

# CAITĪ TRADITION AND THE PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF SONG-TEXTS

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## Abstract

*This article explores the Caitī tradition, a unique blend of semi-classical and folk performance art rooted in the cultural and social fabric of certain Indian communities. Caitī's song texts are a fusion of oral history, poetry, and regional identity. The study delves into Caitī's lyrics and performance contexts to understand their role as both creative expression and societal critique. Through fieldwork, performer interviews, and literature review, the research identifies recurring themes in Caitī songs, such as historical events, rural life, and spirituality. It also investigates Caitī's role in preserving linguistic diversity and regional dialects while adapting to contemporary societal changes. This study offers insights into Caitī's relevance in modern society and enhances our understanding of folk traditions as evolving cultural legacies.*

**Keywords:** Caitī songs, music traditions, Northern India, Oral tradition, Song-text analysis, Cultural expression, Performance studies.

## INTRODUCTION

The rich tradition of North Indian classical music encompasses a variety of regional styles and forms, including the 'Caitī' genre. Caitī songs, typically associated with celebrating the spring season, are integral to the cultural and musical heritage of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. These songs, characterized by their thematic focus on longing and devotion, provide a unique lens through which to study the interplay of cultural, musical, and poetic traditions in North Indian music. The cultural heritage of North Indian classical music is often woven with the intricate threads of the Caitī, a versatile and captivating musical form that has captivated audiences for centuries. (Manuel, 2015) At the heart of this fascinating genre lies the Song-texts, a meticulously crafted compositional structure that serves as the foundation for virtuosic performances. The Caitī encapsulates the essence of North Indian musical tradition, seamlessly blending the theoretical underpinnings of this rich framework, this paper aims to delve into the intricate nuances that make this musical form a true testament to the ingenuity and artistry of North Indian classical music (Bond, 2020).

The Song-texts, serve as the structural backbone of the Caitī, providing a canvas upon which the performer's virtuosity can unfold (Bond, 2020). These meticulously crafted compositional units, replete with melodic and rhythmic complexities, offer a myriad of interpretive possibilities, allowing for the seamless integration of improvisation and innovation within the confines of a predetermined framework (Bond, 2020). The cultural heritage of North Indian classical music intricately intertwines with the Caitī, a versatile and captivating musical form that has enthralled audiences for centuries. Central to this genre are the Song-texts, which are meticulously crafted compositional structures forming the foundation for virtuosic performances. The Caitī embodies the essence of North Indian musical tradition, blending theoretical underpinnings with artistic expression. This paper explores the intricate nuances that highlight the ingenuity and artistry of North Indian classical music. The Song-texts serve as the structural backbone of the Caitī, offering a canvas for performers to showcase their virtuosity. These compositional units, rich in melodic and rhythmic complexities, provide numerous interpretive possibilities, facilitating the integration of improvisation and innovation within a predetermined framework.

The lyrical composition of Caitī has been passed down through generations, predominantly sung by men in rural and classical settings. However, in recent decades, female singers have emerged as key interpreters of this musical form, contributing significantly to the preservation and evolution of the tradition. Their voices bring unique dimensions to the performance, offering a distinct emotional and expressive layer that sets them



apart from their male counterparts. Despite their growing presence in the Caitī tradition, there has been relatively limited academic exploration of the impact and contributions of female singers.

Caitī, a genre of devotional songs, has a long and storied history within the cultural traditions of South Asia. Emerging from the interplay of various religious and folk influences, Caitī has evolved over centuries, adapting to the shifting sociopolitical and cultural dynamics of the region. The practice of Caitī is deeply intertwined with the experiences of women, who have historically played a central role in its transmission and performance. As noted by Sukanya Chakrabarti, the study of Caitī requires an interdisciplinary approach, drawing from fields such as postcolonial studies, subaltern histories, literature, ethnography, and ethnomusicology (Chakrabarti, 2022). This multidisciplinary approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex social and cultural contexts that have shaped the Caitī tradition. One of the defining features of Caitī is the prominence of female singers in its performance. As Chakrabarti's work on "In-Between Worlds" highlights, the Caitī tradition has been a space for the expression of women's experiences and voices, providing a platform for the articulation of personal and communal narratives. (Chakrabarti, 2022)

This paper focuses on a study of Caitī song texts with an emphasis on the role of female singers. It aims to explore how these women have influenced the tradition, both through their performances and their reinterpretation of Caitī's lyrical content. By analyzing the themes, language, and emotional tone of Caitī songs performed by female artists, this research seeks to understand their distinct contributions and how their presence has shaped and enriched the tradition over time. Through this investigation, the paper will provide a more nuanced understanding of the gendered dynamics in Caitī performances and the evolving role of women in this deeply rooted musical form.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review provides a comprehensive analysis of existing information related to Caitī, a semi-classical music form prevalent in North India. This review aims to contextualize Caitī within the broader framework of Indian musicology, identify gaps in current research, and justify the need for a detailed study of Caitī song texts and performance practices.

