



Aesthetic Symbiosis Of Indian Classical Music And Poetic Form In The AI Era: Preserving Indigenous Traditions Through “Hanuman Chalisa And Alha Gayan”

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the aesthetic convergence of poetic forms and Indian classical music with a sense of determination and with reference to “a regional folk song (Alha-udal ki veer gatha) and a popular Hindu devotional hymn (Hanuman Chalisa)”. While Alha Gayan consolidates (shared) collective memory and themes of bravery, it is an oral-epic traditional performance of Bundelkhand and the Hanuman Chalisa incorporates spiritual lyricism embedded in rhythm and repetition, composed by Goswami Tulsidas in 16th century.

The exigency of this unique research work is to preserve our folk traditions through contemporary digital and AI-enabled approaches, so that it can be transferred to our future generations, as “ALHA GAYAN” is only popular in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bundelkhand, but this masterpiece should be made popular in Bharat (India) also, even “Alha-Khand” is not included in any of our school syllabuses, it is only transferred through ‘oral traditions’ to generations.

Both forms reveal an innate musicality which corresponds to the structures of Indian classical aesthetics, but are different in motive and genre. The present study uses musical, textual and relational analysis to explore the relationship between the rhythm, metre & tonal shift (variations) in these traditions with tala and raga, and thus how these function in the process of transforming poetry into personified soundscapes. These facts reveal that their performance not only support oral and spiritual exercises but also sets out as a means for conserving indigenous cultural heritage in the look of modern cultural transformations.

This research is placed within the broad context of cultural preservation, digital humanities, AI-assisted documentation, and aesthetics, highlighting the importance of Hanuman Chalisa and Alha Gayan as a repository of the untouchable heritage of India and the need to study, record and promote these traditions for cultural and educational purposes.

The study further examines how emerging digital technologies and AI can contribute to the documentation, preservation, analysis, and wider dissemination of these oral and musical traditions while maintaining their cultural authenticity.

Keywords: Indian Classical Music, Alha Gayan, Hanuman Chalisa, AI, Digital Technology, Cultural Heritage, Indigenous Traditions, Oral Tradition, Folk song, Literature, Performing Arts.

Introduction

Poems and music go hand in hand with each other and this is evident in the cultural heritage of India where verse and sound are interwoven to form eternal aesthetic traditions. The raga-tala (melody-rhythm) system is a means by which the Indian classical music provides not only artistic creation, but also religious and cultural vibrations. Poetic forms often, then, incorporate rhythmic and tonal qualities that are naturally aligned with musical forms.

In this continuum, “Hanuman Chalisa and Alha Gayan” depicts two traditions that are different but complementary. Alha Gayan is a spoken narration of the heroic epic of Bundelkhand, a lyrical

(musical) recitation, echoing the power of classical genres such as Dhrupad. But the Hanuman Chalisa composed by Tulsidas lays emphasis on spiritual lyricism of the Bhakti movement, the organized meters allowing themselves to be musicalized in classical and folk styles.

While different in intent – heroic courage and divine worship – both customs(traditions) find an aesthetic symbiosis in which music and poetry serve as a vehicle for the transmission of spiritual identity and cultural memory.

This is an exploration of that link, and how their performance helps to promote the indigenous traditions and to preserve the intangible cultural heritage of India. This research investigates the effectiveness of performing arts (dance, drama and music) and its impact on the contemporary culture of “India” and highlights the complex issues of ‘regional language (literature), art and culture’.

Despite the richness of the Indian oral and musical heritage, the aesthetic connections between the poetic forms and Indian classical music have not been fully explored. Hanuman Chalisa and Alha Gayan, though popular and historically important, are generally examined separately – either as spiritual literature or as folklore or as a regional exercise – with only a significant emphasis on their musical harmony. These artistic forms are at risk of being marginalized with the decline of traditional performance spaces, globalization and urbanization. While there is no research that has been consolidated, there is a lack of understanding of their musical and poetic symbiosis and how they function as carriers of indigenous identity and cultural heritage.

In the AI era, the preservation of such oral and performative traditions has acquired a new technological dimension. Artificial intelligence, digital archives, speech recognition, audio analysis, and computational tools offer new possibilities for documenting, analysing, and disseminating traditional musical and poetic forms. However, these technologies also raise important questions concerning cultural authenticity, contextual interpretation, authorship, and the ethical representation of indigenous traditions.

