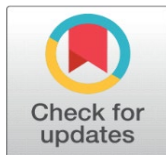
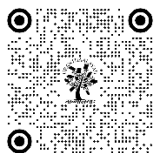


LOK NATYAS OF RAJASTHAN: NARRATING FOLKWAYS

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ABSTRACT

This research looks at Rajasthani *lok natyas* through the lens of their narrative content. The two major natya forms- Khyals and Ramrats are explicitly taken into consideration in this study. The research draws from live lok natya performances at local lok natya festivals, recordings of Khyal and Ramrat performances available with private collectors or on the internet, and Rajasthani literature on this genre available in the local dialect and in Hindi. The lok natyas provide a genuine and an all-encompassing picture of folkways, aiding in the comprehension of the intricacies and wisdom of indigenous people. Reflecting the socio-cultural, political, ideological, psychological, and religious attitude of the folk, the lok natyas delve deeply into the fabric of folk life. They exhibit the folk culture, customs, *dharma* (the right action, a way of life), rituals and ceremonies, and folk perspective on life. Drawing inspiration from mythology and history these natyas cover a broad range of themes, including gender study, multiple truths, green ideals, communal social obligations, and dichotomies in life. There is much to learn, examine, and unpack about the lok natyas as a cultural achievement. It is important to acknowledge the universality ingrained in this cultural manifestation as well as its distinctiveness, specificity, and otherness.

Keywords: Lok Natya, Khyal, Ramrat, Performance, Folk Life, Rajasthan

1. INTRODUCTION

Natya is the art that uses words, music, gestures, and other expressive mediums to portray both the happy and sad aspects of life; it is further accentuated by embellishments, makeup, and costumes, among other things. Natya, then, is a symbol for the boundless diversity of human *prakriti*, or nature. Bharatmuni argues, natya is the nature and behaviour of the world that is intimately related to happiness and misery as furnished by physical and other forms of acting [Bhatt \(2004\)](#). The *Natyashastra* lists twofold mode of representation- *Lok-dharmi*, following the practice of peoples, or realistic, and *Natya-dharmi*, following theatrical modes, or conventional symbols [Bhatt \(2004\)](#).

Charan writes, according to *Siddhanta Kaumudi* the word 'lok' derives from the Sanskrit *dhatu* 'Lokdarshane,' meaning 'to see', imparting the meaning to the word 'lok' as 'one who sees,' which encompasses the entire community of people involved in the act of seeing. The term 'lok' is also alluded to in the Upanishads, the *Bhagwat Gita*, *Asthadhayi* by Panini, *Vartiko* by Varruchi, and *Natyashastra* by Bharat Muni. It refers to common folk several times in the *Rigveda* (2016). The word 'lok' took on new significance with the spread of Buddhism; in Ashoka's inscription, it refers to 'the welfare of the people.' Das states, "As a literary epithet it is used to mean the people that live in more or less primitive condition outside the sphere of sophisticated influences" Das (1953).

Lok *natyas*, is an amalgamated art form that deftly synthesis elements of dance, music, performance, and literature. As verbal and gestural representation of a multitude of experiences, hopes and goals, needs and wishes, hidden feelings and concerns of the folk, lok *natyas* are a performance of the folk psychology. Most of the theories concerning the birth of lok *natyas* attribute their beginnings to classical drama. Charan opines that lok *natyas* have their roots in scriptures. In support of his claim he writes, "The elements of dramatic conversation are evident in the dialogic Richas of Vedas" Charan (2016). Contrarily, folklorist Sharma vigorously contends that folk drama precedes classical drama and that Classical traditions originate from Lokik traditions Sharma (1979). A different interpretation claims that the *Leela* form of *natyas*, which was initiated by the Bhakti saint Vallabhacharya and his disciples in the Mughal times is the source of inspiration of the lok *natyas*. Religious movements have inspired the dispersal of lok *natyas*, asserts Upadhyay in support of this claim Upadhyay (2014). Lok *natyas* are connected to all other dramatic traditions since they exhibit different kinds of reflexivity with the Scriptural, Classical, and Bhakti traditions. The quality of didacticism that unites the lok *natyas* and the classical *natyas* further ties them together as co-texts.