Several musicologists, including Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande (2002) and Omkarnath Thakur (1997), have touched upon the structural aspects of semi-classical forms, though their focus has often been broader, encompassing genres like Thumri and Dadrā. Bhatkhande's extensive cataloging of Hindustani music includes references to Caitī, emphasizing its melodic simplicity and rhythmic fluidity compared to more rigid classical forms. However, detailed analytical studies specifically on Caitī song texts are sparse.

Subramanian (2010) offers insights into the lyrical content and thematic elements of Caitī, pointing out that the songs often narrate folk tales, devotional stories, and seasonal changes. The simplicity and repetitiveness of Caitī's lyrics serve to enhance their emotional and expressive appeal, which is a key area requiring deeper exploration.

Caitī, traditionally sung during the Chaitra month, has its roots in the folk traditions of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Historical accounts suggest that Caitī evolved from village songs that celebrated the arrival of spring and were deeply intertwined with agricultural cycles and local festivities. Scholars like Thakur Jaideva Singh (Singh; Singh, 1988) have highlighted the seasonal and regional significance of Caitī, noting its role in reflecting the socio-economic realities of rural North India.

Existing literature on performance practice in Indian music, such as the works of Bonnie Wade (1998) and Smt. Shanno Khurana (2004), provides a framework for analyzing the performative aspects of Caitī. Wade's ethnomusicological approach to Hindustani music performance highlights the importance of improvisation



and the interaction between performer and audience, aspects that are crucial in Caitī performances. Khurana's documentation of various regional music forms includes observations on Caitī, noting the unique vocal techniques and the use of traditional instruments like the harmonium and dholak.

However, there remains a significant gap in detailed performance studies specifically focused on Caitī. Ethnographic accounts and field recordings are particularly lacking, which limits a comprehensive understanding of the practical and contextual nuances of Caitī performances.

The socio-cultural importance of Caitī has been briefly addressed by cultural historians like Kapila Vatsyayan (2001), who underline its role in community bonding and cultural expression. Caitī performances often serve as communal events reinforcing social ties and cultural identity. The genre's accessibility and relatability make it an important cultural transmission and preservation medium. Despite these insights, there is a lack of in-depth studies examining the contemporary relevance and transformation of Caitī in modern society.

Recent studies on the adaptation and survival of traditional music forms in contemporary times, such as those by Girija Devi, Sabita Devi, and Ashwini Bhide Deshpande (2015), provide a relevant backdrop for understanding Caitī's current status. These works discuss the challenges and opportunities traditional music faces in the age of globalization and digital media. They underscore the necessity of documenting and revitalizing lesser-known forms like Caitī to ensure their continuity and evolution.

## GAPS IN THE LITERATURE

Caitī has historically served as a conduit for expressing the emotions and aspirations of the common people, often revolving around themes of love, devotion, and the changing seasons. The literature on Caitī, though insightful, is limited and fragmented. While the existing literature provides a foundational understanding of Caitī, several gaps remain. There is a need for focused studies on the melodic and rhythmic structures of Caitī song texts. In-depth fieldwork documenting current performance practices and practitioners is required to highlight its unique features and shared characteristics. This research addresses this gap by bringing Caitī into the academic spotlight, thus contributing to the preservation and appreciation of vibrant musical tradition, ensuring its recognition and relevance in the wider spectrum of North Indian music.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs Musical Content Analysis using the following methods to analyze Caitī songs. Employ qualitative methods to interpret the ethnographic data collected from interviews and observations. Thematic analysis will be used to identify recurring themes and patterns in the responses and performance practices. This research paper combines textual analysis of Caitī song texts with ethnographic observations and interviews with female Caitī singers. The textual analysis focuses on the thematic content, lyrical structures, and symbolic representations within the song texts, intending to elucidate how these elements reflect the lived experiences and perspectives of women. The major component of the study involves field research conducted in select regions of north India, where the Caitī tradition remains a vital part of cultural practice.

## MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CAITĪ

Caitī songs have deep roots in the rural traditions of Northern India. These folk songs are often sung during the harvest season or as part of seasonal festivals, with themes related to agriculture, deities, and social life. The significance of the Chaitra month, which is tied to new beginnings and fertility, and how these songs reflect the agrarian lifestyle, spiritual beliefs, and the cyclical nature of life. Caitī is often seen as a subset of the larger folk song traditions in India, with a distinct style that may include simple musical accompaniment (harmonium, dholak, etc.) and is typically performed in gatherings, fairs, or festivals. Caitī songs are typically devotional or seasonal, often dedicated to deities such as Shiva and Parvati or celebrating rural life, the changing seasons, and agrarian work. The songs are traditionally performed in the early mornings or evenings

during the Chait month, marking the transition to summer. Caitī-s, also known as masuamī gīt-s ('seasonal songs'), are popular in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. They celebrate the verdict of the harvest season and the start of spring. Caitī is known as ghāto or ghāṇto in Bhojpuri, caitāvar in Maithili, and caitār in the Magahi language. During the month of Cait, rural communities chant traditional songs accompanied by ḍholak, mañjirā, and/or jhāl (cymbals). Viśuddh ('unaltered') caitī is said to have been born in southern Bihar, notably Arrah, Chapra, and eastern Uttar Pradesh. The genre does not appear to be unique to Mithila. According to Jain (2012: 45), caitī-s in Magahi and Bhojpuri witnessed modifications in subject matter and vocabulary, with Maithili as the local dialect. Singing caitī is related to the festival of Rāmanavamī, the ninth and last day of Caitrā Navarātri when the birth of Lord Rām is commemorated. Caitī is considered a vaiṣṇava contribution. During the month of Cait, villagers in North India host gatherings to sing rāmkathā and kīrtan-s. Caitī-s often include bol-s from Rāmcaritmāna poems. Caupāi-s of the Rāmāyaṇa are interspersed with the singing of bol-s from caitī compositions that can be interpreted in numerous ways. After singing two lines of a caupāi, lyrics of caitī-s are added, followed by a reprise of the caupāi.

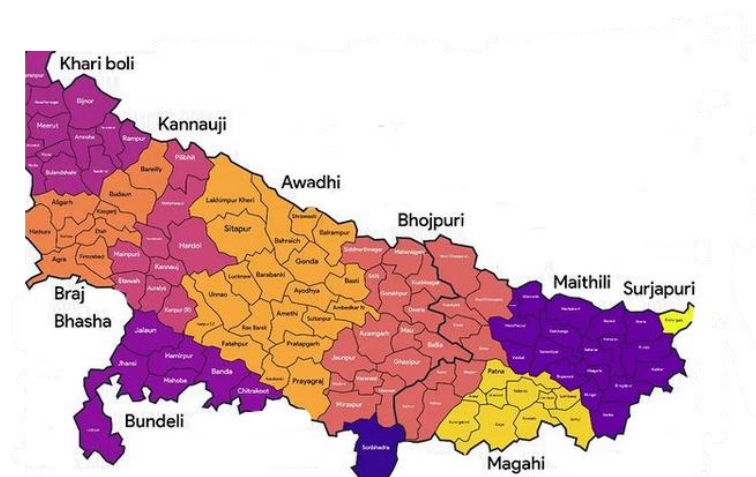


Figure 1: Area of study: Caitī Performed in Bihar and Uttarpradesh

## PERFORMANCE OF CAITĪ

The performance of Caitī is an intricate part of rural cultural expression in northern India, characterized by its simplicity, community focus, and deeply emotive nature. Female singers bring a unique, intimate style to Caitī, creating a performance practice that is deeply tied to their lives and the seasonal rhythms of a rural agrarian society. Performance of Caitī explores the specific vocal techniques used in singing Caitī, including the modulation of voice, the use of improvisation, and the interactive nature of the performance between the lead singer and the audience. The traditional instruments that accompany these songs, and how they contribute to the rhythm and mood of the performance. Discuss the contexts in which Caitī is performed—during religious events, celebrations, or purely as entertainment in rural settings. Caitī is an important part of the ṭhumrī repertory and is generally considered a sub-genre. The performance employs ṭhumrī gāyakī artistic methods, such as the bol banāo technique and complicated alaṅkā-r-s like khaṭkā, murkī, and mīṇḍ. Semi-classical melodies focus on the concept of śṛṅgār ras, with lyrical lyrics that eschew societal issues. Musically, these caitī-s are usually set to rāg-s from the Khamāj or Kalyāṇ. Nonetheless, one may meet caitī-s that represent folk music elements, played in Rag Pāhādī, Pīlū, Deś, Tilak Kāmod, Gārā, Jaijaivantī, Khamāj, Kāfī, and Tilaṅg. Their rendering frequently approaches the elaborate techniques seen in dhrupad (horī) dhamār. Similarly to folk songs of the same genre, these caitī-s exhibit a shift in tāl that increases during antarā singing and contains diverse melodic ornaments (alaṅkā-r-s). śāstrīya caitī-s and horī-s are often considered 'sister-





genres' due to their comparable musical styles. Deepchandi and Kahravā are the most often used tāl-s, usually sung at a medium tempo (madhya laya). (Caranti, 2022).

