

THE CHANGING SHAPE OF PUNJABI FOLK MUSIC: A GLOBALIZATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This article highlights the profound impact of globalization on Punjabi folk music, acknowledging both the opportunities and challenges it has presented. From its traditional roots to its current global presence, Punjabi music continues to evolve, bridging cultures and generations. Nevertheless, it calls for conscious efforts to preserve the richness and authenticity of this musical legacy while adapting to modern trends.

Keywords: Punjabi Folk Music, Globalization Perspective.

INTRODUCTION

Punjab, often referred to as the 'Land of five rivers' holds a distinguished position in the cultural and historical context of India. Originally watered by seven rivers (The Ghaggar, Satluj, Ravi, Beas, Chenab, Jhelum, and Sindh), Punjab now relies on only three: Satluj, Ravi and Beas. Historically, this fertile land has been a center of spiritual, intellectual and artistic brilliance. The people of Punjab are renowned worldwide for their warm-heartedness, determination, dignity, courage and joyful nature. These qualities are clearly reflected in their folk music, an integral component of their social, cultural and religious life. The folk music of Punjab, passed down orally through generations, maintains its authenticity while embodying the sentiments, joys and pastimes of the people of this region.

FOLK MUSIC OF PUNJAB

Folk music of Punjab is deeply embedded in the fabric of society, serving as the very soul of its cultural expression. It manifests through traditional dance forms, songs and musical instruments. This genre of music articulates the inner emotions of the people, their happiness and their celebrations, and it is passed down through generations, safeguarding its purity and cultural relevance. Key elements of Punjabi folk music include Kali, Kavishri, Dhadhi-Waran, Sufi music, Tumbi-Tara singing, literary songs, folk songs, Doganey (Duet Songs) and Phutkal songs. Rooted in the rituals, beliefs and festivals of its people, Punjabi folk music is held in high regard within Hindustani classical music due to its distinctive features and deep connection with everyday life.

GLOBALIZATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MUSIC

Globalization refers to the worldwide exchange of knowledge, services, goods, ideas and cultures. This phenomenon has led to the emergence of a "Global Village" where different cultures, languages and art forms intermingle. When applied to music, globalization facilitates the exposure and performance of music on international platforms, offering global recognition and commercial opportunities. In this contemporary era, music is not only seen as a form of entertainment but also as a lucrative business, where traditional and local music can gain widespread acknowledgment and value.

ROLE OF THE PUNJABI DIASPORA IN THE GLOBALIZATION OF FOLK MUSIC

In the last five decades, Punjabi people, especially those living outside India, have become increasingly conscious of their economic potential. This awareness, influenced by the forces of globalization, has driven them to work harder for economic prosperity while also maintaining their cultural roots. The Punjabi Diaspora is now present in virtually every corner of the world, yet despite being far from home, Punjabis continue to hold their cultural heritage in high regard. Folk music remains a central feature of this identity, serving as a connection to their ancestral roots.

To preserve this connection and pass it down to future generations, Punjabi communities abroad have organized folk music events, cultural festivals, and literary gatherings. Notable folk artists such as Lal Chand Yamla Jatt, Alam Lohar, Surinder Kaur, Asa Singh Mastana, Didar Singh Pardesi, Jagat Singh Jagga and Noor Jahan have played a crucial role in introducing and spreading the essence of Punjabi folk music across the globe, making it well-known in various countries.

IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON PUNJABI FOLK MUSIC

The invention of the gramophone heralded a new era for Punjabi folk music, marking the beginning of its commercialization and international appeal. As young artists began forming music groups and performing on global stages, a commercial music industry emerged. Radio and television stations in countries like the United States and Canada began airing Punjabi music, helping to popularize it even further. The release of records and cassettes further boosted the worldwide distribution of Punjabi folk music. Moreover, the presence of Punjabi songs in Hindi cinema since the early days of Indian film contributed significantly to the spread of Punjabi music. Today, it is considered almost mandatory for Hindi films to feature Punjabi songs, as they often guarantee success. Additionally, 24-hour international Punjabi television channels, Punjabi film awards and the advent of the internet have all played pivotal roles in promoting and disseminating Punjabi folk music globally.

