
UNIT 3 PERFORMATIVE ART FORMS (MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE AND MOURNING)

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit you will be able to:

- understand different performing arts genres of India;
- discuss Indian music, dance and theatre in detail;
- explain folk/traditional performing arts of different regions of India; and
- explain the mourning song and how they are performed.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Let us begin with what is performative art. The performative art forms are those forms of art where an artist uses his/her body as a medium of expression; they are through the voice or gesture or facial expression. The history of Indian performing arts can be traced back from 1st century B.C. Bharata's *Natyasastra*. It was a piece of classical Sanskrit literature on the theory of music, dance and

drama. However, there is no clear division between Indian music, dance and theatre in the field of performing art. They are very much interlinked with each other. In this Unit we will discuss some of the classical and traditional performing arts forms of India and also explain morning songs .

3.2 HISTORY OF INDIAN MUSIC

The origin of Indian music can be traced from the Vedic period, where the recitation of chants was an essential element of the Vedic ritual. Several references of origin and development of Indian classical music is found in ancient literature, scriptures and including great oral epics such as *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

Indian music has gone through many changes from the ancient time to present day tradition as a result of the interaction with different cultures and musical traditions. Indian music is based on three elements of performing arts; *Geet* (vocal music), *Vadya* (instrumental music) and *Nritya* (dance), together known as *Sangeet*. Music of India can thus be broadly divided under following categories:

- 1) Classical music
- 2) Tribal music
- 3) Folk or regional music
- 4) Devotional music
- 5) Popular music

Let us now briefly examine them.

3.2.1 Classical music

Let us first discuss classical music. The soul of Indian classical music is *Raag* (kind of melodic line) and *Tala* (rhythmic cycles). The compositions of both the musical traditions are based on *Raag* and *Taal*. Further, classical music is divided in to two major classical traditions; they are *Hindustani* or North Indian classical music (covers entire Northern, Western and Eastern states of India) and *Karnatak* or South Indian classical music (covers mainly four Southern states of India; Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Karnataka). Now, we are going to discuss some of the Hindustani and *Karnatak* classical music genres:

Hindustani music or North Indian music genres

Dhrupad: It is one of the oldest vocal and instrumental genre. Historically it forms a link with the music of Mughal and pre-Mughal times, and musical forms of South India. The subject matters of dhrupad includes devotional theme of both Hindu and Islamic gods, seasonal theme (songs depicting seasons like *Vasanta* or spring, *Varsha* or rain etc.) and also love (spiritual and human). The dhrupad composition is in *Brajbhasha* (combination of Sanskrit and apabhransha dialects), *Avadhi* (variety of *Hindi* close to *Brajbhasha*), *Hindi*, *Rajasthani*, *Punjabi* and Urdu languages. Dhrupad represents majestic and grand style of performance. It is usually accompanied with musical instruments such as *tanpura* (four string plucked instrument) and *pakhawaj* (double headed drum). Some of the famous composers are Raja Mansingh Tomar of Gwalior and Miya Tansen, who was a great musician in Emperor Akbar's court. Some of the famous dhrupad singers of the present times are Ustad Rahimuddin and Ustad Fahimuddin Dagar, Vidushi Sumati Mutatkar, Gundesha Brothers and others.

Khayal: It is a predominant vocal genre, the “*khayal*” is Arabic word which means imagination. In compression; *khayal* is a less complex and romantic form of singing than dhrupad. The subject matter of *khayal* varies from devotional, philosophical, seasonal and love (divine or human love) etc., the languages of *khayal* are *Brajbhasha*, Hindi, Urdu, Rajasthani, Punjabi etc. It is said that Hazrat Amir Khusru (1235-1325), who was a great poet and composer, is often mentioned as the originator of both *Qawwali* (mystical form of singing) and *khayal*. There are two types of *khayal*; *Vilambit* or *Bada* (slow tempo) and *Drut* or *Chota* (fast tempo) *khayal*. *Khayal* is accompanied with musical instruments such as tabla (two separate drum), *tanpura* and harmonium or *sarangi* (string instrument played with a bow). Some of the renowned *khayal* singers are Ustad Amir Khan of Indor *gharana* (*Gharana*: traditional school of learning music under Guru-sishya or teacher-disciple tradition), Pandit Laxman Rao Pandit of Guwalior *gharana*, Vidushi Kishori Amonkar of Jaipur-Atruli *gharana* etc.