The caitī genre, also known as caitā, is named after Cait (Skt. Caitra), the first month of the Hindu lunar calendar, which corresponds to March-April. It commemorates the start of spring, and various celebrations are held at this time of year. Caitī singing starts on the night of pūrṇimā (full moon) of the month of Phāgun (Skt. Phālguna) in February-March, also known as the night of Holī, and lasts until the night of Citr Pūrṇimā, also known as Caitrī. Caitī refers to the Apabhraṃśa word for Caitrī. Caitī-s, also known as masuamī gīt-s, are folk songs (lok gīt) from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that celebrate the end of the harvest season and the start of spring. Caitī is known as ghāṭo or ghāṇṭo in Bhojpuri, caitāvar in Maithili, and caitār in Magahi language. During the month of Cait, rural communities chant traditional songs accompanied by ḍholak, mañjirā, and/or jhāl (cymbals). The meter is based on 6+4+4+2 instants, with the phrases rām at the beginning of every second line and ho rāmā after every line (Grierson 1886: 248). Caitī texts are distinguished by the use of 'rāmā' at the start of each line and 'ho rāmā,' and/or 'āho rāmā' at the conclusion. These serve as filler phrases or interjections and have no value, instead acting as a genre identifier and contributing to the overall ambiance, or they are just placed for metrical reasons. Religious-oriented caitī-s include works on Kṛṣṇa and his interactions with the gopī-s. The most common themes are those inspired by incidents of the dan-līlā depicting the deity pranking the milkmaids of Braj on their route to market or the well. The same theme of pranks is also depicted from a strictly worldly perspective, as the protagonist travels to a ghāṭ to obtain water and is tormented by a malicious villager.

## SONG-TEXTS ANALYSIS

Caitī song-texts can be lyrical and emotive, filled with metaphors drawn from nature, daily life, and religious devotion. The songs often tell stories or describe situations, such as waiting for the return of a husband, yearning for the rains, or offering prayers for a good harvest. The poetic structure of Caitī is often simple but rich in cultural symbolism, making it easy for the community to engage with and pass down through oral tradition. Many poets have adopted the genre of caitī, which is strongly established in the popular traditions of North India. They propagate the message of bhakti by reciting lyrics set to a certain rāg and metrical patterns. Bulākīdās (c. 1693-1768) is a well-known poet and performer linked with the caitī genre. Bulākīrām's identification appears to be similar to that of Bullā (or Bullāh) Sāhab (alternatively found as Sāhib). Bulākīdās, a follower of Yārī Sāhab (died c. 1684)—the first notable poet of the Bhuṛkurā lineage—was born a Muslim and, like his instructor, had to be Sufi. His lines reflect nirguṇī mysticism, heavily influenced by the Sufi movement. Bullā Sāhab and his pupil Gulāl Sāhab are credited with founding the Bhuṛkurā monastery in Ghazipur district, contemporary Uttar Pradesh. (Caranti, 2022)

Many pieces grouped under the title Caitī ghāṇṭo pad, dating from circa 1723 (Jain 2012: 46). Kabīr had a direct or indirect impact on him and other saints. His name appears in various ghāṇṭos. Nonetheless, they are not proof of authorship and might have been introduced by his pupils. Bullā Śāh was also the name of a Punjabi poet who lived between 1860-1758, although there is no consensus on his identity or literary accomplishment. His appeal transcends communal and religious barriers since his rhymes incorporate elements of Islam, Sufiism, Sikhism, and Hinduism. Among Bullā Śāh's disciples, Rāmdās composed caitī-s in which appears the name of his guru. In general, sant literature has several poems that allude to themes found in certain seasonal music genres rooted in folk heritage. Lorenzen notes that several bhakti sant-poets wrote poems about spring, particularly Holī, Basant pañcamī, and associated events. (Caranti, 2022).

