



6

FOLK SONGS

A folk song is a song that is traditionally sung by the common people of a region and forms part of their culture. Indian folk music is diverse because of India's vast cultural diversity. It has many forms. The term folk music was originated in the 19th century, but is often applied to music older than that. The glimpse of rural world can be seen in the folk music of the villages. They are not only the medium of entertainment among the rural masses but also a reflection of the rural society. In this lesson we shall learn about the characteristics of folk songs and music and also about the various folk songs of India.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- define folk songs;
- list the characteristics of folk songs and folk music;
- list some famous forms of folk song of our country; and
- describe the importance of folk song in our culture.



6.1 MEANING OF FOLK SONGS AND MUSIC

Music has always been an important aspect in the lives of Indian people. India's rich cultural diversity has greatly contributed to various forms of folk music. Almost every region in India has its own folk music, which reflects local cultures and way of life. Folk songs are important to music because they give a short history of the people involved in the music. Folk songs often pass important information from generation to generation as well. Folk songs tell stories of life forgotten or on the verge of disappearing. Almost everyone can relate to a folksong. Folk music is the music that is sung by the people, not music recorded in a studio or performed on a stage. People learn these songs by singing them with others. These songs are passed down from generation to generation. So all regions have Folk music.

6.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF FOLK SONGS AND FOLK MUSIC

1. There are no set written rules of the folk music. However a special pattern is required for the folk music.
2. There is repetition in the songs of folk music. The first line of the song is important and usually the other lines are set to rhyme of it.
3. The lyrics of few folk songs are in the format of the questionnaires. A question is asked in the first verse and the subsequent verses are the answers to the question.



3. Folk songs mostly associate with the mythological characters of various gods such as Rama, Krishna, Sita, Parvati etc. with real life.
4. These songs encourage the most downtrodden to stand up and fight.
5. The lyrics of folk music are natural and fluent.
6. Famous subjects of folk music are: agriculture songs, castes songs, region songs, children's songs, songs of god-goddesses, local songs etc.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1**

State whether true or False.

1. The glimpse of rural world can be seen in the folk music of the villages.
2. There is a set of written rules of the folk music.
3. Folk songs often pass important information from generation to generation as well.
4. There is no repetition in the songs of folk music
5. People learn these songs by singing them with others.

6.3 FAMOUS FORMS OF FOLK SONG OF INDIA

India's rich cultural diversity has greatly contributed to various forms of folk music. Almost every region in India has its own folk music, which reflects the way of life of that region. Earliest



records of Indian folk music are found in the Vedic literature, which dates back to 1500 BC. Some scholars and experts even suggest that the Indian folk music could be as old as the country itself. For instance, Pandavani, a folk music popular in most parts of Central India, is believed to be as old as the Hindu epic Mahabharata.

While the reason behind its origin and the method of usage remains more or less the same throughout India, the style in which it is sung and the way in which it is perceived differs depending upon the culture of different Indian states.

Mentioned below are folk music of various Indian states:

Bihugeet - This folk music is performed in Assam during the famous Bihu festival. The music is usually accompanied by a dance performance; it is performed thrice a year. Many stories are conveyed through Bihugeet and the themes often include nature, love, relationships, social messages and humorous stories.

Uttarakhandi Music - Uttarakhandi music is often performed during festivals and religious gatherings in the state of Uttarakhand. The songs usually convey the importance of nature, bravery of historical characters, stories and important cultural practices of the state.

Lavani - Lavani is a popular folk music of Maharashtra and was originally performed to entertain the soldiers. The song is usually performed by womenfolk and it conveys information pertaining to society and politics.



Pandavani - Pandavani is a folk song which narrates the heroics of characters from the Mahabharata. This folk music is popular in Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh. Though this age-old musical form being kept alive by performers like Teejan Bai, Jhaduram Devangan, Ritu Verma, Usha Barle and Shantibai Chelak and many more.

Rabindra Sangeet - Also known as Tagore Songs, Rabindra Sangeet is a set of folk songs, written and composed by eminent poet Rabindranath Tagore. The topics dealt in these songs include modernism, humanism, reflection, romance, psychology, yearning, etc.

Bauls - During the 18th and 19th century, a set of musicians from Bengal came to be known as the Bauls. The music employed by them was often religious in nature. Bauls travelled throughout the country in search of the eternal truth. During their extensive travel, they sang many folk songs which later on came to be known as the music of the Bauls.

