IN SEARCH OF 'ADIVASI MUSIC': TRAVELS IN HISTORY, CULTURE AND POLITICS

Prachi Vaidya Dublay

The Beginning of a Wonderful Musiquest

The story began in the year 2010. I[1] went to the Adivasi Academy located in Gujarat's Tejgadh village with India's renowned literary critic and cultural activist, Ganesh Devy. During my visit to the Academy, Devy asked me, "You're a singer. Would you like to hear some Adivasi songs, while you're in our Academy?" I said, "Why not Sir?" I had grown up listening to and singing Gujarati folk songs, but these Adivasi tunes seemed quite alien to me. I thought as if some harsh, weird sounds were falling on my eardrums. What kind of music was this? Why would we call this music at all? I was in a bit of a confusion. Then I thought, completely discarding any experience at first go is certainly not the sign of a good student. I felt a bit embarrassed and started listening more carefully. While listening to the tunes, I realized that the Adivasi, by using both the micro and macro levels of sound, were creating very interesting patterns of sound. And there was a reverberation of it—reverberation, an important feature of music-making. I was stunned to experience this. It felt like this music was connecting me with a unique musical self of mine, a self that I had never met before, a self that was generating a simple yet a complex feeling. What was this feeling like? Having these thoughts in mind, I left the Academy. On our way back, I was trying to hum some of these Adivasi songs.

"Rudo rupalo maro Tejgadh no mahudo… Eni dandi gayi aapa ne tepa, Hoy koi puro toh koi adhukado… ghammar ghataadar Tejgadh no mahudo!"

This Adivasi song tells us the story of the dense Mahudo tree of Tejgadh village. While returning, I was humming these tunes. Devy heard me and said, "Don't you think that if these songs have

touched you, you should learn them and perhaps write about them?" I spontaneously nodded my head in agreement.

After this, there was no holding back. I made a bunch of friends in the Adivasi Academy. Travelling to various villages across India, I learnt a lot about my Adivasi friends by understanding their culture, rituals, and way of life. While celebrating their festivals, and listening to the songs and stories from their elderly, I did not realize when this journey began, continued and turned itself into a wonderful musiquest.

The journey that began in Gujarat continued across India through Chhattisgarh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, and Maharashtra. Several years passed. I noticed that during this journey my urban body was under stress, but this unique discovery of Adivasi tunes gave a joyous feeling to one's heart. The loving and giving nature of the Adivasi people, their holding on to memory, their knowledge about the environment overwhelmed me from time to time. But their silence, often displaying numbness, would also make me apprehensive and somewhat uncomfortable. As I journeyed ahead, I realized that the Adivasi world was undergoing a major transition in all spheres. This experience had an impact on the artist as well as the human being in me. It even made me anxious. But it also got me thinking: what is not undergoing a transition? My so-called city, my so-called music, my so-called existence itself has always been undergoing a transition. Then why is there such silence in these Adivasi villages? Or is it only me, who has become used to the cacophony of city life? How do I, merely a student of music, understand this transition? Slowly but steadily, I explained it to myself: "My journey is a musical one. Maybe, music will answer these questions."And I refocused myself onthe music, and along with my Adivasi friends started to listen, learn, and sing their songs, once again.

There is no "Adivasi"

While listening to the Adivasi songs[2], I realized that in traditional Adivasi songs, the word "Adivasi" never appears. Although, in some of the modern songs that are connected to some political or social movements or in some songs used for reform, the word "Adivasi" does appear. The important thing to note here is that if I ask any of my Adivasi friends what or who they are, they would say: Me? I am a Gond…I am a Munda…or a Bhil…Bodo…Santhal…Paniya…Gaddi…So, my Adivasi friends recognize themselves by

their community identity. I pondered, does it then mean that the term "Adivasi" was coined by the so-called mainstream for its own convenience? Or was it created to make a division such as Adivasi and Nagarnivasi (the one from the town/city), on the lines of the *self* and the *other*? If this is true, then what is the difference between the *self* and the *other*? Is this difference, really as dialectical as they call it? In consideration of these, I use the words "Adivasi" and "tribal" with great care, respect and sensitivity, within inverted commas.

