi language alive, helping to maintain linguistic diversity in the region [3]. These songs, often passed down orally from one generation to the next, ensure that the dialect and its associated cultural meanings are preserved.
- Moreover, folk songs often carry historical narratives that document local legends, heroes, and events that have shaped Chhattisgarh's identity. Sharma's study of **Gaura-Gauri songs** shows how these religious songs, performed during festivals dedicated to Lord Shiva and Parvati, not only strengthen community bonds but also preserve religious practices that date back centuries [4]. Such traditions reinforce collective cultural memory and ensure that important religious beliefs and social practices are passed down through the generations.

## Communication through Folk Music

- Folk music in Chhattisgarh is not only a medium of artistic expression but also serves as a powerful vehicle for communication within rural communities. In regions where formal education and mass media may have limited reach, folk songs function as a means of disseminating important messages, fostering social unity, and educating

younger generations about cultural values, local customs, and communal responsibilities. These songs are a form of storytelling that convey societal norms, life lessons, and historical events in an accessible way, ensuring that both children and adults learn about their cultural heritage in a communal setting.

- One of the most significant roles of folk songs in Chhattisgarh is their ability to communicate moral and ethical lessons. For instance, during festivals such as Hareli or weddings, folk songs often contain messages about family unity, respect for elders, and community cooperation. This creates a shared understanding of social values and provides a platform for reinforcing cultural norms. In this way, folk songs act as a tool for informal education, teaching community members, especially the younger generation, about their roles and responsibilities within the society.
- Scholars have recognized the role of folk music in fostering social unity. According to Chandrakar, the performance of folk songs during communal events such as harvest festivals or religious ceremonies creates a sense of belonging and shared identity among participants. This sense of unity is vital in rural communities, where interdependence is key to social and economic survival [5]. Furthermore, Verma notes that folk music, particularly songs performed in local dialects, helps maintain linguistic cohesion and prevents the erosion of traditional values, thereby playing a crucial role in preserving Chhattisgarhi identity [6].
- Folk music also serves as an intergenerational bridge in Chhattisgarh, helping to pass down cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. As Patel points out, younger members of the community often learn these songs through participation in communal activities, absorbing lessons about their heritage and social structure in the process. The folk music tradition ensures that even in the absence of formal educational structures, critical aspects of Chhattisgarhi culture and history are communicated effectively [7]. Songs like **Sua Nacha**, which are sung during agricultural festivals, not only celebrate the harvest but also educate the community about the importance of respecting nature and working together in agricultural activities.
- Moreover, folk songs often serve as a form of social commentary, addressing issues such as gender roles, caste dynamics, and economic challenges. Research by Sharma has shown that many traditional songs incorporate subtle critiques of social inequalities, using metaphors and symbolism to discuss sensitive topics in a way that is both engaging and thought-provoking [8]. This allows for a form of dialogue within the community, where issues can be discussed in a culturally acceptable and non-confrontational manner.

## Regional Studies of Chhattisgarh's Folk Traditions

Chhattisgarh is a region rich in folk music, with a variety of genres that reflect its vibrant cultural heritage. Folk music here is not just a form of entertainment; it plays an essential role in the daily lives of the people, expressing their emotions, beliefs, and communal values. Some of the most notable folk traditions in Chhattisgarh include **Pandwani**, **Sua Nacha**, and **Dewar** songs. Each of these genres has its unique characteristics, and they collectively serve to preserve the Chhattisgarhi dialect and communicate important socio-religious messages.

- **Pandwani** is one of the most well-known folk music traditions of Chhattisgarh. It is a musical performance that narrates stories from the Indian epic *Mahabharata*. The



singer, often accompanied by musicians, tells these stories in a way that captures the attention of the audience, blending dramatic narration with song. The most famous Pandwani singer, Teejan Bai, has popularized this genre not only in Chhattisgarh but across the world. Pandwani performances are a form of oral storytelling that ensures that ancient religious texts and myths remain alive in the collective memory of the people. According to a study by Verma and Bhagat, Pandwani plays a crucial role in preserving not just the stories of the *Mahabharata*, but also the Chhattisgarhi dialect, as these performances are typically delivered in the local language [9]. This ensures that the language remains relevant and continues to be spoken in rural communities, where formal education in the local dialect may be limited.