## CLASSIFICATION OF CAITĪ

Shanti Jain has explained the variety of caitī stylistic expressions in great detail, classifying them into three primary groups: "common" caitī, ghāṇṭo, and gaurī caitī (Jain 2012: 53-59). The form of semi-classical caitī



should be included in such a classification. 'Common' caitī is typically performed in a group, sometimes accompanied by traditional folk instruments like the dhol. This is a wide categorisation that includes multiple representations of the same musical form, specifically:-Khaṛī caitī (proper caitī). Set in Kahravā tāl (eight mātrā-s), they can be nirguṇī, saguṇī, or jhūmar caitī-s tied to folk tunes. Various khaṛī caitī-s are sung to the same melody (Grierson1886: 248). In 'Jhalkuṭiyā caitī' term comes from 'jhāl', which refers to hand cymbals used in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh traditional music, and 'kuṭna', meaning 'to beat'. The term "caitī-s" refers to group singing with cymbal accompaniment. They are often performed by two groups, with each offering a verse in a higher pitch. When the performance reaches its peak, the main vocalist sings at the highest register. Both groups accelerate the beat of the cymbals. Khañjariyā Caitī is sung with khañjarī, a tambourine often employed in traditional music. This caitī genre is often performed by a group of men and follows a similar style to jhalkuṭiyā caitī-s: a line sung by a group or a single vocalist is followed by a verse spoken by another vocalist or group of singers. Variations on bol-s, tāl, and laya may be added in between. Khañjariyā caitī-s are often placed in a certain tāl, then move to a faster pace during elaboration before returning to the original rhythm.

The term ghāṇṭo (also written ghāmṭo, ghāṭo) is likely derived from the verb ghoṭnā meaning 'to grind', 'to mix', and 'to churn'. The word's etymology might be traced back to the genre's performance style, which is defined by the vocalists' aggressive swinging. Ghāṇṭo is also known as caitā. This music form's musical accompaniment mostly includes dhol and jhāl. Similar to basic and khañjariyā caitī-s, the structure involves two groups singing alternately. The sole distinction between ghāṇṭo and other genres is the quick pace (laya), which is accompanied by energetic singing suitable for the male vocal range. In musicology, the words ghāṇṭo and 'common' caitī are commonly used interchangeably.

In Uttar Pradesh, there is a distinct style of caitī known as caitā gaurī, in addition to the previously mentioned forms. This designation refers to caitī in praise of Pārvaṭī, however, it is more frequent to see kajrī-s dedicated to her devotion. This song started in Banaras and eventually spread to Faizabad and Lucknow gharānās. Caitā gaurī originated from singing tunes set to rāginī gaurī (alternatively spelled gaurī) on the nights of the Cait month. Gaurī caitī is a variant of rāg Gaurī described in the Guru Granth Sāhib. As previously stated, caitī singing is strongly associated with Devī devotion.

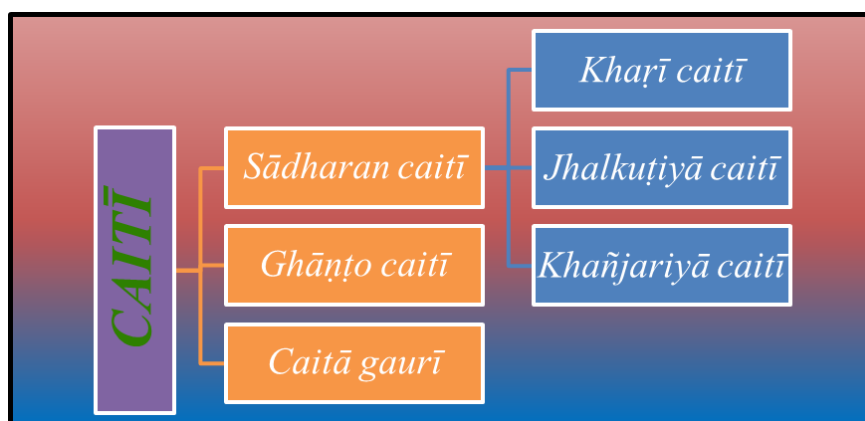


Figure 2: Classification of caitī

Poetic Structure: The structure of Caitī songs, including rhyme schemes, repetition, and the use of local dialects or linguistic patterns. The common themes of Caitī songs, often revolve around love, separation, devotion, nature, and occasionally, social commentary. Themes of longing and devotion to deities like Krishna or Ram are common.

Sthayī

Kothvā pe dhundhun atariyā pe dhundhau

Dhundhi āun sainyañ ke sezariya ho rāmā

Kahā lāgi dhudhun

Antarā

Sāsuji se pucheu nanad ji se pucheu

Saiyān se puchate lajā gai rāmā

(Gupta, 2024)

Meaning:-Searched on the rooftop,searched in the courtyard,also searched on the husband's bed,ho rama, now where to find out?Asked to my mother-in-law,Also asked to sister-in-law,ashamed of asking to husband,Ho rama, now where to find out?

### RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL REFLECTIONS

Caitī songs often carry religious and spiritual undertones, reflecting people's devotion to deities such as Shiva, Parvati, and Krishna. However, the religious devotion expressed by people in these songs is often personal and intimate. It may involve prayers for the well-being of their family, the health of their crops, or the protection of their husbands. Caitī songs can be seen as an expression of their spiritual agency, wherein they perform devotion not only as a religious duty but as a form of emotional and psychological sustenance.

Sthayī

Rāma ji ke bhelai janamavā ho rāmā

Chaita re mahinamā

Antarā

Kinaka ke rāmachaṇdra kinaka ke lakshman

Kinka ke bharat shatrughan ho rāmā

Chaita re mahinmā

(Traditional)

Meaning:-Ram ji has born. ho rama.Whose is Ramchandra?whose is Lakshman?Whose is Bharat, Shatrughana?ho rama in the month of caitī.

Sthayī

Kasat rām van ka gae ho rāma

Kathin dagariyā

Antarā

Kaisan mā tu bhayau tum kaikai

Māyā kahat na lajani ho rāmā

Kathin dagariyā

(Traditional)

Meaning:- Rama, how did you, go to the forest ho rama. It's a difficult step. What kind of mother are you kaikai? Ashamed to call you maa, Ho rama. It's a difficult step.

### Tandav Nritya

Sthayī

bholā bābā hey damru bajāve ho rāmā

ki bholā bābā re

Antarā

bhoot pishach saṅ sab khelein

tāṇḍav nāch dikhāve ho rāmā

(Traditional)

Meaning :- Bhola baba is playing, Damru ho rama, With full of delighted, Playing with ghost and vampires, Exhibiting his tandav, In front of them Ho rama, with full of delighted.

### FEMININE PERSPECTIVES IN THE SONGS

Caitī songs offer a rich platform to explore feminine perspectives, especially in the context of rural life and societal roles in northern India. While traditionally associated with religious devotion and agrarian celebrations, Caitī songs have also served as a medium for expressing the emotional and experiential world of women. Through their lyrics, themes, and performance practices, Caitī songs give voice to women's inner lives, including their joys, sorrows, and yearnings. Here are key aspects of feminine perspectives in Caitī songs:

Sthayī

Aṅganā mā sobhe sawariā goriyā

Antarā

Piyā kharihanvā ki oria ho rāmā

Cait ki ratiyā

(Traditional)

Meaning:- Touching the feet of husband's sister. To have a walk with me, ho rama. Now, I am underage. When I'll be able to fill, the pot by own. Then u can have your, ho rama. Now, I am underage.

Sthayī

Chaita maase chunri raṅgāye ho rāmā

Lāli re lāli

Antarā

Chuṇḍari raṅgāye aṅgiyā silāye

Bich bich ghunghru lagāye ho rāmā Lāli re lāli

(youtube)



Meaning: - The scarf has been, coloured in the month of caitī, Ho rama all reddish, coloured the chunari, and also, stitched the garments, Attached also ghungharoo, in between ho rama, all reddish.

### THEMES OF SEPARATION AND LONGING (VIRAHA)

One of the most prominent themes in Caitī songs is separation (*viraha*), particularly from a husband or lover. Many women in rural areas experience prolonged periods of separation due to migration for work, agricultural duties, or religious pilgrimages. In Caitī songs, women express their feelings of longing and loneliness, waiting for the return of their loved ones. This theme is deeply intertwined with the agricultural cycle, as harvest time often marks periods when men leave for work, and women are left managing the home.

Sthayī

āe na phulele phulgenba ho rāmā

piyā nahi āiele

Antarā

manjaral bagiyā mein koyaliyā bole

chubi chubi mahuā madhur ras ghole

madhuban mein kusum fulaile ho rāmā

bhavarā lobhaile

### EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE AND DESIRE

Caitī songs, especially when sung by women, often explore themes of love, desire, and marital intimacy. These songs can reflect the idealized love between deities (e.g., Radha and Krishna), but they also serve as a space for women to express their feelings, desires, and expectations within romantic and marital relationships.

The female voice in Caitī often articulates the complexities of love, including unfulfilled desires, the challenges of maintaining affection in the face of hardship, and the expectations of marital duty.

Sthayī

Suganā bole re hamri atariyā ho rāmā

āeri chāpe chabili re bideśvā

Antarā

Rahi rahi mārē birahi atariyā ho rāmā

Aeri chape chabili re bideśvā

### DEPICTIONS OF DOMESTIC AND AGRARIAN LIFE

Caitī songs offer a window into the daily lives of women in rural, agrarian societies. Many song texts focus on domestic duties, such as preparing food, tending to children, or managing household chores, often emphasizing the physical and emotional toll of such responsibilities. Through the lens of Caitī, listeners gain an understanding of how these duties intersect with larger themes of spirituality, community, and the passage of time.

