

Images of Peaceful Articulation: Culture of Myth and Orality in Haryanvi Folk Performances

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Abstract

The culture of myth is an integral part of a social milieu. The entry of myth can be frequently noticed in social matrimonies, rituals, ceremonies, communications, and performances. Across the world, various literary disciplines have critically discussed the role of myth in a socio-culture context. In this reference, the land of the Indian subcontinent has ample opportunities to provide a number of folk arts deals with myth. A strong relationship can be observed between folk arts and myth as the majority of the expressions of these arts are based on mythical sources. Myth, thus, becomes an outstanding character of folklore. It has great solidarity with folk performances. The highest percentage of these performances is credited to myth only. By tradition, myth is the foundation of folk performances. It is widely argued that folk expressions do not exist without mythical orientations. The understanding of myth in a particular context is extremely spellbinding. It requires deep attention and appealing engagements.

Myth contributes immensely in bringing a host of tales, stories, songs, dances and literary spectrums. In literature, the representation of myth is vastly explored. In this context, this research paper attempts to provide an extensive collection of theoretical instances and various dimensions related to the multiple narratives of myth. It arguably highlights a range of inquiries survives around socio-cultural necessitate. Further strategy evaluates 'myth' in the inclusive performances of predominate folk arts of India. Technically, these folk arts are under threat of modern urban advancement; this article explores to winch up folk values at a certain level of enrichment and to place these as a safe literary destination within socio-cultural surroundings.

Keywords: *Socio-culture, Myth, Folk, Performance, Saang*



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Introduction

Myth is a socio-political term. It is invented to manifest several old stories from ancient times. Many people believe that these stories do not exist or false but many still believe these existed somewhere in the past. The study of myth is called 'Mythology'. In other words, it is a collection of myths deals with a particular cultural tradition and religious values. Sometimes this term is often used to falsify a common idea or thinking. For instance, 'it is a myth to say that men are stronger than women'. Decoding that, women are as powerful as men and should consider equal to all available opportunities. The fundamental question, 'what is myth?' is a significant inquiry focussing on the essential dimensions of myth in daily social conversations. On several occasions, it can be seen that many social communications revolve around the myth. Even the system of various socio-political functions is generated through myths. It can be said that without the inclusion of myth social communications and ceremonies are measured deficient. In this connection, M.H. Abrams and G.G. Harpham's *A Glossary of Literary Terms* describes that:

In classical Greek "mythos" signified any story or plot, whether true or invented. In its modern significance, however, a myth is one story in a once believed to be true by a particular cultural group . . . to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives. Most myths are related to social rituals – set forms and procedures in sacred ceremonies. (230)

The scientific theory of myth is a contradiction between logic and reason, between belief and experiment and between time and space. Traditionally, scholars have made an attempt to bring out three significant architects of myth (i) in story form, (ii) shows the signs of traditional transmission in a communal setting, and (iii) refers to a deity and/or supernatural beings (Segal Vol.1: 112). Science has its own theory of experiments, while myth has a constructed phenomenon of social belief and structure. Myth does not have independent approaches; instead, it is a subject to be approached on. This relationship between myth and science is arbitrary because the rise of scientific logic was considered a great trouble for myth's expediency. According to science, the social construction of myth is false and does not provide a reason for interpolation. For science, 'myth' is a myth, and scientific theories have much advancement over myth perception and relativity. Thus, it is taken as a 'primitive' counterpart to the current scientific explanations. Anthropologists E.B. Tylor and J.G. Frazer argue that myth is part of

primitive religion. Primitive religion is part of philosophy; it is the counterpart to natural science, itself entirely modern. To Frazer, “myth as mistaken explanations of phenomena, whether of human life or of external nature” (114); but for Tylor, Primitive religion, including myth, functions as the counterpart to scientific theory, for Frazer, it functions even more like the counterpart to applied science or technology. Tylor treats myth as an autonomous text, Frazer ties myth to ritual, which enacts it (7).

