

THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION AND MODERNIZATION ON KIRATA KHAMBU-RAI FOLK MUSIC

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Abstract

The Khambu-Rai, a subgroup of the Kirata people currently residing in Nepal, Sikkim, and the Darjeeling hills, have a rich tradition of folk music deeply linked to their cultural and spiritual identity. Rai folk music, central to rituals, festivals, and daily life, preserves historical narratives and fosters storytelling. However, globalization and modernization pose challenges to its preservation and continuity. This research employs a narrative review methodology, synthesizing existing literature on the evolution of Rai folk music in the face of global cultural shifts. This study examines the dual impact of these global shifts on Rai folk music. Globalization has expanded the reach of Rai music, creating opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration and modern adaptations. However, it also risks diluting cultural specificity, commercialising traditional practices, and compromising authenticity, particularly due to tourism and entertainment demands. The research underscores the need to balance innovation with cultural preservation. Policymakers, educators, and musicians are urged to support Rai folk traditions, ensuring their sustainability and relevance in an interconnected world. The study offers valuable insights into safeguarding cultural heritage while embracing modernization, highlighting the importance of intentional efforts to maintain the integrity of traditional music forms amidst global cultural shifts.

Keywords: Globalization, Modernization, Kirata Khambu-Rai, Folk Music

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Khambu-Rais are an indigenous community of the Eastern Himalayan region. They are a group of the Kirata people currently residing mostly in Nepal, Sikkim and the Darjeeling hills. They are the descendants of the ancient Kiratas of the Kirata Kingdom (Rai, 2005). The Khambu-Rai folk tradition, has a rich and vibrant history that has been shaped by various socio-cultural and political forces over time (Lama K, 2020). In recent decades, the forces of globalization and modernization have had a significant impact on the evolution and preservation of this unique musical heritage (Thapa R, 2019).

Rai folk music is a critical element of the cultural heritage of the Rai people. A part of Rai music is based on the Rai folklore known as the '*Mundhum*' which are oral traditions passed down from generation to generation orally (Rai, 2005). All their religious activities are based upon the Mundhum. These lyrical poetries sound like songs with rhythm and melodies. Other than these there are other types of songs performed during events like marriage ceremonies, farming and hunting. The Rai dance known as *Sili* are an important part of Rai culture of which music is an important part. These *sili* usually don't have lyrics accompanying them (Lama K, 2020). They are performed wearing traditional costumes accompanied by various traditional musical instruments.

This music is traditionally performed during various cultural rituals, festivals, and daily activities, serving as a means of storytelling and preserving historical and cultural narratives. Traditional Rai music is often characterized by the use of unique instruments such as the *ken* (dhol), *maniken* and *chembiken* (cymbals), *sayaken* (Dhyangro), the *murchunga* (like Jew's harp), *bansuri* (bamboo flute), and *madal* (double-headed drum) (Rai R, 2022).

The Rai people, have a long-standing tradition of folk music that is deeply rooted in their cultural and spiritual beliefs. However, the rapid pace of globalization and the influx of modern, Western-influenced music have posed a threat to the continued existence of these traditional forms. (He et al., 2014) (Evolution and Assessment of South Asian Folk Music: A Study of Social and Religious Perspective, 2020) The development

of new technologies, including digital audio and multimedia platforms, has also had a profound impact on the way Rai folk music is created, performed, and disseminated. (He et al., 2014)

One of the primary challenges facing Rai folk music in the modern era is the loss of traditional knowledge and practices. As younger generations are exposed to a wider range of musical styles and genres, they may be less inclined to learn and preserve the intricate techniques and cultural significance of their ancestral folk music. (Evolution and Assessment of South Asian Folk Music: A Study of Social and Religious Perspective, 2020) Additionally, the commercialization and commodification of Rai folk music for tourism and entertainment purposes can lead to a dilution of its authentic cultural essence. (Nepal, 2019)