Sthayī

Sās rāni ke painyān dabāvat ho rāmā

Beet gaye ratiyān

Antarā

Chahal pahal ma dhali dupahari

Rutiyan banāwat sānjh ho rama

Beet gaye ratiyān

Meaning:- While massaging the feet of Queen mother-in-law ho rama, The night has passed. The afternoon passed in hustle and bustle, making rotis, its been evening, Ho rama, the night passed.

## PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

The Details of the performance:

Vocal – Bidushi Sucharita Gupta

Tabla – Pt. Lalit Kumar

Harmonium - Saurabh Shrivastava

'Ehi Thayan Motiya Hera Gaili Rama' is a Caiti song, originating from the Bhojpuri-speaking regions of India. Caiti songs, performed during the Hindu month of Chaitra (March-April), celebrate the arrival of spring. The lyrics reflect Bhojpuri culture, focusing on nature, devotion, and rural life, capturing the simplicity and emotions of daily life. The title suggests a longing and admiration for beauty, possibly metaphorical for nature, life, or divine entities. The song uses rag Pāhādi pentatonic and heptatonic notes typical in folk music, with a repetitive and soothing melody that is easy to remember. It is usually performed in a high-pitched, emotionally expressive tone to convey devotion or longing. Singers often improvise to emphasize personal interpretation, a hallmark of live folk renditions. The song represents Bhojpuri identity and holds nostalgic value, especially among diaspora communities. It is part of festivities and communal gatherings, enhancing collective participation and evoking a mix of devotion, joy, and longing, creating an emotional resonance with listeners. It appeals to both older generations for its authenticity and younger listeners exploring cultural roots. This song, like many in the Caiti tradition, thrives in its simplicity and connection to nature and spirituality. Performances are praised for transporting listeners to the Bhojpuri heartland, even in modern urban settings.

## MELODIC STRUCTURE

Raga Pahadi, meaning "hilly," is believed to originate from the unique melodies prevalent in the hill regions of Himachal Pradesh, western Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab. Raga Pahādī is a raga known for its folk-like essence, often conjuring images of mountainous landscapes. It is a light raga in Hindustani music, frequently featured in semi-classical and light music forms such as ṭhumrī, Dādrā, and film songs. With its simple and adaptable structure, Raag Pahādī allows musicians to improvise freely, incorporating elements of folk melodies. In caiti, it blends light, playful elements with emotional, expressive storytelling, resulting in a musical piece that is both soulful and grounded, evoking a natural, rustic feel. Believed to have originated from Bilawal Thāt, this raga includes very few instances of the notes 'Ma' and 'Ni', classifying it as an Audav raga. The vādī note is 'Sa' and the samvādī note is 'Pa'. Traditionally performed in the first quarter of the night, it is now sung at any time for wider audiences.