The representation of myths in the canon of literary mainstream and folk literature closely deals with different kinds of mythical images and ideas. If we re-look over the productions of literary texts, e.g., dramas, novels, poetry, and short stories, refer to so many inter-textual citations of mythical figures in varying ways. Depiction of gods, goddesses, or their embodiments in literary texts has generally been thought of as mythological figures. This notion of representation has been misleading us for many reasons. Apart from divinity or supernatural beings, the tremendous human figures such as kings, warriors, or other historical characters about whom we may not have sufficient pieces of evidence also become mythical symbols. This literary context of mythic reflections creates contradictions between the perception of reality and supportive myth. Critics and scholars have often debated over the questions of myth. Whether ‘myth’ is a reality or a constructed reality existed in the distant past. Or myth is a collection of stories passed orally through the oral cavity from generation to generations. Many have taken it as just a ‘word’ and have nothing to do with various theories. These deep-seated questions raised have contextually brought varieties of disagreement and a wide gulf between various ideas, opinions, understanding and implications until the day.

Generally, research and findings have generated different interests and arguments to the stories narrated from popular mythologies, including Hindu, Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, Jewish, Greek, Roman, etc. In his critical essay, “The Problem of Defining Myth”, Finnish folklorist Lauri Honko provides twelve valuable viewpoints of myth which produces the background for the scholarly researches and debates,

1. Myth as source of cognitive categories.
2. Myth as form of symbolic expression.
3. Myth as projection of the subconsciousness.
4. Myth as an integrating factor in man’s adaptation to life.

5. Myth as character of behaviour.
6. Myth as legitimation of social institutions.
7. Myth as marker of social relevance.
8. Myth as mirror of culture, social structure, etc.
9. Myth as result of historical situation.
10. Myth as religious communication.
11. Myth as religious genre.
12. Myth as medium for structure. (Honko 47-48)

He defines myth notably,

Myth, a story of the gods, a religious account of the beginning of the world, the creation, fundamental events, the exemplary deeds of the gods as a result of which the world, nature, and culture were created together with all the parts thereof and given their order, which still obtains. A myth expresses and confirms society's religious values and norms; it provides patterns of behaviour to be imitated, testifies to the efficacy of ritual with its practical ends and establishes the sanctity of cult. The true milieu of myth is to be found in religious rites and ceremonial . . . The events recounted in myths have true validity for a religious person. For this reason, the use of the term myth in everyday language is from the scholarly point of view inexact (in ordinary language myth is often used expressly for something untrue, utopian, misguided, etc.) . . . Nowadays attempts have often been made to brand non-religious ideas, political ideas, economic teaching, etc.; as myth. (49)

It is discussed that myth is strongly associated with science, literature, and ritual. Similarly, this analysis in light of philosophy, history, religion, psychology, anthropology, cinema, language, society, ideology, nationalism, and political produces a comprehensive approach applicable in different branches of knowledge in the present world of mythical narratives.

In the folk performances of the Indian subcontinent, the root of myth survives through mythical references from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* primarily. These two are great Indian epics and placed in the canon of mythology. Mostly, Indian folk creativities like folk tales, plays, dances, music, proverbs, and ceremonies are based on these epics. These folk arts are, generally, performed on the occasion of cultural festivals, religious celebrations and social ceremonies. Nowadays, both men and women are equally participating to enhance their skill of performance through such participation. It is also a fact that some predominant folk performances are men centred. Women were denied to be a part of such male-oriented performances rather their roles were performed by male participants only. Such stereotype ideas can be designated in the

category of myth. But simultaneously a strong resistance noted that women are powerfully raising their voices against such social taboos. Consequently, a rapid change is occurring in the socio-political position of women.

The Indian subcontinent possesses profound esteem in folk and classical performances. Major Indian folk arts have vivid imagery of myth. In this reference, Durgadas Mukhopadhyay's edited book, *Lesser-Known Forms of Performing Arts in India* (1978), provides necessary information about familiar folk theatrical performances. For a general understanding, the book introduces a brief sketch of some of the most notable Indian folk performances alphabetically. Then the author of this research paper moves forward to make a detailed analysis of one of these folk arts to generalise the importance of myth and its role in a group of particular folk performances.

Ankiya Naat

This folk form of theatre from Assam is considered the initiation of drama in the field of spiritual performance. The invention of this folk form of theatre is commonly attributed to the medieval saint and social reformer Srimanta Shankaradeva. These plays' performances provide the purpose of religious instruction and the distribution of information beyond the entertainment they presented. These performances remained very popular during medieval Assam. The song narrated the story is usually descriptive. This folk form is preserved in Assam for centuries. Its principal subject is to worship Lord Krishna.