It is a known fact that in order to dismiss colonial words like "tribal" and "animist," Gandhi himself had coined the term "Adivasi" (meaning native). Similarly, the British anthropologist and tribal-activist Verrier Elwin also had coined a word for these groups, calling them "Bhumijan"—people of the land.[3] In 1930, in present-day Jharkhand a big gathering of several groups such as the 'Adivasi Mahasabha' took place and it was decided unanimously that they all would come under the umbrella category of "Adivasi" and would continue to struggle for their dignity and rights together.

But to be honest, in the years of being in company of my Adivasi friends, I have realized that I am not as "urban" as I had thought myself to be, neither are my friends, as "Adivasi". Yes, there are some differences between us at some levels, but despite these differences, the threads of humanity and music have been connecting us for years. Then what do mere constructs, like "Urban music" or "Adivasi music", aim at establishing? How and in what way these 'musics' are different from each other? Does being different mean being inferior or superior? Was this the same conflict that pushed Rishi Matanga, in the sixth century, to elaborate in the treatise *Brihad Deshi* the distinction between *marga* and *desha*? Classical and Indigenous?[4]

I do not consider these as binary. In fact, it is only the diversity in music genres that brings about the possibility of a dialogue between them. Such dialogues develop these genres even further, helping them to evolve. What are the objectives of a researcher? Discussing various subjects related to art and theory, analysing the scriptures of art, to open up the path to knowledge for generations to come? It became utmost important for me to address these questions.

Beginning of the Research

Research did begin, but I was not aware of any research methodology; neither had I read about any, nor learnt any. Until now, I had been teaching courses in universities merely based on my field experience. Rather than teaching, I was singing songs with my pupils.

But three scholars guided this research and deeply influenced my modus operandi. India's eminent musicologist, Ashok D. Ranade used to say: "In the beginning, look at the song, let the data speak… the song will tell you its own story. Once you understand that story, slowly you can add your own understanding and interpretation to it!" But,

first, you have to listen with patience…

Ganesh Devy said, "If you want to learn about Adivasi music, connect to their community…live with them, understand what they want to say, then you can sing their song!" But,

first, you have to listen with patience…

India's renowned film critic, Satish Bahadur, who used to teach me Urdu poetry, would often say, "There is plenty of music hidden in the interval between the words of every song… experience that pause, feel the poise, then only you can reproduce it!" But,

first, you have to listen with patience…

These words spoken by my teachers always remained with me throughout this musiquest.

"Kita na hoi, thapiyana jai, aapoaap niranjan soyi!"—Nanakdas

I do not understand how the *niranjan*, the Abstract Truth, manifests itself. But when I started listening, I remembered Ranade's words— "Any sound tradition has mainly three levels—*bhashana* (speaking), *pathana* (chanting), and *gayana* (singing)." While listening to the Adivasi songs, it seems that they spontaneously transit through all these three stages. In sum, speaking while singing and singing while speaking happen with great ease in Adivasi songs. This question always made me think where this ease comes from. Why this kind of music comes out of the body without any kind of stress, whereas every note that otherwise comes out of my throat, drains my body, mind, and intellect to its very end.

Then, just because this music appears simple, does it also mean that it is easy? Not at all…In fact, just because it is innate, one should not assume it is easy. These songs contain the very complex nature of human behaviour and the character of these communities is inbred in these songs. They cannot and should not be performed just as imitation. In order to understand these songs and perform them, it becomes necessary to understand the internal existence of these communities and connect with their daily routines. As I connected

with these communities, listened to their songs on a daily basis, I found that just as their songs lacked the term "Adivasi", there was also no mention of terms such as music, art, artist, theory, and theorist. In fact, I realized that these terms do not exist in their daily discussions either.

Neither Art, nor Artist, yet We Sing, We Play, and We Dance!

If I take the example of my friends from the Bhil community, they'll say, "Look…today we are jumping with the *timli*, today we will play *dhol pehi* and we will do *garba*, today we will recite the *akhyana*, and we will have *dhandal-dhamal*." These are various aesthetic expressions associated with sound and vision of the community. But they will never use musicological terms like *gaayan vaadan nartan*…If at all there is art, then it is a quintessential part of their lives, and not an entity which is larger than life.