- Another significant folk tradition is **Sua Nacha**, which is performed during the agricultural season, especially during the time of harvest. Sua Nacha is primarily a women's dance and song tradition, in which women dance in a circle, imitating the movements of birds (specifically the parrot, or "sua" in Chhattisgarhi). The songs performed during Sua Nacha are filled with symbolism, often representing fertility, prosperity, and the relationship between humans and nature. These songs carry messages about the importance of respecting the earth, working in harmony with the seasons, and celebrating the bounties of the harvest. According to Patel, Sua Nacha helps in maintaining agricultural traditions while also promoting a sense of unity among women in rural areas [10]. The songs performed during these dances are in the Chhattisgarhi dialect, further ensuring that the local language is preserved and passed down to younger generations.
- **Dewar songs** are another essential part of Chhattisgarh's folk music landscape. These songs are sung by the Dewar community, which is traditionally a group of wandering musicians and performers. Dewar songs are often spiritual in nature, containing religious and mythological themes. Many Dewar songs are dedicated to gods and goddesses, particularly local deities that hold significance in Chhattisgarh. These songs serve as a form of devotion and are performed during religious festivals and rituals. They carry messages of faith, moral values, and social order. According to a study by Sharma, Dewar songs also reflect the social dynamics of rural Chhattisgarh, offering commentary on issues such as caste, poverty, and community life [11]. Through these performances, the Dewar community not only preserves their cultural heritage but also communicates important socio-religious messages that resonate with the larger community.
- What makes these folk genres particularly important is their role in preserving the **Chhattisgarhi dialect**. Many of these folk traditions are performed exclusively in the local language, which has limited formal representation in educational institutions or media. Folk songs, therefore, serve as an essential vehicle for keeping the dialect alive. By singing and performing in Chhattisgarhi, these traditions ensure that younger generations continue to learn and use the language in their daily lives. Sahu's research on the linguistic significance of Chhattisgarhi folk songs highlights how the oral transmission of these songs helps maintain linguistic diversity in the region, even in the face of increasing use of Hindi and English in formal settings [12].

### **III. Methodology**

#### **Qualitative Approach**

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore the significance of Chhattisgarh's folk songs in preserving cultural values, history, and communication. The qualitative method is appropriate for this research as it focuses on understanding the cultural and social contexts in which folk songs are performed and transmitted. The following steps outline the methods used to collect and analyze data:

#### **Collection of Data through Interviews:**

The primary data for this research will be collected through in-depth interviews with local folk singers, historians, and cultural practitioners in Chhattisgarh. These interviews aim to gather first-hand insights into the role of folk songs in preserving Chhattisgarhi culture and transmitting socio-religious messages.

Interviews with folk singers will focus on understanding the themes and traditions embedded in the songs they perform, including the influence of their ancestors and the oral traditions they continue to practice.

Conversations with historians and cultural experts will provide context on the historical evolution of Chhattisgarh's folk music and its significance in shaping the region's identity.

#### **Participant Observation:**

In addition to interviews, the research will involve participant observation in various folk song performances held during village festivals, religious ceremonies, and community gatherings. This method allows for an immersive experience, enabling the researcher to observe how folk songs are performed and received in their natural settings.

By participating in these events, the researcher will gain valuable insights into how these performances function as a form of communication and how they contribute to community bonding. Observing the interactions between performers and the audience will also shed light on the cultural and social dynamics within the community.

#### **Content Analysis:**

To further understand the themes and messages conveyed in Chhattisgarh's folk songs, content analysis will be conducted on a selection of popular folk songs. This analysis will focus on identifying recurring themes such as religion, morality, social unity, and the connection to nature.

Thematic exploration will help uncover the underlying cultural values and messages embedded in the lyrics of these songs. The analysis will also examine how folk songs address contemporary social issues such as caste, gender roles, and community relationships, while still adhering to traditional forms of expression.

