

Art and Culture of Haryana

FOLKTHEATRE

- Plays, to begin with were staged in the open with audience sitting around. In Hindu mythology, the Gods themselves figure as supreme dancers.
- Drama was created not merely for pleasure but for conveying moral truths.
- A combination of music, dance, poetry and speech was called Natya.

Haryana Swang

- The origin of Swang is traced to one Krishna Lala Bhat, who laid the foundation of the present style of folk theatre. In Haryana the most celebrated name is that of Deep Chand Bahman of village, Shiri Khunda in Sonapat. He was popularly known as Shakespeare of Kalidas of Haryana.
- The most popular variety of performance based on the 'open stage' technique. It is an all male cultural troupe of twenty to thirty artistes. Males also play the female roles, but female troupes are not altogether unknown.
- There is a wooden platform about three and a half metres long and of the same breadth. The rest is all a display of skill and stamina of the artistes.
- They do not use loudspeakers. The artistes sing some religious or other songs connected with the play. Then the Guru appears and the artists touch the feet to evoke his blessings. The play opens with a song bhait in praise of the Goddess of knowledge (Bhawani). With a

brief introduction about the play, the performance starts. The Haryana Swang has enriched itself by borrowing and adopting a variety of themes, it embraces romances like Sorath, Nihalde, Padmawat, nautanki etc.

- Some historical and semi-historical themes associated are based on Epics, such as Raja Rissalu, Kichak Badh, Amar Sing Ratthor, Sarwar Neer, Jaswant Singh, Draupadi Chirharan, etc.
- Themes of old literature, such as Gopi Chand, Bhartari Hari, Harischander, and Raja Bhoj etc also adoped.
- Mythological themes like Prahlad Bhagat and Punjabi romances like Pooran Bhagat; Heer Ranjha etc are the vast and varied themes

The Folk Music Of Haryana

- The Jogis, Bhats and Saangis contributed a lot in popularizing the Haryanvi folk music using Sarangi and themes like Allah, Jaimal-phatta and other heroic ballads.
- Haryana's tradition as revealed by the fact that some villages name are mimicked from this tradition like in Dadri Tehsil, Villages related to well known ragas are Nandyam, Sarangpur, Bilawala, Brindabana, Todi, Asaveri, Jaishri, Malakoshna, Hindola, Bhairavi, Gopi Kalyana etc.

Music falls in to two categories

- (1) Classical form with the classical form of singing and the themes of such songs are usually mythological. Allah, jaimalphalla, Barahmas, some Teej songs, phag and Holi songs
- (2) Country side music with legendary tales, such as Purana-Bhagata,

ceremonial songs, seasonal songs, ballads etc.

- Bhairav ragas and Raga Pilu are used. In songs like Jai jai Vanti, Pahari, Bhairavi, Kafi, Jhijhoti

Instruments used in the Folk Music

- Essential accompaniment of folk music is a great variety of musical instruments and some is common to the Northern India.
- These are of three categories: Stringed, wind and percussion instruments

Stringed instruments

1. Iktara:

- Played with the fingers and is made from a piece of bamboo about a metre long with a large gourd attached to one end. The other end of the stick is inserted in to the hollow of the gourd resonator, which is covered with hide
- Before singing, the singer hums gently feeling for the right pitch. The sound of the string keeps the drone of his basic note. This instrument is generally used by Jogis.

2. Dotara-

- Like a two stringed Iktara and serves the same purpose.

3. Sarangi

- A bow instrument because it is played with a bow, which is made of long strand or strands
- About 60 cm long made by hollowing out a single block of wood. For tuning, four pegs are fixed in it, to set the strings according to the pitches of twelve-semi-tones. Some Sarangis have thirty-five to forty sympathetic strings running under the four main strings and

- Occupy a prominent place as accompaniment to the main singer. It has been a folk instrument used by the common people, particularly the Bards for their simple music. In the seventeenth century, the Sarangi was considered suitable accompaniment to the new style of classical music.

Haryana, this instrument is seen with some wandering Bards as an accompaniment to singing their folk song.

Wind instrument:

1. Been

- Mostly used by snake charmers. Two small bamboo pipes are fixed in a hollow gourd. One keeps the drone of the basic note, producing a monotone and the performer uses other one for producing tunes. The player blows into the gourd and his fingers move smoothly on the finger holes of this double-reed instrument

2. Bansari (Flute/veena/murli)

- One of the earliest wind instrument with seven round holes bored in a hollow piece of bamboo stick.
- Varieties of this instrument are as some are held straight away from the face while others are held transversely, parallel to the eyebrows as Lord Krishna used it

3. Shehnai

- A common instrument, seen on occasions of marriage. This is an 'open-air' instrument like Bansari. The modern experts have brought to this instrument fluidity comparable to that of a stringed instrument.

4. Shankh

- The most ancient wind instrument known to man.