Once I had asked Devy, can we call these aesthetic life experiences Art? He replied: "Please remember that there has been nothing like 'a non-marketed art' in the history of humankind. So long as it is not marketed, it does not become 'art', it remains as 'life'. The change in nomenclature is absolutely clearly linked with the nature of patronage. When the sources of patronage shift, the naming of arts change. In future you will have 'digital arts' for a large variety of performing and visual arts. This is because the funding source has changed."[5]

Devy's reply made me ponder over the definition of Art and I started probing into the question:

What is *Kala*? Art in the Indian Context

The word for art in Indian tradition *kala* was mentioned for the first time in *Rig Veda* (8.47.16). It is derived from the stem '*kal*', which means beautiful, melodious and it ends with the stem '*la*', which means to achieve something. To achieve beauty, to achieve a pleasant melody is what art is all about. Bharata's *Natyashastra* (200 BC to 200 AD) too mentions the term '*kala*' but mainly with regard to the performing arts like music, dance and theatre.

Extending this horizon of art, Rishi Vatsyayan's work *Kamasutra* (second century AD), gives the description of sixty-four different forms of art. Among the earliest meanings of art is an important one— skill or craftsmanship. And as we know, the existence of craftsmen depends on the will of the patron, the purchaser, the evaluator, the

connoisseur, in fact, all of them. It involves the use of artisanship,the sale and evaluation of art. Naturally, every piece of art will definitely try to attract patronage in some form or else it cannot survive as art. It is interesting to observe how the meanings of 'art' and 'craft' have changed over the period of time in human history.

To speak about "Adivasi Art" before it was considered an Art, playing of a drum or a flute in such a society was not dependent on any patron or outsider's evaluation, so these societies never used the words 'art' and 'artist' in their own languages. Although, they have tried to please gods, their ancestors, and nature, but these three entities have been regarded as part of their internal existence. In this sense, we can call this experience organic. The entire group is singing, and the entire group is listening to it all together. You yourself are the creator and you are the receiver too.

After spending a long time with these communities, I realized that they treat music more as a phenomenon than as art. An unadulterated desire is associated with these spontaneous musical manifestations, like obtaining self-satisfaction, relieving the pain caused by day-to-day work, sharing happiness with the community, gelling in with its traditions and festivals, exploring the mysteries of nature, and presenting various peers at the feet of these mysterious and divine powers. Merely entertaining the 'other' is not their purpose; this is why there is an ease in their expression, no performance anxiety, no stress.

"Why do you sing?" I ask my Adivasi friend. "It feels good," he gives a simple, straightforward answer. But what appears to be a simplistic reply has a deep traditional knowledge hidden behind. I remember, during his lecture series "The Will to Sing" (1st July 2000, Bandra, Mumbai) Ranade had,to my question "why does one sing?" replied,"Because one desires to sing!"

But this desire to sing has to go a long way before it turns into actual singing. How is this journey? In order to understand this musical journey, it is necessary to understand how humans evolved.

"In Human Evolution, three important stages are described. The first stage was when man's spine straightened and he started walking on two legs.Consequently, his hands became free, free to do several works. The second stage was the discovery of fire, and the third was the development of the spoken language. These three stages have been critical to establish humanity as we know it today," explained Ganesh Devyin his lecture series on "Evolution"(Vadodara, 2009).

But the interesting thing to note is that many historians and researchers believe that music has been in existence much before the

spoken language of words was formed. An infant adapts to tunes and rhythms faster than he can start speaking the words. Based on this argument, many new interpretations of music came into existence. Archaeologist Steven Mithen's book *The Singing Neanderthals* is an important step in this direction (Mithen, 2005).[6]

There is very little evidence to know the nature of the music that existed before the evolution of the spoken word, so how do we find the answer? We could work with hypothesis. It is an established principle that almost 10000 years ago, agriculture was born. Prior to that, people used to live their lives in small groups, travelling in tribes and mostly leading nomadic lives. At such a time, why and how did man use his voice box, and to what benefit? With the help of some hypothesis and the use of particular sounds that are found in Adivasi communities even today, like the Bhil community's Kikiyari (a shrill high pitch sound pattern produced by an individual or a group)[7], we can say that mainly in the absence of light, being surrounded by darkness, when they needed to communicate with each other, humans started using their vocal box. In addition to that, for the sake of admonition, for sharing emotions, for warning each other of danger, for conversation, and beyond that, for expressing one's own joy and sorrow, people used to imitate and create different sounds using their vocal chords. They used to play with these sounds, create specific patterns and structures out of them. The seeds of what we call music today were sown during that time. When the Indus Valley Civilization was discovered during an excavation, a flute with seven holes and a wooden drum covered by animal skin were found. What does this indicate?