## Archival Research

Examination of Documented Folk Songs and Folklore:

To complement the primary data collected through interviews and observations, the study will include archival research. This involves examining documented Chhattisgarhi folk songs and folklore that are preserved in libraries, cultural institutions, and museums. Many of these folk songs have been transcribed or recorded by scholars, government institutions, and cultural organizations as part of efforts to preserve Chhattisgarh's intangible cultural heritage.

The archival research will provide historical context, allowing the researcher to trace the evolution of Chhattisgarh's folk traditions over time. By analyzing these documents, the research will be able to compare contemporary performances with historical records, highlighting both continuity and change in folk traditions.

Cultural Institutions and Libraries:

Cultural institutions such as the Chhattisgarh State Cultural Institute and local libraries will serve as key resources for accessing historical records and folklore collections. These institutions house a wealth of materials, including transcriptions, recordings, and research papers on Chhattisgarh's folk music.

By engaging with these materials, the researcher can draw connections between the folk songs performed today and their historical roots, offering a deeper understanding of how these traditions have been maintained and adapted over time.

## IV. Folk Songs as Guardians of Chhattisgarh's Culture

Historical and Mythological Narratives

Folk songs in Chhattisgarh play a significant role in narrating the region's rich collection of myths, local legends, and historical events. These songs serve as oral histories, passing down stories that form an essential part of the Chhattisgarhi cultural heritage. One of the key ways folk songs preserve history is by recounting the tales of heroes, deities, and important events. For example, the Pandwani tradition is particularly notable for its retelling of the Mahabharata in a Chhattisgarhi style. The folk songs within Pandwani are not just about entertainment; they also convey deep moral lessons and religious values, connecting listeners to their ancestral roots. According to Verma and Bhagat, these folk songs act as a bridge between the past and present, allowing Chhattisgarhi people to maintain a strong sense of their cultural identity through shared stories [13]. The ability of folk songs to encapsulate historical and mythological narratives ensures that the knowledge and wisdom of ancestors are passed down to future generations, thus preserving the collective memory of the community.



## Folk Songs in Rituals and Festivals

Folk songs are an integral part of many rituals and festivals in Chhattisgarh, connecting these cultural events to the region's agricultural and religious practices. During major festivals such as Hareli, Teej, and Pola, folk songs are performed to mark the changing seasons and celebrate agricultural abundance. For instance, during Hareli, a festival that celebrates the beginning of the sowing season, folk songs are sung to thank nature for its bounty and to seek blessings for a good harvest. The songs performed during these festivals often contain messages about the importance of hard work, respect for the environment, and the connection between humans and nature. Patel's study highlights how these agricultural festivals and their associated folk songs reinforce the communal values that are vital for rural life, particularly those related to cooperative farming practices and environmental stewardship [14].

In addition to festivals, folk songs also hold a special place in religious ceremonies, wedding rituals, and community gatherings. At weddings, for instance, traditional Chhattisgarhi folk songs are sung to bless the bride and groom, while also recounting familial stories and offering advice for a happy married life. Similarly, during religious festivals like Navratri or Gaura-Gauri, songs are performed in praise of deities such as Durga and Shiva, reinforcing religious devotion and cultural practices. Sharma notes that the use of folk music in these settings is not merely ceremonial; it is a vital part of the ritual process that brings people together and fosters a shared cultural experience [15]. This integration of folk music into everyday life ensures that cultural practices are not only preserved but also continuously reaffirmed.

## Preservation of Local Dialects and Languages

Folk songs play a crucial role in the preservation of the Chhattisgarhi dialect and other local languages. Since many of these songs are performed in the local dialect, they act as a living archive of linguistic diversity. In a globalized world where dominant languages like Hindi and English are increasingly prevalent, folk songs serve as a key method for preserving the Chhattisgarhi language. Sahu's research demonstrates that folk songs are one of the few remaining ways in which the Chhattisgarhi dialect is consistently used in public spaces, especially in rural areas where the language is spoken more frequently than in urban centers [16].