Chhau

A well known folk art in the field of folk dance is frequently performed in Mayurbhanj of Orissa, Sareikela of Jharkhand and prevalently in the Purulia region of West Bengal. The chief characteristic of these dances is to use a complete mask on the characters' faces during their performances. The majority of the theme is religious. Most of the performances imitate Indian epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. It is conceived as a unique form of folk dance performed freely and dynamically during festivals in folk and classical styles.

Jatra

This is a famous folk theatre form of West Bengal. This form of theatre is also popular in many parts of Odisha and Bihar. The original performances of *Jatra* were based on Indian mythology. It is said, the nature of *Jatra* performance is secular nowadays. Most of the

performances are staged on the open stage. In this sense, it has resemblances with other folk performances like *Tamasha*, *Nautanki*, *Saang*, and *Bhavai*.

Kutiyattam or Koodiyattom

A unique temple art of Kerala is known for Sanskrit's traditional representation. The performers of this art belong to temple communities known as *Chakkiars* and *Nambiar*. To elaborate Sanskrit *slokas* or stanzas through hand gestures by the different characters and oral expression by the *vidushaka* is received as a prominent characteristic of this folk art.

Nacha

Nacha is an outstanding art of folk theatre performed in Chhattisgarh. It is widely performed in the whole state apart from Sarguja and Bastar regions. This folk theatre can be divided into four categories; *Khare Saaj Nacha*; *Gandawa Nacha*; *Dewar Nacha*, and *Baithe Saaj Nacha*. Among these *Baithe Saaj Nacha* is much popular. It has been noticed that women actors can only participate in *Dewar Nacha* performances. In rest of three dramatic arts only men actors perform the role of women. The majority of these performances held during the night time. In these folk plays, comedy is the route of all entertainments. Social issues are portrayed thorough various humoured satires and practices. *Pari* and *Jokked* are the main characters in *Nacha* performances. These performances were considered as the prime source of entertainment for the Maratha soldiers. Its origin is considered from *Gammat*.

Nautanki

This form of folk theatre occupies an outstanding place mostly in Uttar Pradesh, India's northern state. Most of these performances take place in rural areas. Traditionally, the majority of the audiences were expected to be illiterate. Though, historically the origin and development of *Nautanki* are still debatable, it remains a widely appreciated folk theatre of regional performances.

Pala

It is one of the living theatrical forms of India. The basic nature of this form is dance performance. It is widely acknowledgeable in Odisha. This folk art creatively combines theatrical elements like music, wit, humour etc. Varieties of *pala* form are also available in Assam and West Bengal. The narrating sources of *pala* are from mythology, legendary, and historical tales.

Saang

This eminent form of Haryana's folk theatre has been widely performed across the region. The performing art of *Saang* is almost a century old. Lakhmi Chand, Mangeram, Dhanpat Singh, and Chanderlal Baadi are renowned *Saang* composers in this field. They contributed immensely to this folk theatre's development. The folk-plays usually manifest live instruments and singers, songs and elaborate costumes in performances. These plays usually start with the preface narrated by the *sutradhār*. When it ends, the actual performance begins. It is notable to mention that this article primarily revolves around the performance of myth in folk plays.

Sahi Yatra

This folk theatre is from Orissa. The Puri district of this state is known to provide the stages for most of these performances. *Sahi* stands for 'back street' and *Yatra* for 'progress or movement'. Collectively, it refers to the progressive street life of ordinary people. Indeed, it deserves a particular place in the folk theatrical tradition of India.

Tamasha

Maharashtra's most famous folk theatre art functions vibrantly in the state. The performative history of this folk theatre is found in the distant past. Today it has a distinctive availability everywhere in the region. Two poets, Eknath and Namdev have contributed to the composition of performance of this folk theatre. The satirical nature of these plays keeps alive the Marathi tradition of social satire.

Yakshagana

This most distinguishing folk dance is from Karnataka and mostly performed in the state's northern and southern part. It is said that *Yakshagana* is known with several other names in different parts of Karnataka such as *Doddaata*, and *Moodalapaya*. The majority of the performance theme is related to the Indian epic, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The audiences used to be expected from the elite class and rural folks. Though, there are enough arguments among various scholars and critics about the origin of this folk art; such performances deserve many appreciations.