Bhavageete - Bhavageete is one of the most important folk music of Karnataka. Bhavageete literally means music of expression and hence, the singer's expressions constitute the most important aspect of this form of music. The subject matter of this musical form deals with nature, love, philosophy, etc.

Naatupura Paadalgal - Naatupura Paadalgal is an ancient musical form of Tamil Nadu. Like many folk songs of India, this



folk music too was used by the aboriginal people during the farming and harvesting season.

Kummi Paatu - Kummi Paatu is yet another folk music form from Tamil Nadu. These folk songs are usually accompanied by a folk dance form known as Kummi or Kummi Aattam. It is often performed throughout Tamil Nadu during festivals and rituals.

Zeliang - Nagaland - A very primitive style of music, that talks about the history of Nagaland as well as romance in the lives of Zeliang tribe. Their lyrics range from, romance, stories of their ancestors to songs of harvest. The music is generally performed in groups and dance and dialogues in between.

Koli - This is the song of the fishermen of Maharashtra. The songs talk about their life at sea, fishing. Koli music is dance based and is essentially associated with their distinctive dance form. They're mostly loud, lively and fast paced.

Bhatiali - Bengal - As Koli is for the fishermen of Maharashtra, Bhatiali is for the boatmen of Bengal. However, the lyrics and style of music is different and so is the philosophy. The subject matter of the music deals with Prakti-tatva or the matters of nature and the music is often restrained with flowing melodies.

Maand - Rajasthan - A traditional folk singing style in Rajasthan, Maand is also recognized in the classical cycle. It is soulful music with its expressive melody and the lyrics talking about the life in Rajasthan in their very own nuances.



Kajari - Bihar and Uttar Pradesh - Another style of folk music with classical influences, Kajari is believed to have originated in Mirzapur. The music is known to be melancholic, sung by women during long, lonely days of monsoon when their husbands have been away for too long..

Dulpod - Goa - Among various folk genres of Goa, Dulpod is probably the genre that expresses the true Goanese essence. The music the perfect fusion between Indian and western culture and it is rhythmic. It talks about the day to day lives of the Goanese people.

6.4 IMPORTANCE OF FOLK SONG IN OUR CULTURE

It is important because it helps us to look back to the culture which our ancestors gave us. Dance, folk songs and other kinds of art are found everywhere in primitive societies. Dance and folk songs are inseparable parts of the life of the primitive people in India. None of their social or religious function is complete without dance and folk songs. Primitive people generally dance in a group accompanied by music. Different kinds of musical instruments like drums and pipe, etc., are used. On different occasions, different folk songs are sung according to the occasion. For example, on the occasion of marriage, songs connected with the married-couple, are sung; on religious functions, songs connected with deities are sung. Women sing folk-songs in their houses while they are working. Men sing folk-songs while working in the fields.



Notes

The thoughts and sentiments of the primitives are expressed clearly from these folk-songs. These help give boys and girls a practice in singing folk songs. The lives of people are tied to the soil and nature of the place where they live. All these impact their folk-songs also. These folk-songs also help in getting knowledge about the culture of the primitive societies.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

Match column A with column B

A	B
1. Bihugeet	(i) Karnataka
2. Pandavani	(ii) Tamil Nadu
3. Bauls	(iii) Tagore
4. Bhavageete	(iv) Goa
5. Maand	(v) Nagaland
6. Kajari	(vi) Bengal
7. Dulpod	(vii) Assam
8. Zeliang	(viii) Madhya Pradesh
9. Naatupura Paadalgal	(ix) Uttar Pradesh
10. Rabindra Sangeet	(x) Rajasthan



WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT

- Meaning of folk songs and folk music
- The characteristics of folk songs and folk music;
- Some famous forms of folk song of our country; and
- The importance of folk song in our culture.



TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Define the term Folk songs and folk music?
2. What are the characteristics of Folk songs and folk music?
3. List two types of each of folk songs and music of the following:
 - i. Tamil Nadu
 - ii. Bihar
 - iii. Bengal
 - iv. Maharashtra



ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

6.1.

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True



Notes

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Notes

6.2.

1. - (vii)
2. - (viii)
3. - (vi)
4. - (i)
5. - (x)
6. - (ix)
7. - (iv)
8. - (v)
9. - (ii)
10. - (iii)