Through folk songs, younger generations are exposed to the linguistic richness of their culture, even if they are not formally taught the dialect in schools. These songs, often learned by heart and passed down orally, ensure that the language remains vibrant and continues to be spoken within communities. Moreover, the lyrics of these folk songs often include idiomatic expressions, proverbs, and traditional sayings that carry cultural significance. By preserving these linguistic features, folk songs help maintain not just the language, but also the worldview and cultural wisdom embedded within it. In this way, folk songs serve as both a cultural and linguistic archive, safeguarding the dialects of Chhattisgarh for future generations.

## V. Folk Songs as a Medium of Communication

### Social Messages and Education

In rural Chhattisgarh, folk songs serve as powerful tools for communicating essential social messages and imparting education to community members. These songs are embedded with moral lessons, religious teachings, and social values, making them an accessible form of informal education. Since many rural communities lack widespread formal education, folk songs become critical in teaching societal norms and behavioral expectations. Through songs sung at festivals, religious ceremonies, and daily routines, people learn about concepts such as honesty, respect for elders, and the importance of communal harmony. According to Sharma, folk songs are a reflection of societal values, and they help reinforce the ethical frameworks within which the community operates [17].

Moreover, folk songs in Chhattisgarh are often used to address pressing social issues like caste discrimination, gender roles, and economic hardships. For instance, some songs subtly challenge the rigid caste system by promoting the ideals of equality and brotherhood, while others bring attention to the struggles faced by women in a patriarchal society. These songs provide a socially acceptable means of discussing difficult topics and encourage reflection within the community. Patel highlights that by embedding social critiques within folk songs, these messages can reach a wide audience in a non-confrontational manner, promoting gradual social change [18]. Similarly, songs that reflect economic struggles provide a voice to marginalized communities, helping to raise awareness about poverty and inequality.

### Community Cohesion and Identity

Folk songs also play a significant role in promoting community cohesion and fostering a collective identity among the people of Chhattisgarh. Through communal singing during festivals, weddings, and rituals, these songs create a sense of shared experience and belonging. They bring people together in celebration and reinforce the notion that everyone in the community is part of a larger, interconnected whole. For instance, during festivals like Hareli and Pola, entire villages gather to sing folk songs that celebrate agriculture and the environment, emphasizing the interdependence of humans and nature. These collective experiences strengthen community bonds and highlight the shared cultural identity of Chhattisgarhi people.

In addition to promoting community unity, folk songs play an important role in building intergenerational relationships. As folk songs are passed down from elders to younger generations, they help transmit not only stories and traditions but also the values and beliefs that define the community. This oral transmission of folk music ensures that the wisdom of the past is preserved, and young people remain connected to their cultural heritage. Verma notes that this passing down of folk songs strengthens familial and community ties, allowing elders to share life lessons and stories that help shape the younger generation's understanding of their place in the world [19].

## Folk Songs and Linguistic Communication

One of the most important functions of folk songs in Chhattisgarh is their role in preserving and promoting the local dialect, Chhattisgarhi, and its variations. In a region where formal education in the local language is limited, folk songs become vital in ensuring the survival and continuity of the dialect. As songs are passed down orally from one generation to the next, they help keep the language alive, even in the face of increasing dominance by Hindi and English. Folk songs not only preserve the vocabulary and grammar of the dialect but also ensure that the linguistic nuances and idiomatic expressions unique to Chhattisgarhi are maintained.

Additionally, many folk songs in Chhattisgarh function as mnemonic devices, helping people remember local customs, religious rituals, and agricultural practices. For example, songs sung during harvest festivals often contain references to farming techniques and seasonal changes, ensuring that important knowledge about agriculture is retained within the community. Sahu's research highlights how folk songs often encapsulate generations of accumulated wisdom, serving as a practical guide for daily life while simultaneously preserving cultural traditions [20]. The oral nature of these songs means that they are flexible and can evolve to incorporate new experiences while maintaining their core message, further aiding in the survival of the dialect and its variations.