Thumri: It is a semi classical vocal form. *Thumri* is essentially communicative, with variations of *vak* or the spoken words. The word *thumri* might have been derived from the *thumak*, which means the graceful movement of the foot and has a close connection with *Kathak* dance (a North Indian classical dance form). The roots of *thumri* lie in the folk/regional genres of Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states of India. It bridges “classical” and regional/folk music, combining some of the most vital aspects of folk and classical music together and developing them in a highly stylized form. *Thumri* is accompanied with musical instruments such as *tabla*, *tanpura* and *sarangi* or harmonium. The Nawab of Avadh (Lucknow), Wajid Ali Shah (1847-1856) had a significant role in popularizing *thumri* during his reign. He was a poet, singer and dancer. He composed *thumri* under the pen name “Akhtar piya”. One of his famous *thumri* is “*Babul mora naihare choto he ja*” was the outpouring of his heart, when he was forced to leave his beloved city of Lucknow by the British, to be exiled in Metia Burj, Calcutta. He brought many of his musicians with him and that is the reason why Calcutta became a seat of Hindustani music to the masses. Some of the famous *thumri* singers are Siddheshwari Devi, Rasoolan Bai, Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Khan Saheb Abdul Karim Khan, Begum Akhtar, Girja Devi, Shubha Gurtu, Sabita Devi and others.

Karnatak music or South Indian music genre

Kritis: They are the most important melodic groups of musical compositions for both vocal and instrumental music. *kritis* are given a prominent place in *Karnatak* music concerts. The composition of *kritis* are based on devotional character or stories from *Purana* etc., and composed in Dravidian languages and Sanskrit. The most famous composers of *kritis* are Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Shyamasastri; together they are known as trinity of *Karnatak* music. The *angas* or parts of most *kirtis* are *Pallavi*, *Anupallavi* and *Charana*. In *kritis* primary importance is given to the musical aspects and creativity. *Kritis* are accompanied with number of musical instruments such as *ghatam* (earthen pot), *moorsang* (jews harp), *tanbura*, violin etc. Some of the famous *Karnatak* classical music performers are M.S Subbalakshmi (vocal) and Aruna Sairaman (vocal).

Tillana: It is one of the most attractive and lively genre performed in both musical (vocal and instrumental) and dance performance. Generally *tillana* is sung toward the end of the music concert. The word *tillana* is constituted of the rhythmic syllable *ti-la-na*, sung usually in medium/fast tempo and word passages carrying

the composer's signature at the end. *Tillana* consists of two parts *Pallavi* and *Anupallavi*. Some of the important composer of *tillana* is Maharaja Swathi Tirunal, Ponnaiya Ayyar and others.

Astapadi: It is a song from Gita-Govinda of Jaideva Sarasvati. It has two parts *Pallavi* and *Anupallavi* which is also the refrain and called *dhruvapada*. *Astapadi* has eight-couplet or caranas (hence the name *astapadi*), the last which bears the composer's signature. It has been adapted to the ragas and *talas* of *Karnatak* music from about early 18th century.

Now, we will discuss the categories of musical forms other than Indian Classical music.

3.2.2 Tribal music

Music practiced by a group of tribe may be called tribal music. There are several groups of tribal people living in different pockets of India. These people have innumerable vocal (song) and instrumental music which is mostly associated with dance. The context of this music is related to different events of every day life of tribal people; from child birth to death, wedding, festival, work, hunting, rites and rituals etc. Tribal songs are composed by unknown composer and transmitted orally from generation to generation.

3.2.3 Folk/regional music

"Folk music has been defined as manifestations of illiterate people resorting to oral tradition in performance, propagation as well as preservation" (Ranade, Ashok D. 1998. pp.10). Folk music practiced by the rural society is both instrumental and vocal music (folk song). It is a continuous process of creation by unknown composer and transmitted orally from generation to generation. Unlike most of the rural society of the world, folk songs plays an important role in every day life of rural people of India, they are connected intimately with rural life. For rural people it is a medium of the expression of their sentiment. Folk songs are different types and associated with various events of rural life such as: life-cycle (birth, wedding and death), festival, ritual, professional (for example; fisherman's song), seasonal (songs of twelve months), agricultural, work song (for example, cow herd's song), love and yearning, ballads etc.

3.2.4 Devotional music

The devotional music is related with spiritual aspects of personality, viz., religiosity, mysticism and devotion (Ranade, Ashok D, 1998. pp 26). Devotional music of India is strongly influenced by the Bhakti movement and it is closely linked with both folk/regional and classical music. The musical genres of devotional music are *Abhang*, *Kirtan*, *Bhajan*, *Shabad*, *Borgit* etc., Almost all the devotional composition carry the name of the saint in the last line. Some of the popular devotional songs of India are Meera *bhajan* (songs composed by Saint Poet Meera bai), Kabir *bhajan* (songs composed by Saint Kabir), *Gurbani* (devotional songs of Sikh religion), Christmas carol (devotional songs sung during Christmas) etc.