37  
song

41  
song

45  
song

49  
song

53  
song

57  
song

61  
song

65  
song

69  
song

1  
song

5  
song

9  
song

13  
song

17  
song

21  
song

25  
song

29  
song

33  
song



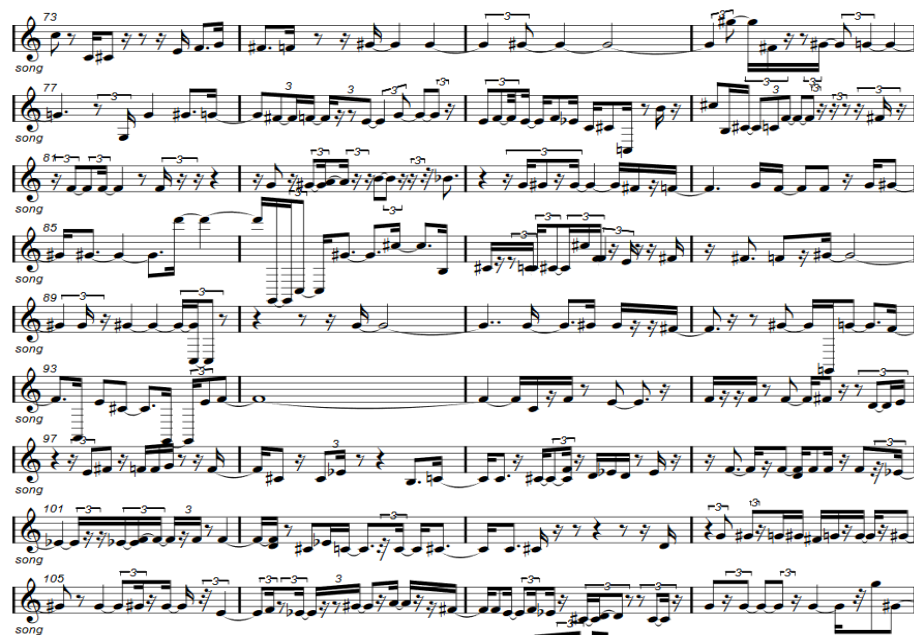


Figure 3: Audio Transcription

Sucharita Gupta, an eminent singer in Indian Semi- classical music, is celebrated for her rendition of semi-classical forms like Caiti, Thumri, Kajri, and Dadra. Her Caiti performances are deeply impactful due to her mastery and emotional depth. Gupta's voice blends power and tenderness, bringing the emotions of Caiti alive. She uses intricate vocal embellishments to enhance the melody's beauty while keeping it accessible. Her ability to infuse rasa, particularly viraha (longing) or bhakti (devotion), is unparalleled. She adheres to the traditional Caiti structure while adding unique interpretations. Caiti songs often reflect themes of nature, love, and rural life, which Gupta makes vivid and relatable, even for urban audiences. While grounded in the raga system, her improvisations are inventive yet respectful of the traditional Caiti framework. Accompanied by instruments like the tabla and harmonium, her performances achieve a perfect balance where the instruments support the vocals without overshadowing them. Her live settings include sensitive interactions with accompanists, creating a dynamic and spontaneous musical experience. Gupta's performances are not just artistic expressions but acts of cultural preservation, keeping the Caiti tradition alive for future generations. Her Caiti blends the simplicity of folk music with classical sophistication, broadening its appeal. The seasonal and emotional themes of Caiti, paired with her evocative singing, often move listeners to tears or contemplation. Her singing transcends entertainment, leaving audiences with a sense of spiritual elevation. Gupta uses storytelling in her Caiti performances, drawing listeners into the song's lyrical and emotional world. Whether in intimate gatherings or grand festivals, her Caiti renditions maintain depth and connection. Gupta's Caiti performances are benchmarks in the semi-classical genre, her technical brilliance, emotional depth, and cultural authenticity making her an ambassador of India's rich musical heritage. Through her, the Caiti form gains national and international recognition, bridging rural traditions and classical finesse..

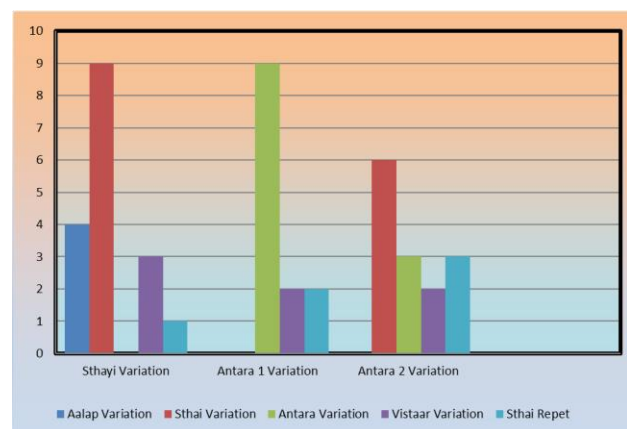


Figure 4: Statistical Analysis of Performance



## CONCLUSION

The Caitī tradition, as explored through its song-texts and performance practices, emerges as a profound cultural expression of rural North India, deeply intertwined with its social, seasonal, and spiritual rhythms. The study reveals that Caitī songs are not merely a form of entertainment but a vital narrative medium, conveying the emotions, beliefs, and experiences of the Bhojpuri-speaking community.

Through the analysis of song-texts, it becomes evident that Caitī encapsulates a rich tapestry of themes, from devotion to nature, the cycles of life, and human relationships. The lyrical simplicity of these songs is balanced by their metaphorical depth, making them relatable across generations while maintaining their poetic richness. Seasonal imagery, such as blooming flowers and the vibrant life of spring, provides a sensory backdrop that connects performers and listeners to their natural surroundings.

The performance of Caitī adds another layer of significance. Its oral tradition, characterized by improvisation and the use of minimalistic instrumentation, emphasizes a communal and participatory spirit. Moreover, the role of the performer as both a preserver of tradition and a creative interpreter ensures the continuity and evolution of this art form. Artists like Girija Devi have demonstrated how Caitī can bridge folk and classical domains, expanding its appeal while retaining its essence.

In conclusion, the Caitī tradition stands as a testament to the resilience and adaptability of cultural practices in a rapidly changing world. By studying its song-texts and performances, one gains insight into the values, aspirations, and artistic ingenuity of the Bhojpuri-speaking community. This research underscores the need for continued exploration and preservation of such traditions, as they are not only artistic treasures but also windows into the collective soul of a culture.

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