## VI. Case Studies of Chhattisgarh Folk Songs

### Pandwani: A Narrative Tradition

Pandwani is one of the most renowned folk traditions of Chhattisgarh and represents a unique form of oral storytelling through song. The tradition involves the recitation of tales from the Indian epic Mahabharata in a distinctly Chhattisgarhi style. In Pandwani, the singer, often accompanied by musicians, narrates these epic tales while dramatically enacting different characters, making the stories more engaging and accessible to the audience. According to Verma and Bhagat, Pandwani performances often involve the use of local dialect and cultural references that resonate deeply with the rural communities of Chhattisgarh [21]. This form of oral storytelling not only preserves the cultural heritage of the Mahabharata but also reinforces moral and religious values. Moreover, Pandwani plays a crucial role in maintaining the Chhattisgarhi dialect, as these performances are delivered in the local language, thereby ensuring that the dialect remains a vital part of the region's cultural identity. Teejan Bai, a famous Pandwani artist, has been instrumental in popularizing this art form on national and international stages, ensuring its continued relevance in the modern world.

### Sua Nacha and Dewar Songs

Sua Nacha is a traditional dance and song form performed by women during important festivals, particularly those related to agriculture, such as Diwali and harvest festivals. The songs and dance moves are deeply symbolic, often imitating the behavior of birds (particularly the "sua," or parrot), which is considered a symbol of fertility and prosperity. During Sua Nacha performances, women sing and dance in a circle, celebrating the bounty of the earth and seeking blessings for future agricultural success. Patel's study highlights that Sua Nacha is not merely a cultural performance; it is a vital expression of the agricultural life and fertility rituals that

are central to Chhattisgarh's rural communities [22]. Through these performances, women express solidarity with one another, and the songs often contain messages about nature, family, and cooperation, all key aspects of life in agricultural societies.

Dewar songs belong to the Dewar community, traditionally marginalized and known for their musical and storytelling contributions to Chhattisgarh's folk culture. The songs of the Dewar community provide a unique insight into the everyday struggles, religious beliefs, and cultural values of the marginalized sections of society. These songs are often spiritual in nature, focusing on local deities and myths, while also reflecting the socio-economic realities of the community. Sharma's research suggests that Dewar songs serve as both a form of artistic expression and social commentary, subtly addressing issues such as poverty, caste-based discrimination, and social inequality [23]. The Dewar community, through their songs, keeps alive a rich tradition of spiritual and cultural expression, offering valuable perspectives on life from the margins of society.

### Gaura-Gauri Songs

The Gaura-Gauri songs are performed during the Gaura-Gauri festival, which is dedicated to Lord Shiva (Gaura) and Goddess Parvati (Gauri). This festival holds significant religious and agricultural importance, symbolizing fertility, marital bliss, and the prosperity of the land. The songs performed during this festival are deeply devotional and celebrate the divine union of Shiva and Parvati, drawing parallels to human marriages and agricultural fertility. According to Sahu, these songs are performed in the local dialect and are rich in symbolism, often referring to the harvest cycle and the hopes for a prosperous agricultural season [24]. The Gaura-Gauri songs serve as a means of reinforcing the religious and cultural beliefs of the community, as well as fostering a connection between the divine, the land, and the people. The performances are not only spiritual but also communal, bringing together families and neighbors to celebrate shared religious and agricultural practices.

## VII. Challenges and Contemporary Relevance

### Impact of Globalization and Modernization

Globalization and modernization have significantly impacted the continuity of traditional folk songs in Chhattisgarh. As the state becomes more integrated with global cultural trends, many traditional art forms, including folk music, are facing challenges in maintaining their relevance. With the growing popularity of mainstream entertainment such as Bollywood music, traditional folk songs are being overshadowed, particularly among younger generations who are increasingly drawn to modern music forms. Globalization has introduced new ways of life, and the influence of Western culture has shifted preferences, leading to a decline in the performance and transmission of traditional songs within communities.