3.2.5 Popular music

Popular music is music practiced by mass-population, predominantly by urban people. Composed by urban composer by giving flavors from tribal, folk, classical,

devotional, film etc., popular music is generally combination of all forms of music around the world. There are a number of popular music genres in India. Here we are going to discuss about following genres:

Film songs: It is one of the most popular music around India as well as among Indian people residing outside India. Film songs are composed with the theme of the movie and moves to the story line. However, lyrics of these songs deal with different scene or mood such as expressing love to the hero/heroine, separation, celebration of festival etc. For example, we can cite songs related to Holi (festival of colour) festival in the Hindi film *Silsila* “*Rang barse bhige/ chunarwali rang barase*”.

Remix songs: These songs are usually composed by mixing various types of tunes/rhythms: like folk or classical, western music (depending on the situation or the character) etc. To identify the types, there are certain words like pop, disco, which are added in the song. For example of remix songs: like Hindi pop (Hindi song sung in Western style), *Disco-Bhangra* (Bhangra is a folk dance of Punjab), *Disco-Dandiya* (Dandiya is a ritual dance of Gujarat, performed during Navratra festival; Nine days festival dedicated to Mother Goddess Amba) etc.

3.3 DANCES OF INDIA

In the previous sections, we have discussed Indian music. Let us now focus on Indian dance. Indian dance can be classified broadly in to three groups: (a) tribal, (b) folk and (c) classical. Here, I will give brief examples of classical dance forms of India. Other two forms will be discussed under the folk/traditional performing arts of India.

3.3.1 Classical dance

The major classical dance forms of India are *Kathakali* (Kerala), *Bharat Natyam* (South India), *Kathak* (North India), *Manipuri* (Manipur), *Odissi* (Orissa), *Kuchipudi* (Andhra Pradesh) and *Satriya* (Assam). A brief note on few dance forms are given below:

Kathakali: It is a form of dance-drama of Kerala. Performed only by men, its accent is on *Tandava* (symbolizing energy and dynamism), the more forceful aspect of dance. Convention demands that the feminine roles be portrayed by men. The performer wears elaborate costume, the colourful mask like make-up, dances with the vibrating rhythm of *chenda* (drum) and *maddalom*. The performance takes place in the evening, sometime till the night or sometimes continues for two or more days. The singer unfolds the stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The dance is a unique combination of *Natya* (drama), *Nrittya* (dance) and *Nritya* (interpretative dance).

Bharat Natyam: It was originally known as *Dasiattam* (dance of Devadasi, i.e. a dedicated servant of god), it was a temple dance of South India. Performed only by female, the singer is very important in this dance. The singer decides and sets the pattern of the dance, while the dancer interprets the singer. The theme of the song varies, and so do their technical compositions. The dance generally begins with a prayer. The singer sings with the rhythm of the *mridangam* (double headed drum), the flute echoes the melody and the *veena* (string instruments) throbs gently. Dancer *Abhinaya* (acting) makes the poetry visible to the audience and keeps it enthralled.

Kathak: It is a dance form of North India. It probably originated from the *katha-vasak* tradition, the storyteller, who mimed, danced and sang his stories from the epic days of India's history, continues to be the teacher as well as performer. *Kathak* is performed by both men and women. The dance begins in a slow tempo and involving a lot of exquisite eye, eyebrow, neck and wrist movements, these opening pieces become attractive media for the subtle presentation of the dancers to the onlookers. The exciting drums, the *tabla* or *pakhawaj* (double headed drum) provide the intricate rhythms; the melodious tune of *sarangi* (string instrument played with a bow) accompanies the singer, who sings Hindustani classical forms like *thumri* and *tarana* (composition containing syllables from musical instruments and lyric) etc. The dancer ends the recital with brilliant finale of decorative movement, tantalizing arrested pauses and lightning footwork.

Manipuri: It is a religious dance-drama from Manipur, a north-eastern state of India. This dance form symbolizes the union of divine love of Lord Krishna and Radha. It is, performed in particular season of the year. It is a lyrical dance form with extremely graceful movement of swaying body, and the exquisite grace of arms. The musical instruments like cymbals, conch, flute and drums accompany the vocal music. Performed by both men and women, the women dancer wears gorgeously embroidered costume with a beautiful veil (The Dances of India: pp 7-20).