The brief references of these traditional forms of theatrical performances are from different regions of India mapping a standard sketch to defend the Indian scope of cultural growth and various performing platforms. The paper briefly records historical, sociological,

anthropological, economic, political, aesthetic, and religious aspects in a compact form by highlighting these Indian folk forms. Indeed, the collaborative study of such various folk manifestations reveals essential differences to compass Indian literary phenomenon,

- There is a wide range of subjects and performative contexts – from vernacular to the elaborated intellectual theatre.
- The mythical link of religious subjects seems familiar, if not predominant.
- The scope encompasses or overlaps the traditional scenario with mythical mysteries and moralities.
- The changing structure over the centuries and modification to the needs of the different social
- cultures.

Over the centuries, folk forms in India originate from the fact that their modifying nature to changing conditions functions to the importance of socio-cultural values. The route of folk arts survives in the native culture of ancient Indian local communities and social surroundings. A folk activity essentially originates for public entertainment. It also helps to shape Indian society as an indigenous tool of interpersonal relationships, cultural coordination, and inter-village communication for centuries. Traditionally, these arts in India have been utilized to circulate religious, cultural, economic, social, political, and class issues through a range of dramatic performances. As an indigenous form, it goes beyond all personal phenomenon and appeals directly to the common mass. In India, the performance of a folk event revolves around ritual & temple ceremonial, mythical beliefs, and collective celebrations. The location of rural areas in most folk performances characterises people's attention, which reduces the space of interaction between a folk utility and local people's involvement. As a compact art in India, folk arts invites composite elements from music, dance, ballads, pantomime, epics, religion, festivals, culture, and art. Diverse performances of folk events in India have generated the impact of social, economic, political, and cultural development, which enlarges Indian literary growth.

The performance of myth in folklore tradition has paid attention to the diversity of contexts to the various realms of culture and general schema of social action. Today, the internet's advancement provides new information and an innovative set of understanding of myth and its historical background through a mixture of social trends. This modern understanding of

traditional terms like 'myth' has seriously affected the cultural phenomenon of human efforts and the contemporary intuition of human logic and science; therefore, it has become a central focus of human thinking and imagination. With the turn of centuries, the performance of myth through various literature and science genres has remained continually changing. For instance, understanding the origin of mythical activities or rituals has different and new perceptions in the twentieth-first century than in preceding centuries. The point assumes that science's recent progress seems efficient and productive, which produced an argument of conflict between the traditional route of the ancient system of science and social customs. The representation of myth in humanities and social science is an indispensable challenge that enhances the potential of modern conflicts between the classical and modern representation of human language and culture. The knowledge offered by myth contributes immensely in comprehending the perception of time and space which drags our sense of thinking towards the actual construction of the universe, the existing social order, and human practices. This growing vast field of myth performance in the folklore genre is very much interlinked with the political and economic machinery.

Roland Barthes in his milestone text *Mythologies* (trans. 1972) observes myth as a type of speech; a system of communication which rises the notion that "myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form" (107). He also undertakes Ferdinand de Saussure's concept of sign and its analysis parallel with myth. His semiologically analysis is confined through three systems of identification of language structure, e.g., signifier, signified and signs. He argued the meaning contained a whole network of values: a history, a geography, a morality, a zoology, and a literature. The form has put all this richness at a distance: its newly acquired penury calls for signification to fill it. The story of the lion must recede a great deal to make room for the grammatical example. One must put the biography of the Negro in parentheses if one wants to free the picture, and prepare it to receive its signified (116). He further examines the responsible factors that emerged in the contemporary social system to create a new phenomenon of modern myth. He recognized this creation of modern myth and current thinking through the lenses of political, economic, and poetical wings. Barthes expended his views that "poetry occupies a position which is the reverse of that of myth: myth is a semiological system which has the pretension of transcending itself into a factual system;

poetry is a semiological system which has the pretention of contracting into an essential system” (133).

According to Barthes, myth is depoliticized speech. One must naturally understand politics in its deeper meaning, as describing the whole of human relations in their real, social structure, in their power of making the world; one must above all give an active value to prefix de . . . In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it goes away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a worldwide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (142-43).