Bharata elaborates on the purposes of *natyas*, saying, *natyas* will serve as the world's primary source of instruction Bhatt (2004). Bharata adds, *Natyas* contribute in generating wholesome instruction, fostering courage, leisure, amusement, and pleasure through their portrayal of men representing high, middle, and low category Bhatt (2004). In a similar fashion as Parmar notes, the lok *natya* has historically been used as a mode of entertainment for the general public and is more closely linked to the lives of the working class than the elite Parmar (1969), the main goal of lok *natyas* is to amuse the uneducated masses. While Nagendra observes that lok *natyas* are products of mass consciousness and incorporate multiple facets of folk life Nagendra (1971), Satyendra says that although lok *natyas* are produced by individuals, they cover matters of public interest Satyendra (2017).

2. CHIEF LOK NATYA FORMS: *KHYAL* AND *RAMMAT*

Rajasthan is home to different lok *natyas*, such as *Leela*, *Tamasha*, *Khyal*, *Khel*, *Swang*, *Rammam*, *Nautanki*, *Jhamtane*, *Puppetry*, *Tura-kalangi*, and *Boliya* of women, which emerge from the diverse geographical, social, and cultural context. The two main lok *natya* varieties that are well-known in Rajasthan are *khyal* and *rammat*. According to Ahuja, who quotes folklorist Bhanavat, *Khyals* are known by a variety of names, like *Natika*, *Byavala*, *Nishani*, *Leela*, *Masiya*, *Lavni*, *Rasiya*, *Sheloka*, *Dharwal*, *Bahar*, *Chatra*, and *Tappa*. To support his claim that *Khyal*, *Nautanki*, *Rammam*, *Sangeet*, and *Sang* are synonyms, he also cites Devilal Samar Ahuja (2016).

The connection between *Khyal* and *Rammam* is intricate; even though they share many commonalities, they also diverge significantly in certain attributes. The *khyal*

form of natya is structurally considered closest to the classical definition of the dramatic genre. Most folklorists agree that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are when khyal first appeared. From an etymological point of view, Khyal originates from the Hindi word *khel*, meaning 'to play,' whereas Rammats springs from the Sanskrit word *raman*, which also means 'to play.' The Khyal performers are known as *khiladi* (players).

Khyal combines the traditional dramatic form of *Bhagat* from Brij with the theatrical impersonation of *Swang* from Haryana, set to music and conversation. In the process of evolution, it gained the addition of verse, dance, music, story, and performance aspects [Pandey \(2010\)](#). The primary variants of the genre, which include the Kuchamani Khyal, Jaipuri Khyal, Shekhawati Khyal, Machi Khyal, Haathrasi Khyal, and Turra-Kalangi, have distinct performing techniques but are linguistically similar. They constantly evolve in terms of themes, music, verse, dance, and stagecraft. On the other hand Jaisalmar, Phaloudi, and Bikaner regions serve as the enactment areas for rammats, which usually feature historical or socio-religious themes. Gavri and Ravalo ki Rammats are the admired varieties of this form.

3. THEMES IN KHYALS AND RAMMATS

Khyals pertain to mythology and romantic tales, and they depict the lives and accomplishments of idealized individuals. The aim of khyals with mythological themes is to uplift people's conscience and strengthen their belief in God. The most well-known khyals centered on mythology are Ram Leela, Krishna Leela, Chand-Malaygir, Harishchandra-Taramati, Mordhwaj-Padma Kunwar, and Brathari-Pingla. Historical khyals highlight the protagonist's function as a keeper of traditions and a giver of goodwill. They frequently include lives of saints, *satis* (female saints), folk deities like Pabu, Teja, and Goga, historical personalities such as demagogues King Vikramaditya, Jagdev Kankali, and Amar Singh Rathore. Khyals of historical heroes exhibit similarity in themes with the classical natyas as they both promote the principles of justice, charity, truth, *bhakti* (devotion), and *tapasya* (austerity). These khyals are enhanced by comprehensive stories of wars, slaughter, and bravery. They also conform to the concepts of classical philosophy, such as *vachan paalan* (keeping one's vows), *shranagat dharm* (obligation towards a capitulator), and *karmphal* (the consequence of one's acts).

Khyals of romance typically center on fictitious characters who are members of an upper class or on true-life tales of rustic people falling in love. Jhoran-Banjara, Jalaal-Bubna, Dhola-Maru, and Nihalde-Sultan are included in the former group, whereas Chaila-Diljaan, Kanwar-Kalali, Seth-Sethani, Devar-Bhojai, and Kaki-Jethuta are included in the latter. These khyals look at the moral and immoral, platonic and sensual, and socially desirable and undesired paradoxes in a man-woman love relationship. This group of khyals has been defined by mutually conflicting conceptions of love, often in disparate social situations. Shekhawat claims that whereas some khyals see love as a confusing and polluting feeling, others see it as a heavenly power that elevates. Confronting the notion of a single, all-encompassing truth, they indicate towards the existence of multiple truths [Shekhawat \(2021\)](#).