Odissi: The first record of dance in Orissa found in the manuscripts pertaining to the rituals of Lord Jagannath at his world famous temple at Puri. The 'devadasi' dance at the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri was also known as Mahari dance. The devadasis were known as maharin, meaning someone deeply in love with the Lord. Almost contemporary was the 'Gotipua' tradition. This was towards the end of 16th century. 'Goti' means 'one', 'pua' is boy which meant a boy performing a solo dance, as girls from Orthodox families were not allowed for public performances. Both 'Mahari' and 'Gotipua' dance styles co-existed and from the essence of both has been drawn, kneaded and shaped the best classical Indian dance form of today, Odissi dance. In this dance form, usually an epic is performed by a solo dancer, mostly women, sometime men, or even a group of dancers, gorgeously and traditionally attired, aesthetically represented.

3.4 THEATRE IN INDIA

Let us now focus on the theatre tradition in India. India has one of the richest and oldest traditions of theatre dating back to at least 5000 years. The origin of Indian theatre is closely related to ancient ritual and practices associated with it. Bharata's *Natyasastra* was the most elaborate treatise written on Indian theatre sometime on 1st century BC, it is a classic Sanskrit literature, is assigned the monumental treatise of Bharata on the theory of music, dance and drama. According to some legend the very first play was performed on heaven when the gods have defeated the demons, and were enacting their victory.

The Indian theatre is a composite art. It includes narrative form with recitation,

music and dance. Emphasis on narrative element made Indian theatre essentially theatrical right from the beginning. That is why the theatre in India has encompassed all the other forms of literature and fine arts into its physical presentation: literature, mime, music, dance, movement, painting, sculpture and architecture. Mixture of all these forms together is being called “*Natya*” or theatre in English.

Indian theatre can be broadly divided into three parts: Sanskrit or classical drama, Contemporary or modern theatre and Folk or traditional theatre. Here, we will discuss some of the folk theatre of India.

3.5 FOLK/TRADITIONAL PERFORMING ARTS OF INDIA

Every state and region of India has innumerable folk/traditional performing art forms. Here, I shall discuss about some of these forms from four different regions of India. The forms have been highlighted in and should not be considered exhaustive and are only examples.

3.5.1 East India

Bihu dance and music: It is associated with the spring time festival of Assam *Bohag Bihu* (between mid-April to mid-May), the first month of Assamese New Year. It is a festival of nature, youth and fertility cult and observed throughout Assam, irrespective of caste and creed, tribes, language and even religion. *Bohag Bihu* starts on the last day of Indian month *Sot* (mid-March and Mid-April) and goes for a month. The first day is dedicated to cattle worship known as *Garu Bihu* (cow Bihu). The day after *Garu Bihu* is *Manuh Bihu* or *Bor Bihu* (men or big *Bihu*). On this day the main festivity begins and people pay respect to elders, visit village *Namghar* (community prayer hall) and exchange *Bihuwan* (kind of cotton woven towel). The *Bihu* dance and music begins with the *Husori* (community singing) performance, performed only by men to welcome the New Year and welfare of the society. The *Bihu* dance and music are performed by a group of young men and women with the accompaniment of *dhol* (double headed drum), *pepa* (buffalo horn pipe), *toka* (bamboo clapper), *xutuli* (earthen wind instrument), *gogona* (bamboo jew’s harp) and *bahi* (bamboo flute). Usually, the drummer is the leader of the group, beats the drum, dance and sing songs. *Bihu* songs are primarily love songs, but other than love, there are songs convey various aspects of social life and values that rural folk cherish. The solo playing of *pepa* with its enticing tune invites the women dancers to the floor and then all males begin to move around and dance in ring.

Chhau dance: It is the traditional mask dance-drama of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa. There are three types of *Chhau* dance forms: Saraikele, Mayurbhanj and Purulia (West Bengal). Here, we will discuss briefly about *Chhau* dance of Purulia. In Bengal *Chhau* dance is performed every year on 13th of April, to celebrate the *gajan* or the annual sun festival of Bengal and continues till the month of June.

It is an open air dance and performance begins during late evening and continues through the night. Performer wears different kinds of masks according to the storyline and character; such as a mask of animals or mask of deities like Lord Siva or Goddess Durga etc. with costumes of a realistic nature. Sometime they also paint their face and body with different colors instead of mask. The dance forms are a fusion of tribal war dance and spiritual magical dance with vigorous, intriguing and complex movement. The *Chhau* dance is accompanied mainly by instrumental music such as *dhamsa* (big tribal kettle-drum), and *shehnai* (conical oboe).