- Considered a very sacred one by Indians and is being regarded as one of the attributes of Lord Vishnu.
- Prior to use the Shankh is drilled in such a way as to produce a hole at the base taking care that the natural hole is not disturbed. The instrument is often used in temples and sacred shrines. It produces only a drone. In ancient times, the Shankh was used on the battlefield. The Shankh used by Lord Krishna was called Panchajanya.

Percussion Instrument

1. Harmonium

- Originally it does not belong to India
- Used by Swangis and Bhajmis in Haryana as an accompanying instrument. Rhythm comes naturally to man since everything in creation moves to it. Percussion instrument keeps the rhythm of a dance, singer or an instrumental player intact.

2. Dhol

- A two-sided drum, played by two small wooden sticks and is a barrel-shaped wooden drum is covered with skin on both sides. There are numerous varieties of this instrument.

3. Dholak

- A smaller version of Dhol, mostly used by the Ahirs of Gurgaon district.

4. Daph

- One sided drum and serves as accompaniment of dances particularly during Dhamal dance which is popular in Mahendargarh district.
- Consisting of an open circular frame with only one side covered with skin. It can be played either by

hands or with small sticks. It is also used on festive occasions.

5. Damru

- Very small drum, shaped like an hourglass. It is an attribute to Lord Shiva who is said to have played it during his Tandava Nritya. It is used as an accompaniment for devotional and ritualistic folk music especially in Gugga dance.

6. Deru

- Bigger version of Damru but serves the same purpose.

7. Ghara

- The earthen pitcher is the cheapest instrument played on different occasions to keep only the rhythm

8. Cymbals

- Two big round pieces of bronze which produce metallic sound during a dance and other occasions.

9. Bells

- Used generally in temples during aaratis, kirtans and other devotional performances

10. Ghungrus

- Worn by dancers around his or her ankles to give force and effect to the dance. It also helps in producing the rhythm.

11. Khartal

- Are small Ghungrus fixed on two small wooden pieces and are struck together to keep the rhythm according to the tempo of the other instruments.

12. Manjira

- Is a pair of metallic cymbals used for producing rhythm and is used mostly as accompaniment to devotional music and more frequently during dance performances. It is also used by Jogis

of 'Naath Parampara' during their prayers.

13. Khanjari

- The small variety of Daph with the only difference that the Ghungrus (bells) are fixed around it. It is generally used in a solo dance performance.

14. Nagara (Naqqara)

- A relic of feudal times when state announcements were made with the beat of the Nagara.
- Also a type of side drum but heavy and large in size and rests on the ground while playing. It is played with two large sticks

15. Taasha

- Single sided earthen instrument played by two small sticks and is used on ceremonial occasions

16. Jhil

- Played on the left side of the Nagara.
- Smaller version of Nagara and is played with small sticks.

Folk dances of Haryana

The following are the important folk dances practiced in the state of Haryana:

1. Ras Leela

- Common among the people living in the Braja area of the Faridabad district
- Ras Leela becomes a dance of spiritual ecstasy with God pervading the world as his own self and as the selves of the dancing gopis.
- Lord Vishnu, the supreme embodiment, has been manifest in many incarnations
- He is Lord Krishna. The Gopi's of Braj Bhoomi, the simple milkmaid is his true devotees and are His favourite. Radha, the most beautiful of the Gopis, proud of her beauty and

power over men was the last one to surrender to the utter bliss of the Lord.

2. Daph Dance

- A seasonal dance connected with the harvest and spring
- People of all sections of the village community participate in this dance
- Melodic instruments like flutes, lutes and beens. The daph used in this dance is an ancient instrument. The songs are most suited to the occasion. The sound of the ornaments worn by the women also becomes a part of the dance-orchestra.

3. Phag or Phalgun or "Faag" Dance

- Also a seasonal dance
- Celebrated during the month of February – March they have a little leisure between sowing and harvesting. The crops are growing well, the spring is on and the rural folk express themselves through song and dance.
- Men and women group together and the rhythm take them on to emotional expression through their hands, eyes, and feet. The dance involves a variety of movement requiring sound co-ordination
- Women wear traditional costumes in different colours. Men similarly display different colours in their turbans and sashes. They sing in the ancient Daamal style, a combination of dance and song, the origin of which dates to the hoary past, it is a mixed dance but some times it is performed by men only. The songs are different in each case.

4. Dhamal dance

- Dance as old the Mahabharatha. It is popular among the among the Ahirs

of Gurgaon district. It is also in vogue in Mahendargarh and Jhajjar.

- Performed on moonlit nights of Phalgun. When the winter veil of fog and mist is lifted from the face of the earth and whisper of spring is in the air indeed. The dancers assemble in an open space and form themselves into a circle. They start with a song to the sound of Dhamal beats. The songs sung during the dance relate to the burden of love and labour. They depict the villager's hopes, aspirations, their love-longings and joys and sorrows. Between fifteen and twenty dancers participate in the dance.