Imagination and creation are humankind's most important influences. On the one hand, there is the passing of the wind through bamboo, and the sound waves produced by it gave birth to the flute. On the other hand, using a dead animal's skin to cover a wooden plan and then hitting it to create different rhythms, and along with that, whistling, clapping, tapping on the ground…all this has been possible only due to man's imagination and need for creation. Even today, the Adivasi consider the *vanhri*, the flute and *dhol*, the drum as their traditional and key musical instruments.

From this perspective, now a complex question arises: many of the Indian Adivasi communities who had never before (especially during the pre-independence era) spoken of themselves as Adivasi or artists have now become "Adivasi Artists", who find a large audience in government and non-government festivals. They sell their 'art', 'music', crafts and 'paintings'. They have prepared museums of

'primal art'. They organize several seminars on Adivasi Art and Craft. They are creating new 'songs/music' amidst their battle for social-cultural identity, political identity and rights, and are also using music as a means of spreading awareness. With the rise of technology, like in every other sphere of the society, the Adivasi self is also undergoing a noteworthy transformation in all its dimensions. Their way of living is changing faster than ever before and so is their music. As we know, music is an intangible form of art as well as a fluid, temporal form of art; it is time-relative, intimately connected with the breath of humans. All the incidences that affect the human breath, also influence the music created by humans. In this sense, from being an organic experience to being a socio-political-cultural instrument, what a magnificent journey 'Adivasi music' has gone through in its transformation from being a mode of existence to being an art and a theory.

When the face of every sphere of society is changing rapidly, when music is constantly being redefined all over the world, can these community sound practices now be considered as music, an art form? Can we, at least now, trace the theory behind these age-old sound practices as manifested through their oral being?

What is Shastra? Theory in the Indian Context

The etymology of the word *shastra* (theory) comes from the stems *shaas* and *shansa. Shaas* means to rule and the meaning of *shansa* is to describe. These are the main components of any theory, that is, regulation and description.

With this understanding if we look at the traditions of Adivasi music, then it is clearly evident that these sound traditions are bound by different rules. In their presentation, the description has unique significance, for example, which instrument should be used, which song should be sung, which chant should be orated during certain occasions and rituals and why and how this should be done. On this basis, we can definitely argue that every Adivasi sound tradition has its own theory. Yes, its nature is oral, but the theoreticians of music can now write the script and theory of Adivasi music by making a detailed study of the rules, regulations and descriptions of these oral traditions. The very fact that these oral traditions have survived through ages and are still very much alive, is sufficient evidence that they have an inherent structure of their own. It is only a romantic myth that these are free-flowing sounds, which are beyond grammar.

But again, exploring and understanding the theoretical frame-

work underlying these living traditions is a slippery ground in many ways as the researcher has to guard himself or herself against romanticization, ossification, standardization, Sanskritization and most importantly, the appropriation of Adivasi music. A researcher could be caught easily into the traps mentioned above knowingly, or even unknowingly, and thus it becomes even more complex and difficult to decipher the underlying grammar of this oral tradition. The researcher may also have to face the criticism of "straight jacketing" all communities by writing ONE theory for them all. But before raising such objection, an informed critic would always remember the fact that every space, every culture is distinct but after all, we all live on the same planet. Thus, there will certainly be some similarities along with differences, a circular culmination of the journey of sounds which bring these oral traditions under one umbrella called Theory. All said and done, it becomes still more crucial for a music researcher to understand the theoretical framework that rests underneath all Adivasi music.