Each folk art, mentioned above, requires almost a separate research paper to be discussed elaborately. The idea behind the brief highlight is to provide an outline understanding of the basic structure of these folk arts. One can easily notice mythical motivation in each art. The journey of these arts was accomplished through a wide variety of myth references. By taking one of these folk arts into consideration, the author attempts to explore the culture of myth with the help of critical citations and textual analysis. Though it seems a tough choice to select one of these; but the author has to choose one to find his way of responses. After much thought, the appropriate choice goes to the folk art of *Saang*. The reason behind choosing this art is that the highest percentage of performance revolves around the myth.

Saang is a theatre event. The performance of this art is a phenomenal endeavour. It is one of the accepted living theatrical traditions of India. It is widely performed in the northern state of Haryana. In *Saang*, various stories are performed significantly. Each story has a unique theatrical expression. The source of these stories is mostly Indian mythology and legendary. This social form of *Saang* in English can be called ‘folk, musical and poetic play’. Now onwards, the term ‘folk play’ may be used interchangeably. A *Saang* is named folk play because ethnically it has cultural and traditional significance. This may be an essential parameter to identify an art whether it is folk or non-folk. The performance of this folk play offers an impressive blend of acting, songs, music, narration, and recitation. *Saang* performers are usually a group of eight to fifteen characters including musicians and the main narrator (*sutradhar*). In a *Saang* performance, the narrator should be a well-known actor, skilful, energetic in delivering dialogues

and non-verbal expressions. It is the narrator who always remains in a commanding position and guides the movements of actors and musicians. The narrator also plays a vital role to bring audiences' attention to the performance. *Saang* performance is commonly staged in the evening and runs from three to four hours up to midnight. Earlier a *Saang* used to perform during the entire night. *Saang* provides a noteworthy contribution to Haryanvi folk literature, culture, and tradition. This common form of theatre functions vibrantly throughout the decades.

Soul Features of Saang

This theatre form brings a host of unique and outstanding characteristics. These offer a sound manifestation to know this folk art in the most appropriate way. Acknowledgeable qualities are:

1. *Saang* is equally stand to a folk play. It can also be called folk and musical play.
2. Originally, *Saang* is performed on the open stage.
3. It is a compound noun. Its usability is acceptable in singular and plural forms.
4. *Saang* performance begins in the evening and remains to continue up to late midnight.
5. By tradition, *Saang* has ethical and cultural significance.
6. A *Saang* consists of eight to fifteen performers. These include one main actor & narrator, four to six actors, four to five musicians, and one comedian (clown, fool).
7. *Saang* is much popular in villages. Who performs the *saang* is usually called '*saangi*'.
8. In *Saang*, female participants are significantly fewer.
9. *Saang* always begins with a prayer and ends with slogans of victory.
10. Frequent appearance of *Rāagni* in a *Saang* performance is one of the main features.
11. Each *Saang* consists of at least ten to fifteen *rāagnis*. The duration of one *rāagni* is ten to twelve minutes.
12. Myth is the main source for *Saang* performances.
13. A *Saang* performer is also known as '*Saangi*'.
14. Oral composition is the main root of a *Saang*.
15. A *Saang* is a folk performance originally. It cannot be labelled a pop performance.

Performance of Myth in Saang

'Myth' and 'Performance' are two essential dimensions in the appropriate study of folk literature. In the various branches of knowledge and discipline, both the terms have their

importance and function. It is universally thought that myth is a permanent attribute of our social and ritual history. It is suitable to say that myth is an inevitable societal phenomenon. The dignity of myth and its performance seems to have become a cultural value representing the elementary process's whole. The discussion and study of myth have multiple underlying principles in terms of the anthropological survey, philosophical analysis, symbolic significance, cultural impact, rhetorical meanings, religious connectivity, and social functions. These necessary inputs facilitate to presume myth may have rich meanings in the view of social, cultural, religious, philosophical, and symbolic implications.