5. Loor

- Performed around the Holi festival and is very popular in the Bangar and Bagar parts of the region.
- The participants in this dance are all girls. The dancers stand in two rows facing each other, in the form of a semi circle
- In the Dadri area the term Loor is used for a girl.
- The dance starts with this song the essence of the song is: "Your bahu has given birth to a daughter and a son is born on this side, why not marry the two". They discuss this problem, which is accepted. The next topic is about the presents to be given by the parents of the son to the girl at the time of marriage.
- Marriage itself is performed through the dance. The girl has reached her sasural or in-laws place. There will be full of sentiment. She moums in song and dance. The husband is away in the army and not expected back for another twelve years. The unhappy girl addresses an imaginary

pigeon and through a song she persuades the pigeon to convey her message to her husband. She continues her song and dance till the pigeon returns and sits on her shoulder. The pigeon informs her that her husband is coming home soon.

6. Gugga charri dance

- Have Several names: -Guru Gugga, Zahir Pir and Bagarwalla. Gugga is worshipped all over Haryana it is an exclusively male dance and falls in the category of ritualistic dances. It creates an atmosphere charged with spiritual fervor among the devotees of Gugga.
- Devotees are scattered over neighbouring states of Rajasthan, Punjab and Himachal. The Pir was born on Bhadon Naumi at Dadreva village in Bikaner(Rajastha) the day is celebrated as Gugga Naumi all over northern India.
- About a week or two Before Gugga Naumi, his devotees take out a procession, led by a bhagat, carrying Gugga kichhari, it is a strong and long bamboo stick decorated with fans, garlands, flowers and coloured pieces of cloth. Five Bhagats are the Main dancers. They carry their own musical instruments in their hands, consisting of Dholak, Manjiras, Deru (a small side drum), Chimta and Cymbals. The bhagats sing a song in praise of Gugga. The dance is very simple. The dancer's feet move according to the rhythm or their songs. As the tempo increases, they shed tears and beat their chests with iron chains. These parties are seen coming in Haryana villagers during the month of Bhadon

7. Jhumar dance/Haryanvi Gidda

- Jhumar, an ornament commonly worn on the fore head by young married girls & is performed exclusively by woman.
- Form a circle and move gracefully, accompanied by the beats of dholak and Thali.
- The performance lasts several hours. A girl comes forwards and breaks in to song. When girl sing the song another girl then steps forward, swaying rhythmically with perfect poise. Both share the second line of the song. The tempo increases as the dance proceeds. The other girl does not leave their places but keep on singing and clapping. There is a short pause before a new line of the song is started.

8. Ghumar Dance

- Ghumar is a Rajasthani dance but it is popular in Laharu, Dadri and some parts of the Hissar and Bhiwani, bordering Rajasthan and inspiration source for some is from religion. The gods and the elements are invoked to shower their blessing on the labours of a community.
- Women devotees on their way to the temple perform dance. Young women and girls carrying brass plates of offerings in their hands go to the temple singing devotional songs
- Performed on Diwali, the festival of lights and Holi, the festivals of spring or on the occasion of the local ceremony of Gangor Puja. Brass plates in their hands, girls make a circle and start singing with the tune the dance begins to take shape and gain momentum, the dancers put their offerings aside forming a large

circle and dances gracefully with uplifted arms to the simplest beats. Slowly the dance gather momentum, the swaying bodies become frantic, taking the dance to its climax.

9. Khorja Dance

- Variety of Jhumar dance & is performed by woman only mainly in the central areas of Haryana
- Connected with the daily life of the people and with the most important events like harvest. Singing a folk song, the girls enter dancing place and make a ring. The simple movements acquire form and colour with the swirling off their full-gold-work skirts and coloured chundries and the gleam and jingle of heavy rustic jewellery. The graceful steps give place to faster tempo until two or three pairs of the girls break from the ring into the centre with crossed arms joined together swirling on the axis of their feet. The girls in the ring clap to the beat of the drum.

10. Holi Dance

- On seasonal festival of spring on the completion of their agricultural operations. It is performed in various formations to the accompaniment of drums and pipes.
- Men and women participate
- Instruments like dhol, jhahj, chimta, khartal and thalis and anklets on the feet of the dancers produce the rhythm. The dancers sprinkle Abir, gulal and coloured water on each other.
- Dance is popular in Faridabad, Palwal and Ballabgarh

11. Gangor-Puja Dance

- Performed in villages bordering Rajasthan.

- By woman in connection with puja ceremony of Iswar and Gangor (Lord Shiva and Pravati) dressed in colourful costumes and Jewellery, with brass jars on their head, the woman move in circle
- Smiles of the dancers are important element in the performance and are devotional dance to invoke the blessing of the gods for good harvest and are usually performed in the months of palghun and Chait

12. Sapela Dance

- A woman acts the role of the village belle while the other acts as the sanke charmer.