Ghoomra: It is a folk song and dance genre of Orissa, prevalent in the districts of Sambalpur, Kalahandi, Bolangir and Cuttack. This dance is named after the musical instrument “*Ghoomra* (drum)”. It is also the main instrument of this dance. Traditionally, performed by men on the festive occasions of *Pausha Purnima* (full moon night of *Pausha* month, *Pausha*: between mid-December to mid-January), *Durga Puja* (ritual worship of goddess Durga, sometime between late-September or mid-October), all the dancers wear turbans on their head clipped with feathers of peacock. They dance while playing the *ghoomra* drum with both hands. The dance is accompanied by songs related to invocation to god and expression of love for beloved.

3.5.2 West India

Jagor: It is a folk theatrical performance of Goa (coastal state of India). *Jagor* is performed in *Mand* (an open space in the village, which through traditional usage has become sanctified). The theme of the *jagor* is based on Hindu myths and epics. The central figure of the story is Adimaya, the primal mother, and the founder of all things or put it differently, the deification of nature benign, creative and supportive. There are two types of *jagor*; *Perni jagor* and *Gauda jagor* in the Christian Gauda community. The most important feature of *Perni jagor* is use of well crafted and painted wooden masks, depicting various animals, birds, super-natural powers, deities, demons and even social character. The theme of *Perni jagor* is mythological and also philosophical, whereas *Gauda jagor* deals with contemporary village life, especially *jagor* at Shiolim village in Bardez district is performed together by both Hindu and Christian community, where main character called *Jagorio* is performed by the Hindu and musical support is provided by Christian artists. The performer displays music, dance and dialogues with exciting moods with the accompaniment of musical instruments like *nagara* (drums), *ghummat* (an earthen pot, mouth bounded with leather covering), *jhanj* (brass cymbals) etc.

Sidi Goma: They are joyful prayers and mystic dances from black Sufis of Gujarat. The Sidis of India are a little known population of Africa, who traveled across the Indian Ocean from East Africa to India over millennium or more. Using African-derived movement, sound and instruments, their sacred rites and music are unlike any other on the subcontinent. In Gujarat, Sidis are Sufi Muslims dedicated to black African saint symbolic ancestor, Bava Gor. The tradition of

this community of saint is to embody and celebrate the spiritual gifts brought to them by Bava Gor through song, music, dance and play. Among the unique gifts often mentioned in the song texts is the joy and rapture collected by Bava Gor from waves of the sea during his voyage to India. The performance of Sidi Sufis includes *Zikr* (prayers, remembering Allah through repetition of His name), *Goma* or *Damal* (ecstatic dancing to drums in praise of Bava Gor) etc., with the accompanying of musical instruments such as Mai Misra (coconut rattle), malunga (a stringed musical bow) and *mugarman* (large vertical cylindrical drum), damal (a small armpit-held cylindrical drum).

3.5.3 North India

Svanga or Sanga (of northern Indian states: Haryana and Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh): It is an open air folk theatre, with little variation in presentation from place to place. The *Sangi* (the main singer of the performance), recite folk poetry and tales, and others follow him by making some gesture. The theme of the tales relates to devotional, socio-religious and sometime includes contemporary issues such as propagating recruitment in the army, for collection of funds for social welfare schemes etc. An oral tradition, *sanga* is performed at night by group of male performer. The instruments used are *sarangi* (bowed string instruments), *dholaka* (double headed drum), *nagara* (conical drums played by striking) and harmonium.

Teratali: It is a fertility ritual-performance of *Kamara* tribes of Rajasthan. It is performed only by women with thirteen small cymbals called *manjira*, worn on their body, two on two arms, and two on the fingers of both the hands and nine from toe to thigh of one leg. The theme of the songs are devotional, they sing songs striking the cymbals for thirteen times by keeping a pot over their head. The women swing their body with the rhythm of the song and accompaniment of *ekatar* (one string plugged instruments) from slow to fast, balancing the pot on their head. Sometime the performer holds a sword between their teeth while playing the cymbals.

Pandavani: It is a story of the Pandavas from great oral epic *Mahabharata*, retold in the Chattisgarhi folk ballad style. The Gond tribe of Chattisgarh is closely associated with the singing of this folk ballad. The singers of the ballad are known as Pandavani, the main singer plays the *ektara* (string instrument), studded with *jhunkis* or *ghungroos* (ankle bells) and in the other hand holds a *kartal* (brass cymbals). Usually Pandavani singers perform in the open spaces, with audience in direct view.