The Being of "Adivasi Music": Some Salient Features

Here are some salient features of "Adivasi music":

- Rooted in oral tradition, this category of music primarily depends on human memory—very long song-texts are rendered only on the basis of memory. Like the *Mahabharata*, singing of the Dungra Bhil community runs for seven consecutive nights without taking recourse to any literary text or written script.
- The song-texts are very long but the tune is set maximum to three or four notes. Covering the entire octave is an exceptional case. Thus, one may say that Adivasi songs are based on tetra-tonic, quadra-tonic and penta-tonic scales—the scales using three, four or five notes only.
- A seed of extendable melody is seen in every tune, but they do not elaborate it because the repetition of the same tune is important in Adivasi songs, and not the imaginative extension of the same. This is so because communities believe that imagination may separate the human being from the group, while being collective is an important virtue of Adivasi music. The entire community is involved in musical performances. This is the reason that despite the possibilities of luxurious imagination, no imagery detail is found in collective song play.

- Compositions are primarily found in three, four and seven beats, the rhythms that the human mind responds to with ease. Even here, the presentation of the collective is kept in mind.
- The music is presented with the inherent flow of human rhythm, so this music is not dependent on any external instrument, the body of a human seems to be used as an instrument for creating a rhythm by striking feet on the earth, clapping, making loud, gibberish sounds, etc. This is why the use of instruments is not mandatory. Of course, we do find wonderful instruments also which add rustic and earthy color to this tradition.
- Since it is not individualistic music, the creators of the songs remain unknown. Many times it is seen that new verses are added into songs from generation to generation, which appear to emerge again due to the collective consciousness of Adivasi society.
- *Gayan, vadan* and *nartan*, that is, singing, playing music, and dancing are all presented together—there is no separation of these arts in an Adivasi musical performance. Musicologist Sharang Dev defined this interpretation in his thirteenth century work *Sangeet Ratnakar* as—*"geetam, vadyamtatha nrityam trayam sangeetam uchyate!"*—"song, play, and dance,the triumvirate of music". But since long before this, these three forms have existed as a collective form of art in Adivasi communities.
- There is a special music for every stage of life, from birth to death, and traditional songs contain topics such as nature, deity worship, human relationships, festivity, customs, rituals. At the same time, in the modern songs like *Jagaran* (reform) one finds discussion of issues related to the life of the Adivasis today.
- In Adivasi music, mostly natural and environment-friendly instruments are used—instruments, which can be played through every season, for example *dhol, dholak, nagada, khadatal, bansuri, morchung, pehi*, etc. But with the changing times, Adivasi communities too are using electronic instruments for making new music.
- According to the geographical position and condition of every Adivasi community, the method of singing changes, for example, people living in the mountains and the desert, sing mostly in a high pitch, while people living on the river banks have different vocal vibrations.

- Like many other forms of music, Adivasi music also sometimes becomes symbolic; it goes outside itself and keeps pointing towards other events or situations.

To illustrate the last point, let us take the example of symbolism in poetic themes: let us examine this song from the Raathwa Bhil community, "*Gulaab nu phool beni vaadi maa khilse, chinta na karso beni sukai jawase*". In this Adivasi song, one friend is suggesting to another, "Oh my friend! The rose flower will continue to bloom (nature will keep its rhythm continuous), but if you worry(stop looking at the overall joy in life), then my friend, you will dry up. It seems as if the rose and a friend are representative of nature and life, with them the contradictory experiences of blooming and drying up are used and weaved well.

Similarly, the Gond community also has very symbolic wedding songs and death songs, in which the women make the bride sit at the centre of a circle of women and they sing sad songs as if asking the bride to cry now and get over with it. Later on, while carrying out the responsibilities of conjugal life, she will have to stay firm and will not have the time to cry. While on the other hand, the Gond tribe also celebrates the death of a person of old age and prays for their soul to find peace so that their journey ahead is full of joy. The experience and philosophy of a deep truth comes out with great simplicity through their singing, this is the primeval wisdom revealed in the Adivasi life and their music.

<div style="text-align:center">

Does the Music of every Adivasi Community
have Some Peculiarity?

</div>

While studying the documented songs during research projects, one notices very clearly that just like classical music schools, every Adivasi community also leaves its own distinctive mark on its songs and singing styles. For example, most of the songs of Rathwa Bhil community are set to seven beats and do not rest the musical phrase towards the end of the song on the base note 'sa'—that is, *shadaja* in Indian music, but very surprisingly, they end the song on lower *komal nishad*, the flat note 'ni'. After listening to these melodies, one wonders if they are underlining the incompleteness and complexity of life. This experience demolishes the misconception and the myth that Adivasi music does not have any grammar. Similarly, if we look at the songs of Gamit or Dehwali Bhil they are set to three beats which is considered as *teeshra jati* in Indian music.It appears that they

are expressing the triad *adi madh ant*—the 'beginning, middle, end'. Interestingly, these Dehwali and Gamit Bhil songs end the musical phrase on *sa*—and start a new musical journey again.