Folk play like *Saang*, a new dramatic form of expression, offers a typical stage to the performance of myth and its role in social traditions. During the years of the 1960s and 70s, the focus gradually shifted to oral storytellers, musicians, dancers, and performers of oral tradition and folk demonstration. At that time, many groups of performers were unable to acclimatize to the region's changing contemporary tradition because of their close association with the regional folk culture and rituals. Their ways of expressing their own culture and tradition through folklore channels like folk songs and dance, folk music and ballads and folk tales and plays became a central point for the performance of these activities. Their efforts encouraged uplifting and re-establishing the value of these cultural forms by utilizing several new fieldwork methods and techniques of expression, particularly in the realm of performative art of entertainment and messages on several contemporary socio-political issues. The description of various recent stories, proverbs, riddles, parodies, rumours, gossip, fairy tales, legends, and tales from several epics has brought into consideration multiple folklore practices to bring immense interest in the performance. The various contemporary acting groups of *Saang* performed the mythological theme of the same plays in different manners. Some of the famous *Saangs* depicted popular mythological themes include *Raja Harishchandra*, *Raja Vikramaditya*, *Satyavan Savitri*, *Narsi Ka Bhaat*, *Vishwamitra-Menaka*, *Draupadi Chir Haran*, *Jaani Chor*, *Pingla Bharthri*, *Gopi Chand*, and *Kichak Vadh*.

It is claimed that this region is the land of *Saangi*ⁱⁱ. *Saangi* like Chanderlal Baadi Lakhmichand, Mangeram, and Dhanpat Singh are very popular in Haryana. They are now gurus of the new generation of *Saangi*. Most of their *Saangs* are brilliantly dealing with the inquiry of myth and each *Saangi* follows the *Saang* tradition of their guru or master. One *Saang* can be

performed differently by various *Saaangi* with different *raagni*, rhythm and music. It is a notable fact that a *Saang* is the composition of an oral/mythical story. The performance of this story in a dramatic way is named *Saang*. The major sources of these stories are the Indian epics: the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These are performed via narrations and *raagnis* (to express dialogues in songs). It is very common to detect that various *Saangi* can perform the same story in multiple ways in their *raagni* and style. It is not necessary that a *Saang* of the same tale should have the same dialogues and *raagnis*; although the story is the same. For instance, the story of *Satyavan-Savitri*ⁱⁱⁱ is the same in the record. Different *Saangi* can perform it by composing their own *raagnis* and expression of dialogues. This is a charming feature of a *Saang* performance. It is frequently exposed that the maximum percentage of *Saangi* is from the privileged section of the society; therefore, dominating the *Saang* tradition of the region.

The *Saangs* of *Satyavan-Savitri*, *Kichak-Vadh*, *Vishvamitar-Hoor Menaka*, and *Satyavadi Raja Harishchandra* are extensively performed in the region. The author prefers these plays due to their wider understanding of mythical context. However, the author argues through the *Saang* of *Satyavan-Savitri* and *Kichak-Vadh* one by one briefly. These two *Saangs* serve as an instance for the whole in the context of myth. These tales have been performed by several acting troupes of Haryana following a different tradition of other *Saangi*. These groups have their own style of folk performance and appearance in different manners. It is needed to clarify that each group of performers has its own members around eight to fifteen in each *Saang mandali*^{iv}. It consists of actors, musicians, imitators, and the lead actor who is also the main narrator. Six to ten performers act in different roles. Sometimes, one actor plays more than one or two given roles, but these multiple roles' ambiguity is always clarified to audiences by the narrator (*sutradhar*) on the stage itself. One or two comical characters appear between the play to entertain the audiences by remarking satirical comments humorously and purposefully. Four to five musicians usually sit on the stage beside the acting performers to attract the play's attention. Traditionally, the roles of female characters are played by male characters in the play. The local name for a female is *Janana*; for a male, it is *Mardana*. Now-a-days, *Saangs* are performed by professional actors as well.

It is also exposed that recently a few attempts have also been made to bring maximum female characters to perform their role in these folk plays. Eventually, all attempts seem to fail

due to the public's conventional social thoughts and narrow interests. The role of patriarchal construction of Indian society controlled by men supremacy is another realistic factor in establishing a male literary tradition. It is better to call such a typical structure mythical. A female's role in contemporary folk plays was not suitable for constructing a new thought of myth. Positively, female priorities' role was severely affected by the wrong assumptions of societies' stern and patriarchal faces. It vastly influenced the Indian style of literary representation and heavily existed in the western shape of social tradition. Most of the scholarly assumption favours the contemporary conventional thoughts as the responsible cause, but others may not be agreed on such continental conformity. In the present time of the twentieth-first century, it is fascinating to observe the gradual affirmative change in the social attitude of judgement and dynamic literary productivity to decentralize the prevalent prejudice of gender discrimination.