In order to warn people against the corrupting influences, another subcategory of realistic khyals based on socially unacceptable acts and behaviors, such as immorality, corruption, polygamy, matchless marriages, adulterous affairs, drug addiction, gambling, and so forth are performed. The khyals depicting doings of bandits and dacoits are more realistic, much like khyals of romance. In popular culture, bandits and dacoits are portrayed as utopian socialists who pillage the

wealthy to support the poor and uphold social justice. The tales of Jowaharji and Dungji belong in this category.

Khyals are thematically richer than rammats. Socio-religious issues are taken up in Ravallo ki Rammat, Gavri, and Ardhnarishwar, but historical matters are the focus of Amar Singh Rathore ki Rammat, Jamnadas ki Rammat, and Choubel Nautanki ki Rammat. The tutelary goddess of the Bhils and the sacred companion of Lord Shiva, Gauri, is the protagonist of the ritualistic natya Gavri performed by the Bhils of Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Banswara. Gavri combines mime and storytelling with elements of theater and dance. It is modeled after the Shiva Leela of mythology.

The story frameworks of rammat and khyal are quite different. The Rammats have an open-ended, dynamic framework, while the majority of khyals have a predefined, closed narrative frame. The opening invocation of a khyal performance is generally performed alone or in chorus, as is the case with classical plays. The concept of *bahujana sukhaya bahujana hitaya* (for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many) propounded by Buddha is echoed in the prayer. Numerous diseases, problems, and obstacles are cured and removed by calling on the gods and goddesses. The *guru vandana*, or invocation to the spiritual guide, comes after the prayer to the god. Thereafter, virtuous are eulogized, while vicious and all those who jeopardize a khyal performance are condemned. This is a part of a wider movement that disparages bad energies and elevates positive ones. The stage is then meticulously swept and misted with water, symbolically highlighting the significance of maintaining an austere and clean physical setting. The invocation's goal is to sanctify the space in order to make it sacred and boost its positive energy. This practice is also frequently seen in classical theater.

The main character is then introduced by the *halkara*, or announcer, who describes his valour and majesty in detail. This is where the story begins and is told in one continuous thread from beginning to end. The swangs of Banjara-Banjari, Ardhnarishwar, Surdas, Baniya, Darji, Kanha-Gujri, Bikaji, and Bore-Bori convey the narrative in rammats, while the swangs of Seth-Sethani, Seth-Munim, Mali-Malin, Kumhar-Kumhari, etc convey the narrative in khyals.

A significant figure in Indian philosophy, Lord Shiva is shown as *Ardhnarishwar* (*ardh*-half, *nari*-woman, *ishwar*-lord) in Ardhnarishwar Swang, denoting the unification of Shiva-Shakti or *prakriti-purush* (feminine and masculine) elements that make up all living things. Shiva's character, who is old in appearance but young at heart, symbolizes the concept of Ardhnarishwar, which stands for the paradoxes in nature. He is both a part of and separate from the world he controls and possesses.

Rammat performances use swangs like *Meeye* (Muslim) ka Swang to add humour and sarcasm. The clothes, gestures, and actions add to the humour. This swang not only mocks at the evils of the culture it presents but also people adept at lying, tricking people, enticing them to perform terrible deeds, usurping money meant for the underdogs, and inciting fights between spouses. In the Swang of Seth, the merchant class is mocked at for their avarice and their use of loans and exorbitant interest rates charged from the poor. This Swang is particularly significant because it examines the conjugal infelicity between Seth and Sethani born out of Seth's inability to meet Sethani's physical and emotional needs.

In consonance with the life force hypothesis, which holds that people choose mates who are the same age as their peer group, Swang of Darzi claims that unpleasant husband-wife partnerships result from mismatched marriages. The Swang of Meena not only honours their combat prowess but also draws attention to the unfavourable perception of Meenas as robbers in the community. The Kanha-

Gujri Swang portrays the mutual love of Krishna and the Gopikas, whereas the Swang of Bika tells the tale of Bika, who worked for the Rana of Udaipur. The Swang of Jogi reveals the hypocrisy of ascetics and popular superstition.