But in spite of these peculiarities and differences, Adivasi communities have some coherent tunes, rhythms and themes as well, which harmonize them all with each other. Stretching from western India to northern India, southern India, eastern India to central India, some tunes and rhythms could be found and heard in every region. Primal forms of Indian *ragas* such as the *Dhani, Piloo, Bhoop, Durga, Sorath, Bhairavi* are found in Adivasi ethos. But due to ethnic and geographical diversity, their musical expressions vary from community to community.

Let us try to understand this feature of Adivasi music with two examples. If we listen to the north-eastern Mising (Mishing) community's love song Oinitom… "aairee do aaieree do paapud kapila.. pakadam kavadun..", we would notice that it has a pentatonic structure which uses the notes *sa re ga pa dha*. But interestingly, just like some tunes from South East Asian countries, the tune of this Oinitom is also set in descending scale. It starts rolling down from upper *sa* to the base *sa*...like *sa dha pa ga re sa*. According to Indian classical music, these notes make the *raga* called *Bhoop*. But the same structure of notes will be heard in the ascending order in the western belt of India. Take the Bhil Adivasi song from Gujarat, "moda moda pahalu me.." It ascends from base note *sa … re ga pa dha sa* in this order. Again, a classical musician will immediately recognize this as *Bhoop*. But in contrast with the north-eastern tribe, this tune is going up from down in its tonal design. This change occurs because the communities mentioned above are distinct from each other culturally and geographically. Still, the commonality very much remains, as they both dwell in the penta with great ease. But why only these two cases! All over the world, music researchers are trying to address this question as to why human beings in all cultures dwell most in pentatonic?[8] All over the world ethnomusicologists are trying to understand the music of the indigenous communities through their culture and their culture through their music.

As far as India is concerned, special mention should be made of Rajasthan. The Adivasi music of Rajasthan is very eloquent and it has got completely mixed up with Rajasthani folk music. Indian classical *ragas* such as *Maand, Sarang* are considered to be the contribution of this region. One of the reasons for this musical affluence in Rajasthan is believed to be the existence of many musical communities such as the *Langa* community, meaning 'the giving of songs' and those who

ask for songs are called *Manganiyaar*. Both the communities earn their livelihood by singing and playing music. Through such examples we learn that musical categories like Adivasi, folk or classical are not watertight compartments, they are constantly conversing with each other—a fact that makes the musical traditions of India richer and deeper.

What is Parampara? Tradition in the Indian Context

If we carefully look at the very concept of tradition and listen to Adivasi songs, several fluid meanings of the word *parampara*, which is 'tradition', come to the fore. The word 'tradition' is a representation of an idea, tendency, and principle which is in existence from earlier times.There is an inner flow in tradition, and no blockage. It is a dynamic process in which new ideas, tendencies, and facts continue to get added. And generation after generation, this knowledge is passed on and revised. As Dr. Balamurlikrishnan, the legendary vocalist of India rightly had said, *"There is no tradition without addition!"* It is unfortunate that some societies have manipulated the component of tradition for their convenience and self-interest. But the Adivasi communities continue to a large extent with their tradition and live with the flow of *parampara*.

Temporalities and Adivasi Music

So far, we have been trying to understand the being of Adivasi music through travels in history, culture and so on. At this juncture, a question arises from the other end: can we discover the past of these communities through their oral stories and songs, which are so far unwritten? The answer is a big Yes. These communities give their ancestors the status of God. By listening to their creation myths and other songs we can figure out where they lived, how they followed rituals and practices, what the names of their kings and village gods were, what their relationship with nature and culture has been for centuries, and so on. The oral history of Adivasi music is an independent topic of study in itself.

For example, take this creation myth of the Rathwa Bhil community:

"Kona kona naam padya kaashiraam boman yaraha.
Kona kona naam padya kaashiraam boman yaraha."