As time progresses, the themes of Punjabi folk music have evolved as well. Today, songs addressing social issues, patriotism and cultural pride are increasingly being appreciated, alongside traditional themes of love, loss and celebration. Renowned artists like Gurdas Maan and Satinder Sartaaj are bridging the gap between traditional and contemporary Punjabi music, ensuring the continuity of this vibrant art form while embracing modern sensibilities.

THE ADVERSE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON PUNJABI FOLK MUSIC

While globalization has undeniably brought Punjabi folk music to the global stage, it has also had some negative consequences. Traditional singing styles, such as dhadi vaaran, kavishri, and the singing of folk songs accompanied by instruments like the tumbi, algoza, and dhol, are losing their popularity as younger generations are more inclined toward modern forms of entertainment. Due to economic hardships, many artists who once performed these styles are now forced to take up small jobs to support their families. In the current scenario, the influence of globalization has led to the replacement of traditional folk instruments like the been, wanjli, ghada, tumbi, algoza, sarang, dhol, and dholak with modern electric instruments (like the casio, octopad, etc.). As a result of the widespread use of Western instruments in Punjabi folk music, the use of traditional folk instruments has drastically reduced, leading to a loss of employment for many skilled folk musicians.

Additionally, the commercialization of folk music has led to the creation of fast-paced, rhythm-driven superficial music focusing on flashy visuals and catchy tunes with double meanings and indecent lyrics, rather than preserving the depth and cultural richness that traditional folk music embodies. The subject matter of many contemporary songs has also narrowed down to themes of love, infatuation and violence with little regard for the richness of cultural or social values. This shift in priorities has caused the spiritual and cultural essence of Punjabi folk music to be overshadowed by commercial interests.

The dominance of Western influences has caused many singers to abandon cultural traditions in pursuit of economic gain. Several music companies have preferred cheap, low-quality music over clean and soulful folk singing, leading to the degradation of music from a form of art to a mere commodity for visual consumption. As a result, many singers, influenced by the success of foreign artists, began experimenting with Western styles and this shift has led to the evolution of a new genre of Punjabi pop music. By 1996-97, Punjabi folk music had completely embraced Western influences, giving rise to a full-fledged Punjabi pop music genre.

However, this new form of music has been met with criticism from cultural purists who feel that it undermines the traditional values of Punjabi folk music. While there are still talented and visionary artists today, some musicians are creating songs that promote anti-social behavior, leading the younger generation astray.

SUGGESTIONS

Instead of waiting for a guiding force, we must each take individual responsibility for our reactions. Electronic and print media, as well as social media platforms, can be instrumental in this effort. If musicians and lyricists set certain standards and become aware of their social responsibility, we can curb the rise of vulgarity in Punjabi music. The government should implement stricter laws regarding obscene songs and take immediate action against them. There should also be a dedicated time slot for live telecasts of folk music on various media channels. Additionally, establishing folk music academies and specialized music schools, where trained artists can become teachers, would help promote and preserve this art form.

CONCLUSION

The future of society depends on preserving its heritage. A society that forgets its roots cannot look forward to a bright future. Unfortunately, the traditional characteristics of Punjabi folk music are quickly disappearing, and this has become a growing cause for concern. Although the root cause of these issues is undoubtedly globalization, it is important to recognize that it is an unavoidable part of modern life and is expanding rapidly across all areas of life. With the ongoing social and economic development, the inclination toward the globalization of Punjabi folk music has only intensified. Despite the negative aspects of globalization, Punjabi folk music remains extremely popular today. It is appreciated and enjoyed by people of all religions, castes, and social backgrounds. It is nearly impossible to remain untouched by its influence, and with proper guidance, this genre can once again transform into a wholesome, clean, and entertaining form of music. The future of Punjabi folk music lies in achieving a delicate balance between embracing the changes brought about by globalization and preserving its traditional roots. As globalization continues to shape the world, it is vital for the younger generation to recognize the value of their musical heritage and ensure its transmission to future generations. The commercialization of music should not eclipse the cultural significance and spiritual depth that traditional folk music offers. While change is inevitable, the preservation of heritage and cultural identity remains crucial in securing a bright future for Punjabi folk music.

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