Songs or comedic sequences are incorporated into khyals and rammats to indicate the switch over from one swang to another. In rammats, songs about the *chaumasa* (rainy season), the worship of gods and goddesses, or the hymns of Ganpati Vandana and Ramdevji are performed; in khyals, during the changeover, a popular folk song is sung or a comical situation is introduced. The folk sense of time is made clearer by the allusion to chaumasa. In folk culture, a year is split into twelve segments, or *barahmasa*. A portion of the year chaumasa (July to October) is set out for *kathas* and *satsangs* (religious performances). During this time, austerities like fasting, vegetarianism, and alcohol abstention are observed. In folklore, *saawan* or, the rainy season, represents the hopes and fears of lovelorn couple.

The stories of Gavri Natya, also known as *Khel*, *Bhav*, or *Sang*, are related narratives centered on the lives of Shiva and Amba. *Kutkadiyas* or, the commentators/narrators, weave these khels together by verbally narrating the dance. These khels teach us the art of happy living and are full of life lessons. Shekhawat argues, Parvati's arrival at her parents' home is shown in Gavri, which on a greater scale represents the passion and nozzle that are necessary for a happy marriage. The khel of Neema's mother depicts the much-discussed *nanad-bhojajei* (sisters-in-law) interpersonal interaction. The narrative of khel of Ambamata tells of Shiva intervening to save Ambamata by vanquishing the demon Biyavad, who had abducted her. This khel warns individuals who dare to breach the moral line by casting doubt on women's purity by implying that death is the penalty for such horrible actions [Shekhawat \(2021\)](#).

The stories of lok natyas have been significantly influenced by folk belief systems. The prevalent belief in the presence of super humans is represented here by characters possessing divine powers. Benevolent and malevolent, the former assists the heroes in achieving great deeds while the latter places barriers in their way. Folk deities are called upon and revered as key characters in the folk belief system, and they are prayed to for success in endeavours. A recurrent theme throughout lok natyas is the deities' trial of these heroes' faith. These gods can even bring the dead back to life when pleased.

4. POETICS AND AESTHETICS

The folk and classical traditions exhibit a form of continuum because a porous membrane separates them and permits exchange between them. The similarities seen in natya genre of these traditions serve to bolster this thesis. *Sutradhara*, the stage manager or narrator, and *Vidushaka*, the clown or jester, are staples of classical theater. They are typically present in folk theater as well; occasionally, one character assumes both roles. Sutradhara advances the story and serves as a conduit between the audience and the story. Because there is no curtain in folk theater, the speech conveys the spectacle, with the Sutradhara typically bearing the brunt of it. Before the performance starts, Kutkadiya, the Sutradhara, or the storyteller in Gavri natya, explains the story to the audience. *Bhopa*, the priest of folk deity *Bhairu*, calls the play to order. The priest Bhopa sways his body to the sound of bells attached to his feet and girdle. It is said that during the act, the Bhopa commissions Bhairu in his own body. When hired to perform the Gavri concert, the Bhopa and his group report to the patron right away. The host sponsors the transportation and the stay.

Additionally, the classical convention has a strong legacy of Vidushaka. He appears to be helping the main character with his admirable endeavours. The role of Vidushaka has evolved significantly as we go from the classical to the folk theater. He takes over the stage as one swang leads to another in lok *natyas*, thus weaving together the many storylines. He functions as a sort of stand-in hero, controlling both the stage and the audience at the same time (sometimes as Sutradhara). His importance goes beyond the stage. Shekhawat argues, on a political level, he represents the 'opposition,' which monitors and checks the operations of the 'power,' occasionally confronting them with incisive commentary and targeted repartee. In social terms, he stands in for the voiceless and is a symbol of the alert, vigilant, and critical ordinary man. This links lok *natyas* to the idea of a social justice ally, where a powerful individual advocates on behalf of the underprivileged. He discusses the social, religious, and political ills without holding back. For the apathetic masses, his insightful satire on these ills is an eye-opener [Shekhawat \(2021\)](#).