It gives every detail about the origin of the community, like how

Rathwa Bhils have migrated from Alirajpur in Madhya Pradesh to Chhota Udepur in Gujarat and how their ancestors prayed to the mountain goddess Rani Kajal. The place where they lived in Chhota Udepur was known as Rath Vistar. This graphic description gives the etymological background of the name of the community, which is Rathwa.

Just as these songs depict the history of these communities, the music reflects their contemporary culture and life as well. What is their relation with other forms of Indian music? What kind of questions the wave of modern civilization has put before them? How these musical traditions are changing their structure and texture, and so on? The answers can be found in their contemporary songs and music. Indeed, Adivasi music is a subject that can help us find a new dimension to the art and theory discourse.

Let us take, for instance, the new Bhil Song—'rongnambar' (Wrong Number), where a young Bhil boy is expressing his anguish by saying that how his beloved girl is treating him, just as a wrong number! And if he by mistake dials her number, he is beaten up badly by her family and friends![9] Not only is their present life and culture reflected in these songs, but their identity politics is also manifest in these songs. The changing structure and texture of Adivasi music where DJs and synthesizers have replaced the organic instruments and the songs are now creating a larger space for the Adivasi in every sphere of modern society. This is an indicator of the assertive and confident Adivasi self, which is refashioning and empowering itself by creating new songs and placing them on the web and CDs, making Adivasi music videos and using them all powerfully in their political movements like *Narmada Bachaao Andolan.* The song and slogan "*Aamu Akha Adivasi*" (We the Adivasi are All One!) is seen as a strong revolt in the Indian political scenario today. 'World famous' music bands, like Indian Ocean, have collaborated with Adivasi movements like *Narmada Bachaao Andolan* and have created wonderful fusion numbers, like *"Maa Reva Taaro Paani Kal Kal Behto Jaay."*[10], with the help of electronic instruments.

Importantly, the change which has been brought about in music by technology has another face too, which may not be appreciated by some puritan or old school thinkers. The Adivasi music which used to be generated organically inside the communities, has now externalized itself. While it is being played on the synthesizer today, the relationship between the notes of Adivasi tunes have changed. The reason for this is that the synthesizer generates tempered, equidistant scale unlike organic instruments like the flute. Obviously

the structure and the texture of Adivasi music which is played on synthesizer will be different from that which has been practiced by the community say half a century ago. One can listen to one such Adivasi song which has a traditional tune but is played on synthesizer and drums.[11] The listener or the researcher here must understand that change, beyond good or bad, is inevitable. The so-called urban music and tribal music divide was bound to collapse, especially with emerging technology. One cannot expect the 'Adivasi' on one hand to remain its 'organic self' and at the same time to shake hands with the so-called modern main land. When technology encounters us with all its power, a new music is born, whether one likes this new face or not.

Writing Adivasi Music: What is Gained and What is Lost in Script?

As we have already discussed above, Adivasi music is being played on the synthesizer today and as a result some community-specific nuances and peculiarities are lost in the tempered scale—this is a musicological fact, but at the same time this music becomes more accessible to the larger part of society. It rapidly changes from being a phenomenon to being Art, and a Craft too. Whatever might be the case, Adivasi music exists as an intriguing entity and demands the serious attention of the researcher on constant basis. To an extent, it is possible to write the score of Adivasi music with various methods like Indian or Western Notation Systems, but as we are aware much is lost while translating the sound into a letter. In spite of this limitation, all over the world, musicologists are writing their indigenous music in their own scripts and notation systems. Also, in the digital age, it has now become possible to preserve the 'image' of every song through printing its sound waves which emerge during the recording sessions.

As we can see, Adivasi music poses new challenges every time but it is possible for a researcher to face them and to address the complexities which are increasing every day in the world of the Adivasi.

There is No Conclusion, Only Continuation of the Musiquest

It must have become clear by now that Adivasi music is a multi-dimensional and complex term, which is surrounded by many academic and non-academic debates. There is an important reason

for this: this term is seen and understood differently by different groups of people. The Adivasi themselves, cultural activists, academicians, and the artist fraternity, all view this term in a different light. In this case, searching for the root of this term becomes like travelling through a maze. Again the question might arise: 'Is breaking through this maze even necessary?' Well, in all these years of my journey, I have experienced that when the traditional wisdom of these communities is engaged in a creative conversation with modern thought, which is supported by science and technology, a complex yet amazing idiom of living is created in all spheres of life including music and art. This is the reason that after accepting all my limitations as an artist and a theoretician, I continue with my effort to look through this maze of Adivasi music to the very end of my journey. Yes, I shall continue to travel on this less-trodden path as I realize that this story of music does not belong to my Adivasi friends alone, but to me as well!