For example, the song "Silu" is a well-known Rai folk song that narrates the pilgrimage to the sacred mountain Silu and embodies themes of devotion and spiritual journey. This song, along with others, is not only a musical expression but also a medium for passing down traditions and values through generations.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Globalization and modernization have introduced new cultural dynamics to the Rai community, leading to both the fusion and potential dilution of traditional music forms. The rise of digital media and the global music industry has made it easier for Rai music to reach a broader audience, but it has also introduced new challenges. These include the commercialization of music, which often prioritizes marketable elements over cultural authenticity, and the influence of popular genres, which may overshadow traditional sounds.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the historical and cultural significance of Rai folk music, exploring its origins, development, and role in the community.
- To examine how globalization and modernization have affected Rai folk music, including changes in lyrical themes, instrumentation, and performance practices.
- To identify the challenges and opportunities faced by Rai musicians, such as the pressures of commercialization and the opportunities for cross-cultural collaboration.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is relevant for understanding the broader cultural implications of globalization on indigenous music traditions. By focusing on Rai folk music, the study contributes to the discourse on cultural preservation and the resilience of traditional arts in the face of global change. It also provides valuable insights for cultural policymakers, educators, and music practitioners interested in promoting and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research employs a narrative review methodology to synthesize existing literature and provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of globalization and modernization on Rai folk music.

Data Collection

Data for this study on the impact of globalization and modernization on Nepali Rai folk music was sourced from various secondary sources. This includes academic journals and books such as "Ethnomusicology" and "Asian Music," along with works like John Levy's "The Music of the Himalayas" and the "Nepali Folk Music and Dance" series by Regmi Research.

Online databases and archives such as JSTOR, Google Scholar, the Nepali Folk Archive, the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, and the Internet Archive will be used to access recordings, historical data, and other relevant materials for comprehensive analysis.

Data Analysis

Based on the detailed analysis of the collected data, the study identified key themes and trends in the impact of globalization and modernization on Nepali Rai folk music.

Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical standards by ensuring accurate citation and acknowledgment of all sources.

RESULTS

The impact of globalization and modernization on Nepali Rai folk music is multifaceted. On one hand, these forces have revitalized traditional practices, making them relevant to contemporary audiences and ensuring their survival. On the other hand, they have introduced challenges such as the potential loss of cultural specificity and the risk of turning cultural artifacts into commercial products.

The impact of globalization and modernization on Nepali Rai folk music has been extensively analyzed through various sources. The following table summarizes key findings from academic journals, books, articles, reports, interviews, documentaries, and online databases.

SN	Paper Title	Author	Journal Name	Year of Publication	Key Findings
1	"Sakela is our national dance": the enactment of identity-roles in folk dance performances	Maria Maung	Nomadit	2019	The sakela dance has evolved from a ritualistic performance to a public celebration, blending traditional and modern elements, reinforcing Rai ethnic identity.
2	"Modernization's Effect on the Sakawa Sili Festival"	Kiran Lama	Munin	2020	Modernization has led to the integration of modern dance and music styles into the traditional Sakawa Sili festival, reflecting the evolution of the festival in response to changing social dynamics.
3	"Cultural Festivals and Folk Songs in the Rai Community"	Unknown		2022	Rai festivals and folk songs have incorporated contemporary musical styles, showcasing a dynamic interplay between preserving tradition and embracing modern influences.
4	"The Impact of Modernization on Nepali Folk Music"	Bimal Raj	Folk Music Studies Journal	2021	Modern elements in traditional Nepali folk music have created a fusion genre, appealing to younger generations but risking the dilution of original cultural significance.
5	"Popular Nepali Music 101"	Jivan Sharma	Ethnomusicology Review	2020	Rai folk music is experiencing a renaissance, with modern artists incorporating traditional melodies and instruments into contemporary music, making it accessible to a global audience while risking commercialization.