3.5.4 South India

Theyyam: It is a ritual dance form of north Kerala, performed in front of the village shrines or in an open air theatre. A special type of face-painting is done for the dancer who wears an elaborate long headgear larger than the person himself and also uses mask, depicting the image of a folk deity. The dancer along with drummers recites a particular ritual song describing myths and legends

of that deity. Musical instruments like *chenda* (double headed drum), *tudi* (a small hour glass drum) and *kuzhal* (flute) etc., are played to accompany the vocal recitation and dance. *Teyyam* dance is performed only by male members of lower section of Hindu castes, such as *Vannan*, *Malayan*, *Velan* etc. A unique performance of vocal, instrumental and dance forms.

Karagam: It is a folk dance from Tamil Nadu. Traditionally, dancer used to be males but it is often performed by women. The dancers carries colorful decorative pots, piled one after another on their heads, while balancing the pots dancer gaily executes intricate movements with their feet. The display of movements is more of acrobatic skill, for example, fire blowing tricks. Although *karagam* is performed in various occasions but traditionally it is performed in honour of the Goddess Mariamma (Goddess of health and rain), the pots signifies the symbols for fertility.

3.5.5 Central India

Karma: It is a music and dance performance. It is performed by the Central Indian tribes such as Santal, Oraons, Gonda, Baiga etc., during Karam festival in the month of Ashvin (mid-February to mid-March) or Bhadra (mid-July to mid-August). The ritual worship of the Karma tree, which is also known as “Kadamba” is an important part of the ceremony and also believe as the symbol of fertility. Men and women dance in single rows facing each other while moving backward and forward. The performance begins in the evening with an invocation to Karam Devta (Karam God) and goes on till midnight. The theme of the songs depicts legends about Karma devta, day to day lives of the community, nature’s bounty and beauty etc. The song and dance accompanied with the musical instruments such as bamboo flute, *madal* (double headed drum, played with both hands) and *nagara* (a big half spherical drum, beaten with small sticks).

3.5.6 Puppetry

Puppetry is one of the most ancient forms of entertainment in the world and closely associated with folk theatre. This art form combines all the elements of performing arts as well as visual art such as painting, sculpture, music, dance, drama etc. India has a rich and ancient tradition of puppetry, the history of Indian puppetry goes back to 5th century B.C. Puppetry is not only entertainment but it also acts as powerful medium for communication. It generally deals with various stories from the epic *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas*, legends of great king and queen or local heroes or even contemporary issues. The puppeteer (person handling puppets) holds each puppet, often sits behind the curtain and moves the puppets by manipulating his finger. Indian puppets can be broadly classified into four categories: (1) Shadow puppet (2) Rod puppet (3) Glove puppet (4) String puppet.

Shadow puppets: They are made of cut out of leather and are flat in figures. Shadow puppets are pressed against the screen with a strong source of light behind it, the manipulation between the light and the screen make colourful

shadows for the audience who sits in front of the screen. These puppets are popular in Orissa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

Rod puppets: Rod puppets are an extension of glove puppets, they are much larger in size and often supported and manipulated by rods from below. These puppets are found in West Bengal and Orissa, in both these places puppets are connected with traditional folk performances.

Glove puppets: They are also known as sleeve, hand or palm puppets. The head of the puppet is made of papier mache or cloth or wood with two hands emerging from just below the neck. The rest of the body consists of a long flowing skirt. The movement of the puppet is controlled by the human hand. In India, traditional glove puppets are found in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal and Kerala. The puppet performance is usually done by one performer, who delivers dialogues, makes movement of the puppet according to the story with the beat of various musical instruments.

String puppets: They are attached with two to five strings which are normally tied to the fingers of the performer, who manipulate the puppets. The very famous string puppets in India are *Kathputi* tradition of Rajasthan. These puppets are carved from single piece of wood, then covered with colorful long flowing skirt from waist and headgears. String puppets are also popular in Orissa, Karnatak and Tamil Nadu.

(Reference: The art of puppetry 1 and 2)

Case study: puppet play, a folk art in Orissa

Folk art is an age-old art pioneered by the folklorists of Orissa. The lifeless puppets play on the stage and create great curiosity in the minds of the audience at the very first sight. But after a moment the audience lose themselves in the skilful movements of the inanimate puppets in the hands of the artists. Like the actors and the actresses of flesh and blood the puppets look lively. As a consequence, the audience is struck with their grandeur. Here lie the specialties of this folk art.