These plays explore the specific scenes that deal with specific portrayals rather than narrating the whole story. Out of these, the story of two *Saang*: *Satyavan-Savitri* and *Kichak-Vadh* come from the epic *Mahabharata*. Though, most people are very familiar with the basic storyline related to these two plays. It is fascinating to see how *Saang* performers compose and perform these stories to the audiences in a attractive manner of Haryanvi dialect-cum-language with rustic flavour. The art of the beginning of these plays is quite different from that of other folk plays of India. When the narrator comes to the stage, he invokes his words to God or sometimes to a regional deity. After this prelude of five to ten minutes, the actual performance begins.

To invoke god at the beginning of *Saang* indicates the influence of myth because the invisible god itself is a substance of myth. God's myth is a personal choice of opinion among people; for the atheists, God does not exist, but for the theist, it is a belief that God exists everywhere and in all living and non-living things. It is a peculiar feature of the *Saang* that mostly the storyline narrates in dialogues through the art of *raagni* (folk song) between the *Saang*. After the end of each *raagni*, the narrator explains the play's further action to the audience loudly so that audiences and guests can be engaged in the play's story. In the *Satyavan-Savitri* play, there are twenty-nine *raagni* to complete the whole story of the *Saang*. These are available in written form textually but available hardly in recording and uncertain whether all

these are sung by a performer during the usual performance. The time frame of the *Saang* is past and present. It begins in past, runs and ends in the present. In the same manner, the next *Saang* of *Kichak-Vadh* (Kichak's Death) is heavily based on the mythical story from *Mahabharata*. The narrator is on the open stage along with supporting actors, comedians and musicians. Audiences and guests are sitting around the stage. The play opens in Viratnagara where the Pandavas are staying in disguise. Pandavas spent the last year in Viratnagara in disguise with different names. The name of Yudhishtira is Kanka as a respectable courtier and entertainer of king Virata. Bhima plays his role as a cook and wrestler by the name of Ballava or Vallaba. Granthika is the name of Nakula who is a horse keeper. Tantipala is a disguised name of Sahadeva who remains there as a keeper of kine. Arjuna, a great archer, turned his gender into a neuter (eunuch) due to a curse from Urvashi, a heavenly maiden in the palace of the rain god Indra, and plays his role dresses up in a *saari* on the name of Brihannala. He becomes the dance and music teacher of princess Uttra. Draupadi assumes the identity of Sairandhri who is now a maidservant to queen Shudeshna. This *Saang* focussed on a special episode of an encounter between Draupadi and Kichak. He is the brother of queen Shudeshna and commander of king Virata's forces. At the end of the play, his sexual lust for Draupadi leads him to a tragic death. This episode of Draupadi and Kichak is most famous among the *Saangi* of folk performances. Many *Saangs* have been composed on this episode by different performers of a specific *Saang* tradition. The play agreeably deals with the mythical tradition of Haryanvi folk plays. This play has shown ample elements of myth. The story of *Mahabharta* has secured wide popularity among the *Saang* composers and performers of the region. Textually, the reference of these two *saangs* is available in *Saang Samrat: Chanderlal Badi Granthavali* (2017) edited by Rajendra Badguzar.