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. This article has been purposefully written in a first-person mode in order to render visible the location of the author.
2. Major sources of this research article are the ethnographic references and empirical data collected by the author from year 2010 to 2017 in various tribal belts of India.
3. David Hardiman writes how Gandhi and Elwin were instrumental in using and popularizing the terms 'Adivasi' and 'Bhumijan' (Hardima, 2003).
4. Dr. Srinivas Rao discusses in his blog the sixth-seventh century Indian treatise, *Brihaddeshi*, written by eminent musicologist Rishi Matang. https://sreenivasaraos.com/tag/brihaddeshi/
5. Prof. Ganesh Devy, e-mail correspondence, 6 December 2016.
6. Hank Campbell discusses in his article how music is more innate to humans than language: http://www.science20.com/science_20/did_ _ music evolve_ language.
7. Rathwas making Kikiyari sound in the course of Timli Dance: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_dL2ywz2O4.
8. Singer and composer Bobby McFerrin explains and demonstrates the power of pentatonic scale: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjvR9UMQCrg.
9. New song 'Rong Nambar' (Wrong Number) of Rathwa Bhils: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3M4doWuf1AQ
10. Indian Ocean recreates the tribal song Maa Reva: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89D-4-ztyIM.

11. Bhilala Adivasi Community from MP produces New DJ song: https://www.
    youtube.com/watch?v=jMnhBUzzpNk.

References

Bakhle, Janaki. 2006. *Two Men and Music.* New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Banerjee, Prathama. 2006. *Politics of Time: "Primitives" and History-Writing in a Colonial Society.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Banerjee, Prathama. 2006. "Culture/Politics: The Irresoluble Double-Bind of the Indian Adivasi". *Indian Historical Review.* 33(1): 99-126.

Bor, Joep. 1988. "The rise of ethnomusicology: sources on Indian music c. 1780-c. 1890." *Yearbook for Traditional Music.* 20: 51-73.

Chatterji, Roma. 2003. "The category of folk". In *The Oxford India Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology*, edited by Veena Das, vol. 1. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Chhotaray, Sharmila. 2014. Review of "Writing Identities: Folklore and Performative Arts of Purulia, Bengal" by Roma Chatterji. *Contributions to Indian* Sociology 48(1): 143-163.

Devy, G. N. 2002. *Painted Words: An Anthology of Tribal Literature.* New Delhi: Penguin Books.

Devy, G. N., Davis, Geoffrey V., and Chakravarty, K. K. 2008. *Indigeneity: Culture and Representation.* New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Devy, G. N., Davis, Geoffrey V., and Chakravarty, K. K. (eds.), 2015. *Performing Identities: Celebrating Indigeneity in the Arts.* London: Routledge.

Hardiman, David. 2003. *Gandhi: In His Time and Ours.* New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.

Mithen, Steven. 2005. *The Singing Neanderthals: The Origins of Music, Language, Mind and Body.* London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson.

Nettle, Bruno, Bohlman, Philip. V. (eds.) 1991. *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music: Essays on the History of Ethnomusicology.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Neuman, Daniel. 1976. "Towards an Ethnomusicology of Culture Change in Asia". *Asian Music.* 7(2): 1-5.

Ranade, Ashok Da. 2008. *Perspectives on Music: Ideas and Theories.* New Delhi: Promila & Co in association with Bibliophile South Asia.

Read, Herbert. 1951. *The Meaning of Art.* London: Faber & Faber.

Rice, Timothy. 2003. "The ethnomusicology of music learning and teaching." *College Music Symposium.* 43: 65-85.

Rice, Timothy. 1987. "Toward the remodeling of ethnomusicology". *Ethnomusicology.* 31(3): 469-488.

Sims, Martha, Stephens, Martine. 2011. *Living Folklore: An Introduction to the Study of People and their Traditions.* Utah: Utah State University Press.