Only four persons are required to stage a puppet play namely: Sutradhara, two singers and the drummer. It is interesting to mark that unlike other plays in Orissa members of a single family take part in it. They represent the puppet Krishna acts to the tune of male member behind the screen and in a like manner the woman in the back ground recites for the puppet Radha. So the audience can listen to two voices only-the one representing the actor and the other representing the actress. The social restrictions imposed and the financial implications involved therein, probably prevent a female of another family to take part. Similar is the case also with the male members of a different family.

It is noteworthy that no special play fitting the puppet-stage has yet been written in Orissa. Therefore the Puppet artist takes shelter under the Opera Plays. But

those plays of opera are subject to necessary changes, so that they will suit the puppet-stage. Besides, popular songs and charming dialogues are added. Similarly old and antiquated portions are also excluded. In such a process gradually the spirit of the plays of the earlier period is lost and it has taken a quite peculiar shape—a conglomeration of songs of many folk poets and a symposium of dialogues of many folk plays.

The dialogue of a puppet play is really very interesting. In the beginning the drummer sits in front of the stage and first of all beats his drum. This is nothing but an invitation to the people to witness the performance. After this the performance begins. The lady recites the dialogue of the queen, the messenger or the attendant. She sits behind the screen. But this is not the case with the male dialoguer who sits outside the stage. He recites for the king, Minister, police or the messenger. Each of them sings about twenty five to thirty songs a night. Two people get by heart the entire play Puppet-play is full of songs.

As a family art it has its advantages. It is self-dependant, self-supported and remains under strict control and management of the guardian of the concerned family. In this way this art goes on developing for generations as traditional and professional as well. For the development of this art no rich patronage was necessary. It is essentially a folk art. The simnort of the village folk has helned it to flourish.

3.6 MOURNING SONG

Mourning songs are a type of lament sung during the death rituals. These songs are a variety of musical and poetic forms inspired by mourning rites for the dead (The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musician, Vol.10. 1980. pp. 407). The funeral/death rites are universal ritual of communities around the world, includes singing, instrumental music and acting. The purpose of the lament are firstly as a technique of grief, secondly as a lyrical expression of regard for the dead person; and thirdly as a ritual and to persuade them not to return to trouble the living. Mourning songs are very much practiced among all tribes and community people of India. For example, the *Dak vidhi* or funeral rites of potter community of Maharashtra, where musical instruments like *Damru* (small hour glass shaped wooden rattle), is played while reciting the songs, accompanied with *Zanj*, *Tuntune* (string instrument), *Jak* and also harmonium. This performance takes place on the 3rd, 5th and 13th day of death. Some of the communities in Assam perform death ceremony every year following the same date for paying homage to the departed soul singing *Nam-Kirtan* (a kind of *Vaisnava* devotional recitation). Although there are innumerable mourning songs and performance, but amongst all the mourning performance related to Islamic festival Muharram is most widely known and practiced by Muslims all over the world. Now I shall briefly discuss about the *Marsiya* and *Zari* songs and performances associated with the Muharram festival in India.

Marsiya songs: The history of *Marsiya* songs dates back to Iranian literary tradition, in India it was first developed in the Deccan as a form of oral folk poetry. The term *marsiya* means praising the dead in funeral narrations, weeping and wailing over the deceased. *Marsiya* is supposed to be a well defined Arabic literature in pre-Islamic days, which was written by number of poets paying homage to death of well known person. However, it became a popular narration in the event of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad and his kinsmen at *Karbala* (in Iraq). The Muharram is celebrated in the first month of the Islamic calendar, which has a great sentimental value for the *Shia* sect of Muslims. One of the *Deccani marsiya* was composed in the local dialect, *Hindavi* (a spoken language containing elements of *Deccani* speech and phases and words from Persian and Arabic, Telugu and *Braj-bhasha*). The following *marsiya* song says:

Wacha kina Hindvi mein/qissa-i-maqtI-I Shah Hussain

Nazm likhi sab mauzuaan/youn main Hindvi kar asan

(I have composed the *qissa* of the martyrdom of Shah Hussain in *Hindvi*. All episode (of the tragedy) have been related in this *nazm* (poem) in a simple style. (Madhu Trivedi: 2006. *Journal of Indian Musicological Society*. Vol. 36-37. pp. 149-152))

In most places of India, the rituals of mourning are observed by taking out procession in Muharram, the practice of *Tazia* (to practice dissimulation) is performed among the devotees.