Figure 1: A Professional Saang Performance with Raagni

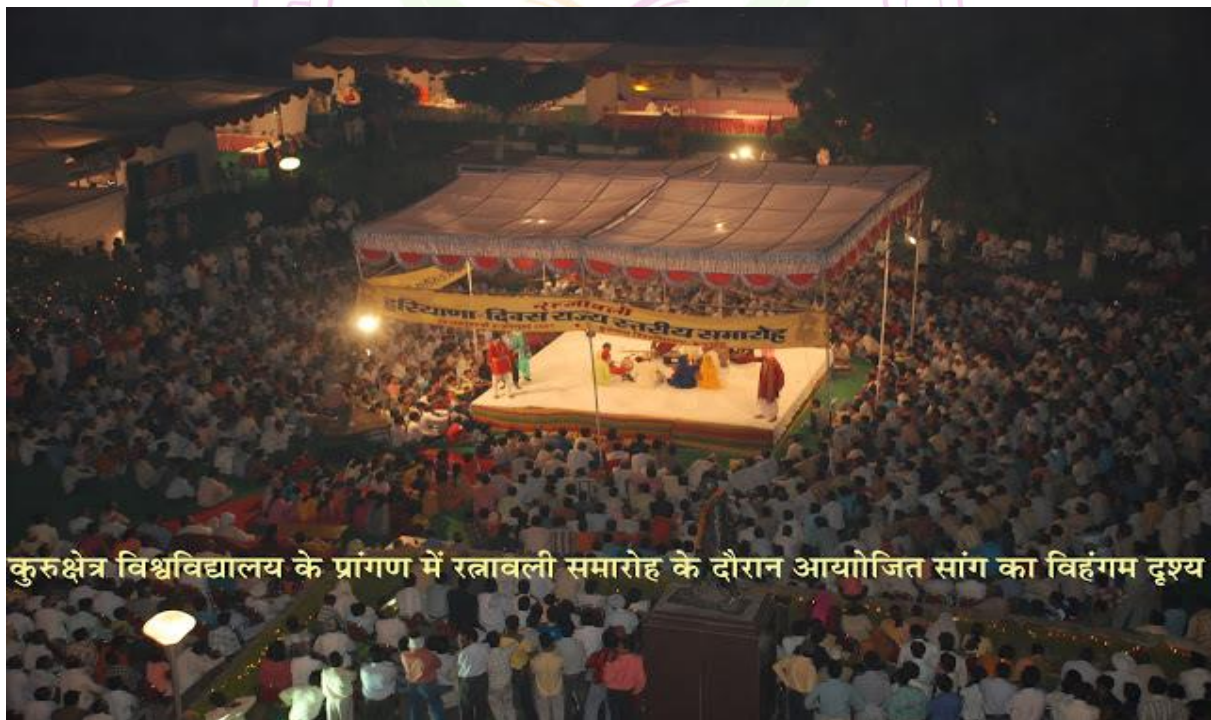


Figure 2: A Saang Performance on Open Stage During Ratnawali Cultural Festival, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, India

Conclusion

It can be observed that these two plays, including the last one, have instinctively dealt with the aim of the article. The fictional texts and stories have left a heavy impact on folk literature's survival forms, including folk tales and songs, folk dance and plays, ballads and proverbs. To circulate the representation of these folk genres through performative practices and nuances is an attempt to acknowledge the importance of folk culture in the social-political sphere. The intention behind introducing myth in the performance of *Saang* advocates to re-establishing the mutual harmony of the socio-cultural bond, which seems apart under the span of religious beliefs and practicality of modern scientific advancement. In this reference, this paper on the concerned inquiry is an effort to explore myth and its connectivity in the artistic performance of folk plays.

Thus, it may be understood that the functionality of myth exists in transcendental practices and performances. Myth is an internal part of folk literature. It is a source of the functions of social ritual and ceremony. Even in the present behaviour of literary theories, myth is an essential spirit of social programme and tradition. In folk performance, its attachment is unbroken. It is considered to be the most interesting in the representation and at the same time most complex to explore through such theoretical aspects. In these folk plays, it can be discovered that the appreciation of myth is very limited and specific. Underlining folk stories is merely an endeavour to reach the basic function of myth. Positively, it may be accurate to reveal that myth secures the highest place in the celebration of oral literature and performance. In this way, the inquiry for the significance of myth in *Saang* performances has been explored with supportive pieces of evidence and instances. It seems that myth has a wide perspective in the world of folklore. These two *Saangs* may have generalized an idea that other folk siblings of India, more or less, produced a similar intention in mythical performance and production.

Endnotes

ⁱ It is a folk song used in the saang performance to forward the story of the play.

ⁱⁱ The main narrator and actor who performed a *Saang*.

ⁱⁱⁱ The story of *Satyawan-Savitri* has been derived from *Mahabharata*. The same story is performed in the form of *Saang* to the audience. The basic structure of stage is open all around with a temporary roof made of clothes; all performances are performed on these traditional stages.

^{iv} A group of saang performers

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