One notable aspect of Rajasthani lok *natyas* is that, on their first appearance, the characters walk onto the stage and give a brief introduction before beginning their discourse. Both heavenly and super-celestial, the characters in lok *natyas* are strikingly stereotyped; there are strong affinities between the lovers, the beloveds, and the family relations. All heroes are virtuous, and all heroines are loyal. Shekhawat observes, Meenas are thieves, Nais are gregarious, and Seths are misers. These characters are archetypes of their respective castes and are portrayed with characteristics exclusive to their castes [Shekhawat \(2021\)](#). Khyals have characters of specific types; whereas rammats are based on generic kind. Characters in Gavri *Natya* include Gods, humans, devils, and animals. Gods help, comfort, or bless people in times of distress. Demons stand for the darker aspect of life, humans for the practical side, and Gods for the idealistic side. Shiva is a destroyer, a dancer, a naive, and a kind person.

Maji and *Kheliye* are the two separate groups of characters in Gavri. Raiburia, the two Rais, Kutkadiya, and Pat Bhopa are all considered *maji* characters, whilst the other minor characters are classified as *kheliye*. As the Bhils view taking part in a Gavri performance as a highly esteemed achievement, there are occasionally up to a hundred *kheliye* in a single performance. Key human figures in the Gavri performance are Buria, Kutkadiya, Kan-gujari, Kanjar-Kanjari, Phatta-Phatti, Bhopa, Mina, Nut, and Khetudi. Khadilya Bhut, Bhiyanwad, and Hatya Danav, the three main demons in Gavri are grotesque representations of demons with horns on their heads, signifying violence. The animal characters in Gavri are the bear, pig, elephant, and lion. The clothes and cosmetics used by the characters in lok *natyas* allow for their iconographic identification. The Gods are fairer than the demons, who are distinguished by their dark skin and horns on their head. In accordance with the roles they portray, the actors don masks.

Interestingly, in most khyals, including Jaipuri Khyals the female actresses ensure their participation; while men play female impersonators in rammats and some of the khyals. In Gavri performances also the men portray women, illustrating the contradiction within the Bhil community about their professed promotion of gender parity. The likely explanation is that women find it challenging to participate due to the performance's itinerant style and month-long run (which includes nighttime performances). Another likely explanation is that women who are on their monthly menstrual cycles are prohibited from taking part in religious performances.

Social inclusivity and community life are directly linked to lok *natya* performances. Although the performance is open to all communities, the performers

of khyal typically come from the Nat, Mirasi, Bhaat, Bhand, Meena, Saharia, or Girasia communities. There is no caste restriction for supporting roles in rammats; Meghwal, Churidar, Daroga, Nai, or a Muslim actor can all guarantee participation; however, the lead thespian is a member of the socially superior caste. Even yet, some responsibilities are caste-specific; for example, a *Nai* (a member of the barber community) typically holds the lamp during the rammat performance.

The distinction between the actors and the audience in lok natyas is subtle, with the audience occasionally participating in the performance. Because of the captivating performances, viewers' identities are often absorbed by the actors, who occasionally transcend their roles, a phenomenon akin to the 'breaking of the fourth wall' in Brechtian Theater. Participation of spectators is facilitated by the question-answer format of the dialogues, and viewers are also encouraged to participate through the narrative's riddles.

The folk's exceptional artistic ability is reflected in the delivery of the language, songs, dance, stagecraft, costumes, makeup, and masks employed in the performance of lok natyas. The conversations are concise and clear. *Teriya*, who are the singers of verse dialogues, sing *ter*, or verse dialogues, in khyals and rammats. The conversational exchanges in the verse dialogues are called *batan* (stories). In Turra Kalangi Natya, discourse takes the form of questions and answers. There are deeper truths hidden beneath the superficial humour of the allegorical discussions. The oral form of lok natyas increases the potential for linguistic hybridization as orality is fluid and dynamic; Rajasthani dialects with vocabulary from Braj, Urdu, Khariboli and English, facilitates communication and enhances linguistic hybridization.

There are variances in stagecraft, costumes, and presentation within the khyal genre in its regional variations. For khyals in Kota and Jhalawar, a basic stage is usually set up because the performance is outdoors, however for Kuchamani and Shekhawati Khyals, a wooden plank stage is used. Rammats, in contrast are held in public spaces like market squares or open spaces without official stages; instead, a crude homemade stage is built, and audience are seated in front of it. The presence of deities during the performance is indicated by the background curtain that has images of gods and goddesses printed on it. The inexpensive stage in Gavri may be as basic as a courtyard or crossroads, with the audience seated a short distance away from the performers. In contrast to Gavri, Turrakalangi has a multi-storied and pompously decorated stage. Two parallel lavishly decorated stages facing each other are erected twenty feet high. Shekhawat observes, "The stage becomes a sacred space during the performance as the deities descend there when invoked; it becomes a sphere of positive vibes and healing energy; and a site for display of incredible feats in performance, a lived performance indeed" [Shekhawat \(2021\)](#). Since the goal of lok natyas is to achieve bhakti through the possession of an actor by the respective deity, they typically have a closed seating arrangement. "The merger of actor and character have implications for poetics" [Dharwadker \(2004\)](#).