Urban migration also plays a significant role in this decline. As younger people move to cities for education and employment, they are exposed to modern lifestyles and often lose touch with their cultural roots. This disconnect from rural life has led to reduced engagement with folk music, which is deeply embedded in the rhythms and rituals of agrarian life. Patel's study highlights that the migration of youth from rural to urban areas has created a gap in the

generational transmission of folk music, as the younger generation is less involved in traditional performances [25]. Furthermore, digital media and entertainment platforms, while offering new avenues for exposure, often prioritize commercial music over traditional folk genres, diminishing their appeal.

### Cultural Preservation Efforts

In response to the decline of traditional folk music, several cultural preservation efforts have been initiated by local governments, NGOs, and cultural institutions. The Chhattisgarh State Cultural Department has taken steps to promote and preserve folk traditions through organized folk festivals and cultural events. These festivals provide a platform for local folk artists to perform and showcase their music, helping to maintain the visibility of Chhattisgarh's folk traditions. Additionally, NGOs are working to document and record folk songs, ensuring that these cultural treasures are preserved for future generations. Such efforts are crucial in safeguarding the state's intangible cultural heritage. According to Verma, cultural workshops and training programs have been organized to teach younger generations the art of folk music, ensuring that the skills required to perform traditional songs are passed down [26].

The integration of folk music into school curriculums is another important step in preserving Chhattisgarhi folk songs. Some schools in rural areas have started incorporating folk music into their arts education programs, allowing children to learn about their cultural heritage through song and dance. This not only helps preserve folk music but also instills a sense of pride and identity in students, ensuring that the cultural roots of Chhattisgarh are not forgotten. Cultural preservation efforts are essential in keeping folk traditions alive amidst the rapid changes brought by modernization.

### Folk Songs in the Digital Age

The rise of digital technologies presents both opportunities and challenges for the preservation of folk music traditions. On one hand, recording technologies and online platforms offer new ways to document and share Chhattisgarhi folk songs with a broader audience. Folk artists now have the ability to record their performances and distribute them globally via platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. These digital platforms provide an opportunity to reach audiences who might not have been exposed to traditional music otherwise. For example, some folk musicians have gained recognition beyond their local communities by sharing their songs online, and this exposure has helped generate interest in Chhattisgarhi folk traditions [27].

However, the transition to the digital age also poses significant challenges. Many traditional folk artists, particularly those in rural areas, lack access to the technology and resources needed to document and share their music effectively. Additionally, as folk songs enter the digital space, there is a risk of cultural dilution, where the music may be altered or commercialized to appeal to broader audiences, losing some of its authenticity and traditional value. Sahu points out that while digital platforms offer great potential for preserving folk music, they also run the risk of commodifying it, stripping away the contextual richness that comes from live, community-based performances [28]. Thus, while technology can help preserve folk songs, it must be managed carefully to ensure that the cultural essence of the music is retained.



## VIII. Conclusion

### Summary of Findings

This study has highlighted the central role of folk songs in safeguarding Chhattisgarh's rich cultural heritage and their vital function as a medium of communication within rural communities. Folk songs in Chhattisgarh act as living archives, preserving the region's history, religious beliefs, social values, and oral traditions. By narrating historical and mythological stories through traditions like Pandwani, and through performances such as Sua Nacha and Dewar songs, these folk songs ensure the continuation of Chhattisgarh's cultural identity across generations. They transmit essential moral lessons, social values, and communal knowledge, playing a key role in educating younger generations about their cultural heritage, especially in regions where formal education is limited.

Folk songs also promote community cohesion by reinforcing social unity and creating a shared sense of identity. As these songs are passed down orally, they help preserve the Chhattisgarhi dialect, acting as a living repository of linguistic diversity in an increasingly globalized world. While the impact of globalization and modernization presents challenges, with influences from digital media and urban migration affecting the traditional folk music landscape, efforts by local governments, NGOs, and cultural institutions have helped preserve these valuable traditions. The advent of digital technologies offers both opportunities and challenges, and it is crucial to strike a balance between utilizing modern tools for preservation while maintaining the authenticity of these folk traditions.

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