

Pankaj Rawat

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

Sacred Ethnomusicology and Religious Music Practices in Uttarakhand Himalayas: Shaping Social Spaces of Identity, Belongingness, and Community Caste Roles

Ethnomusicology reflects different aspects of traditions, customs-rituals, aspirations, and values linked to various dimensions of socio-cultural life of humankind. Various scholars have classified folk songs from the region of Uttarakhand Himalayas into categories such as Jaagar Geet, Maangal Geet, heroic ballads, songs related to the rite of passage, romantic folk songs, occupation-based folk songs, season-related songs, etc.

Jaagar songs include proverbial cosmic tales, heroic ballads, mythological tales, and love songs. They are considered a category whose poetry addresses deities and unsatisfied souls, a kind of Vedic and cosmic ritual that honors subtle souls on the earth. However, the most significant feature of Jaagar folk songs is that the rhythms produced by specific musical instruments are used according to the contexts. While literature specialists consider Jaagar as a group of songs, ballads, mantras, and tantra material, music specialists think of it as music of the supernatural world. Whether it is Dhol Sagar, demon killing, worshipping of fairies, or heroic ballads, this entire literature is considered the property of the learned Jaagar only.

The current paper investigates patterns and processes associated with sacred and religious music practices, with a special focus on Jaagar folk songs. It demonstrates how Jaagar and ritual singing, as oral traditions of a people, contribute to the social construction of identity and caste roles. Furthermore, my research aims to explain the roles of sacred music traditions in shaping community's togetherness and belongingness through personal communications and exploration of Jaagar and related events, using theoretical, ethnographic, processual, and linguistic approaches.

Bio

Pankaj Rawat is pursuing his PhD in geography of traditional music from the Department of Geography, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India. His research interests chiefly focus on social and cultural geography, and traditional ethnomusicology. He has been awarded a Senior Research Fellowship from the University Grant Commission, India, to pursue his research. His map entitled Geography of Traditional Music in India has been selected as the winner of the Map Making Contest, December edition, 2017, organized by the American Geographical Society (AGS).