Folk culture is strongly reflected in the costumes of lok natyas. In khyals, the female impersonator enrobes in a *ghagra odhni* (long skirt paired with a head cover), while the male actors wear a turban and either *kurta pajama* (loose knee length shirt paired with loose trousers) or *dhoti kurta* (loose knee length shirt paired with a cloth worn around the loins). Artistry of Bhils is showcased in the masks used in Gavri. Embellished with silver leaves and colored in black, blue, red, or yellow, they symbolize different identities, demons are represented by black, gods by blue, people by yellow, and bravery by red. Rai Buria's mask is more closely related with psycho-religious belief and is spectacular due to its enormous size.

When a mask is taken off by the character, it represents the return to his original state and the ascent of celestial spirits within his body. The elaborate embellishments on Gavri performers' makeup are purely decorative and are done so to attract attention.

5. CONCLUSION

The lok *natyas* give extensive insights into folk life covering the sociological, psychological, intellectual, political, and religious worldviews of the masses. These *natyas* address a broad range of issues like the dichotomies of life, performer-spectator interactions, gender study, time and space, multiple truths, green ideals, social inclusiveness, and collective social responsibility. With the use of mythological and historical materials, they present folk culture, customs, *dharma* (the right conduct), rituals and rites, and folk perspective on life.

The values of folk culture are embodied in lok *natyas* through delineation of folk behavioral patterns, which include love and fidelity towards partner, hard work and dedication, goal achievement, keeping one's word, honesty and trust in established institutions, and cognizance of fundamental issues of existence like the environmental conservation. Some *natyas* emphasize the necessity of leading a spartan life, while others support the materialistic aspect of everyday existence. They also have a significant impact on community life since they have long been a means of interpersonal, intergroup, and inter-village communication, enhanced by the variety of themes of folk life, folk experiences, and human emotions. The early lok *natyas* known by generic name *leelas* propounded by Bhakti saint Vallabhacharya and his disciples based on events of Krishna's childhood from Bhagavat were chiefly centered on religious issues in order to present a lofty ideal of living before the audience; nevertheless, secular elements were eventually introduced. The eighteenth century bards promoted philosophical ideas such as Divine, World, *Aatman*(soul), *karmphal* (the consequence of one's acts) and the immortality of the soul and morals and values like *vachan paalan* (keeping one's vows), *shranagat dharm* (obligation towards a capitulator), compassion, charity, truth, justice and mass welfare through the dramatic style of lok *natya*, which has a wider audience. The *leels* of Krishna and Ram and the *khyals* of Harishchandra Taramati, Chand Malaygir, Brathari Pingla and Puranmal are some of the prominent lok *natyas* that were used to propagate these ideas.

Any creative form's shape, content, and purpose are largely determined by the era of performance and the tastes of its audience. The swift progress of technology and the ensuing shift in people's artistic preferences have not spared Rajasthan's lok *natyas* either. To adjust to the shifting values of society, the core structure of lok *natyas* is rapidly evolving. In an effort to meet the demands of the modern world and seize chances presented by the emergence of secular and monetary values, they are continually switching from religious to secular subjects. New media and theater forms are gaining popularity and quickly replacing traditional folk theatre, posing a severe danger to lok *natyas*.

The trans-genre adaptation of lok *natya* narratives to films, serials, documentaries, and other forms suitable for television broadcast brought about a revolutionary change in the medium of transmission of lok *natyas*. However, at the expense of popularity, lok *natyas* are losing a great deal of their morality and values in an effort to cater to the tastes of contemporary viewers. The internet has proven to be a significant platform for the global dissemination of regional folklore forms, however, it has shown to be an unsuitable medium for the most important feature of folklore i.e. face-to-face interaction finds no place on the internet.

Concerns should be raised about the declining popularity of the traditional lok natyas, since these natyas have served as a vehicle for both entertainment and the dissemination of folk culture. The federal and state governments have to promote and patronize this folkart form, and folklore institutes and culture centers devotedly working to preserve and revive this style of storytelling need to be funded so that lok natyas can continue to instruct and amuse the public for many years to come.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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