6	"Reviving the Roots: Rai Folk Music and Dance in Modern Nepal"	Sushma Tamang	Cultural Heritage Journal	2021	The revival of Rai folk music and dance in modern Nepal involves integrating traditional practices with modern performance contexts, reinforcing cultural identity and adapting to contemporary social environments.
7	"Globalization and Its Effects on Indigenous Music: A Case Study of the Rai Community"	Ram Thapa	Global Cultural Studies	2019	Globalization has led to the hybridization of Rai music, blending local and global elements, enriching cultural expressions but risking the loss of unique traditional characteristics.
8	"Music and Modernity: The Transformation of Rai Folk Traditions"	Rekha Rai	Journal of Modern Asian Studies	2022	The transformation of Rai folk traditions under modernity includes the adaptation of traditional music to contemporary forms, balancing the preservation of cultural heritage with the need for innovation and relevance.
9	"The Role of Media in Promoting Nepali Folk Music"	Deepak Gautam	Media and Culture Journal	2020	Media has played a crucial role in promoting Nepali folk music, including Rai traditions, by making them accessible to wider audiences and facilitating their adaptation to modern contexts.
10	"Cultural Identity and Music: The Case of the Rai Community in Nepal"	Anju Khadka	Journal of Ethnic Studies	2021	Music serves as a significant marker of cultural identity for the Rai community, with traditional practices being adapted to fit modern social and cultural contexts, thus reinforcing community bonds and ethnic pride.

The key themes and insights that arise are -

Transformation of Traditional Practices:

- **Sakela Dance and Rai Identity:** The sakela dance, a traditional Rai performance, has evolved significantly due to modernization. It has shifted from a ritualistic practice performed by a select few to a widespread public event involving thousands. This transformation is reflective of broader trends where traditional cultural practices are being adapted to fit new social contexts, thereby reinforcing ethnic identity in modern settings. The sakela dance, mimicking agricultural activities, is a cornerstone of Rai cultural identity. Its transformation from ritualistic performances to widespread public celebrations reflects the community's adaptation to modern contexts while maintaining ethnic pride.
- **Modernization of Nepali Folk Music:** The incorporation of modern musical elements into traditional Nepali folk music has led to a fusion genre that appeals to younger generations. This blend of old and new ensures the survival of traditional music, but it also poses the risk of diluting its original cultural significance.

Commercialization and Global Influence:

- Popularization through Media: Modern artists are integrating traditional melodies and instruments into contemporary music, making it accessible to a global audience. This trend is facilitated by new media and technology, which help in popularizing these forms but also lead to their commodification. The commercialization aspect may overshadow the cultural authenticity of traditional Rai music, turning it into a market-friendly product rather than a genuine cultural expression.
- Economic and Cultural Impacts: The commercialization of folk music has brought economic benefits and greater visibility to traditional forms. However, it also introduces new performance dynamics and expectations that can alter the essence of the original practices. The economic aspect can sometimes prioritize marketability over cultural integrity.

Preservation vs. Innovation:

- Cultural Continuity and Adaptation: The adaptation of traditional practices like the sakela dance for modern audiences ensures their continuity but also changes their traditional format and context. This dual nature of preservation and innovation highlights the complex interplay between maintaining cultural heritage and embracing new influences.
- Hybridization: Globalization leads to musical hybridity, where local and global elements blend to create new music forms. While this enriches cultural expressions, it also risks losing the unique characteristics of traditional music. The challenge lies in balancing innovation with the preservation of cultural heritage.

Various Rai festivals like Yele, Wadangmi, and Dhwangkum, along with folk songs such as Hiyari Chham, Saima Chham, and Hakpare Chham, are deeply rooted in the community's cultural fabric. These festivals and songs have seen changes due to modernization, with traditional themes being blended with contemporary musical styles. This blending reflects a dynamic cultural landscape where traditional practices are being preserved while adapting to modern influences.

The analysis of these articles indicates that globalization and modernization have had a profound impact on Nepali Rai folk music. The traditional forms of music and dance, such as the sakela dance, are being revitalized and adapted to fit modern contexts. This process includes the incorporation of new instruments, styles, and performance practices, which helps in preserving these cultural expressions by making them relevant to contemporary audiences. However, this adaptation comes with challenges, such as the potential loss of cultural specificity and the risk of commercialization overshadowing the original cultural meanings.