Jari song

Jari songs are sung in Assam and also parts of Bengal by the Muslim community during Muharram festival. These songs are based on the tragic episode of *Karbala*, depicting the sorrow and the lamentation of the people over the martyrs of *Karbala*. Performed only by male performer, *Jari* songs are sung in group, where participants move in a circle by clapping hands following rhythmic steps. A form of oral tradition, the basic language of these songs is Assamese with combination of Arabic, Persian and *Brajabali* words.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

From the ancient time onwards various types of folk/traditional music, dance and theatrical performances worked as a medium of communication between actor and audiences. Although these forms are for solely entertainment, but the kings, nobles and religious leaders used these forms to spread their messages and also to keep any lover people. With the advancement of electronic media like television, radio, commercial film, documentary, internet etc., the traditional media is slowly decaying but at the same time these technologies are also providing knowledge of innumerable arts forms practiced all over the world. India is a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual country, diversity of these

elements provides her with wide range of performing arts and especially of folk/traditional art forms. In the above article, I have given a brief summary of some of the arts forms which are artistically and aesthetically created from the socio-religious, socio-cultural and philosophical dimension.

3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

The dances of India. New Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

Ranade, Ashok da. 1998. *Essays in Indian Ethnomusicology*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

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3.9 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

1) What are performative/performing arts and what are its three medium?

Ans: see section 3.1

2) What are the major categories of Indian music?

Ans: Classical, Tribal, Folk/regional, Devotional and Popular music.

3) What are the two major system of classical music in India?

Ans: Hindustani or North Indian classical music and Karnatak or South Indian classical music.

4) What are the classical dance forms of India?

Ans: Kathakali, Bharat Natyam, Kathak, Manipuri, Odissi, Kuchipudi and Satriya.

5) Write a brief note on folk/traditional performance of any region of India from the note or any other folk/traditional performance from your region.

Ans: Chhau dance: is the traditional mask dance-drama of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa. There are three types of Chhau dance; Saraikela, Mayurbhanj and Purulia (West Bengal). Here, we will discuss briefly about Chhau dance of Purulia. In Bengal Chhau dance is performed every year on 13th of April, to celebrate the Gajan or the annual sun festival of Bengal and continued till the month of June. It is an open air dance; performance begins during late evening and continues through the night. Performer wears different kinds of

masks according to the storyline and character; such as a mask of animals or mask of deities like Lord Siva or Goddess Durga etc. with costumes of a realistic nature, sometime they also paint their face and body with different color instead of mask. The dance forms are a fusion of tribal war dance and spiritual magical dance with vigorous, intriguing and complex movement. The Chhau dance is accompanied mainly by instrumental music such as; dhamsa (big tribal kettle-drum), shehnai (conical oboe).

- 6) What is Puppetry? Give an example of any form of puppetry.

Ans: Puppetry is one of the most ancient forms of entertainment in the world and closely associated with folk theatre. This art form combines all the elements of performing arts as well as visual art such as painting, sculpture, music, dance, drama etc. India has a rich and ancient tradition of puppetry, the history of Indian puppetry goes back to 5th century B.C. Puppetry is not a only entertainment but also act as powerful medium for communication, deals with various stories from great epic Ramayana and Mahabharata, Purana, legends of great king and queen or local heroes or even contemporary issues. The puppeteer (person handling puppets) holds each puppet, often seats behind the curtain and moves the puppets by manipulating his finger. Indian puppets can be broadly classified into four categories: (1) Shadow puppet (2) Rod puppet (3) Glove puppet (4) String puppet.

Shadow puppets: made of cut out of leather, flat in figures. Shadow puppets are pressed against the screen with a strong source of light behind it, the manipulation between the light and the screen make colorful shadows for the audience who seats in front of the screen. This puppets are popular in Orissa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu.

- 7) What is Mourning song? Give an example of any mourning performances from the note or you witnessed in your locality or elsewhere.

Ans: A type of lament songs sung during the death rituals. These songs are a variety of musical and poetic forms inspired by mourning rites for the dead. For example: **Jari songs:** these songs are sung in Assam and also parts of Bengal by the Muslim community during Muharram festival. These songs are based on the tragic episode of Karbala, depicting the sorrow and the lamentation of the people over the martyrs of Karbala. Performed only by male performer, *Jari* songs are sung in group, where participants move in a circle by clapping hands following rhythmic steps. A form of oral tradition, the basic language of these songs is Assamese with combination of Arabic, Persian and Brajabali words.