The influence of Western music has led to a hybridization of traditional Rai music, incorporating elements like Western instruments (e.g., guitars, keyboards) and modern production techniques. This has broadened the appeal of Rai music but has also raised concerns about cultural authenticity and the dilution of traditional forms.

'Lok Pop' represents a significant shift in how traditional music is produced and consumed. While it helps in preserving certain folk elements, the commercial nature of 'Lok Pop' may lead to the erosion of the rich, nuanced traditions of Rai folk music, reducing it to simplified, market-friendly versions.

The broader context of globalization shows a complex interplay between preservation and innovation. For Rai folk music, this means adapting to new realities while striving to maintain cultural integrity. The results highlight the need for targeted efforts to support traditional music forms through cultural policies, education, and community initiatives.

DISCUSSIONS

Globalization has both positive and negative impacts on the Sakela dance. On the positive side, it has brought international recognition and pride to the Rai community. On the negative side, it has sometimes required

alterations to fit the expectations of non-traditional audiences, potentially compromising the dance's original cultural and spiritual meanings.

For Rai folk music, hybridity means incorporating global elements into traditional forms, creating a dynamic and evolving musical landscape. However, this also means that traditional aspects of Rai music may be overshadowed or lost in the process. The results call for a balanced approach that embraces innovation while safeguarding cultural heritage.

Similar to the Rai community, Native American music has seen a blend of traditional and modern influences. Modern Native American artists incorporate electronic beats and contemporary genres into traditional chants and melodies, which helps in reaching younger audiences and preserving cultural practices (Scales, 2012). Irish folk music has also undergone significant changes due to modernization. Traditional Irish instruments like the fiddle and tin whistle are now often played alongside modern instruments like electric guitars. This fusion has resulted in new genres such as Celtic rock, which has gained international popularity (O'Flynn, 2009).

The commercialization of Rai folk music through media and public performances has increased its visibility but also risks diluting its cultural authenticity. In India, Bollywood has had a similar impact on traditional folk music. Folk tunes and instruments are frequently adapted into film music, making them popular but also leading to a loss of traditional contexts and meanings (Morcom, 2007). African drumming traditions have been commercialized extensively, especially in Western contexts. While this has increased global recognition of African music, it often results in the simplification and misrepresentation of complex cultural practices (Agawu, 2003).

The revival of Rai folk music in modern Nepal, facilitated by cultural festivals and media, showcases a cultural renaissance. This process involves reclaiming and celebrating ethnic identity through music and dance (Tamang, 2021; Khadka, 2021). The Maori of New Zealand have experienced a cultural renaissance, with traditional songs (waiata) and dances (haka) being revitalized and promoted through educational programs and media. This revival has strengthened Maori cultural identity and community bonds (McLean, 1996). Flamenco music and dance have undergone a revival in Spain, with modern interpretations and global tours helping to preserve and promote this traditional art form. This revival has enhanced cultural pride and awareness both within Spain and internationally (Steingress, 2005).

The key themes of preservation, adaptation, commercialization, and cultural renaissance are evident across different cultures. While modernization poses challenges to maintaining cultural authenticity, it also offers opportunities for cultural renewal and global recognition.

The Rai community's experience highlights the importance of balancing tradition and innovation to ensure the survival and relevance of cultural practices. This balance is crucial for maintaining cultural identity and fostering a sense of belonging in an increasingly globalized world. Future research and cultural policies should focus on supporting such balanced approaches to cultural preservation and modernization.

LIMITATIONS

A significant challenge was the scarcity of scientific literature specifically focused on Rai folk music and its interaction with globalization and modernization, limiting the study's ability to draw on a broad range of empirical data. The study also encountered cultural and linguistic barriers that limited access to certain sources and perspectives. Many traditional Rai songs, rituals, and practices are deeply embedded in the community's language and oral traditions, which may not be adequately represented in the existing literature or accessible to researchers outside the community.

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