Literature Review

Indian Aesthetics: Embodied Listening and Raga-Tala in the Digital Era

Research on Dhrupad emphasizes gravitas, and improvisatory alap (prelude) as a structure for narrative effect (Sanyal & Widdess, 2004) provides a lens through which to explore the quasi-epic and spiritual recitation musically. The basic scholarship suggests that raga is an arrangement of melodic potentialities and tala is periodic time which governs the performance and conscious listening (Wade, 1980/2011; Subramanian, 2006).

Alha Gayan is the name of the regional, oral epic & performance. In the memory-scape of oral epics, Alha is found to be linked to community identification and to some extent to performance cycles (Ramanujan, 1999; Blackburn et al., 1989). Studies provides explanations of melodic speech, responsorial involvement and rhythmic amplification, which is akin to classical techniques, and retains folk tone and local lexicon.

Hanuman Chalisa: Sonic Devotion, Bhakti Poetics and Digital Transmission

Bhakti examination on Tulsidas is focused on the poetics of the informal genre (chaupai, Doha) and the repetitive genre (structures), in which the poet's work is aimed at group (communal) singing (Lutgendorf, 1991/2007). Raga induced Kirtan/bhajan trials, wherein the set text is modified to fit the tune (melody) and a meditative and sentimental state is created, with classical aesthetics.

Methodology

This paper combines a “qualitative and comparative approach” which includes textual, musical and sociocultural analysis. Selected verses from Hanuman Chalisa and Alha Gayan will be analysed using the following techniques: “Textual analysis” will be undertaken by analysing the rhythm, imagery, metre and poetic devices of selected verses from Hanuman Chalisa and Alha Gayan. Some performative qualities, like rhythmic patterns (tala), tonal modulation and raga-like framework were identified through readily available recordings and supplementary documentation, and these are the qualities that will be explored in “Musical Analysis”. Juxtaposition is preceded by a comparative framework, which is followed by a comparison of two traditions to illuminate the differences and similarities in their aesthetic relationship with the Indian classical music. For this linguistic understanding, a cultural-Ethnographic insight is used; this means that information on linguistic understanding was gained from existing ethnographic accounts, heritage learning and community practices, which were placed in the wider cultural context.

This multi-layered methodology mapping will be implemented to assist in the mapping of how music, aesthetics and poetic form work together to sustain indigenous customs (traditions). The study also considers the potential application of AI-assisted and computational approaches to the documentation, textual analysis, audio analysis, and digital preservation of these traditions. AI is treated as a complementary analytical and preservation tool rather than as a substitute for humanistic interpretation and community-based knowledge.

Alha Gayan: Heroic memory, Musical recitation and Digital Preservation

This is an Alha Gayan tradition (custom) of Bundelkhand which tells the story of valor of **Alha** and **Udal**. Its style of singing is high pitch, semi-lyrical and rhythmic. The famous line that is recited is:

“आल्हा और ऊदल, बुंदेलखंड के वीर, रण में लड़त, न डरत, न धीर।”

“Alha aur udal, Bundelkhand ke veer, Ran mein ladat, na darat, na dheer.”

It is a couplet that is alliterative and has a lively rhythm in it, which is characteristic of tala rhythms. The oral technique is often fast and slow with a variation in pitch, like the improvisation of ‘dhrupad’ singing. The beats are repetitive, and the listener is able to understand and feel not only the story, but also the melodic effect, given the collective power (energy) of the beats. In the AI era, the oral nature of Alha Gayan presents both a preservation challenge and an opportunity. Digital audio archives, speech-to-text technologies, and AI-assisted documentation can potentially help preserve regional variations, pronunciation, rhythm, and performance styles that may otherwise remain vulnerable to loss.

Hanuman Chalisa: Devotion through Musical Poetics and Digital Cultural Transmission

Tulsidas composed, The Hanuman Chalisa. It is written in quatrain metre (chaupai), creating a rhythmic regularity fitted for chanting.

A key verse reads:

जय हनुमान ज्ञान गुन सागर। जय कपीस तिहुं लोक उजागर।

“Jai Hanumāna Gyāna Guṇa Sāgara | Jai Kapīsa Tihun Lōka Ujāgara”

The balanced metre gives a melodic base which can be easily converted into kirtan/bhajan, often set to “ragas like Bhairav or Yaman”. The repetition of plea (invocation) not only reinforces devotion but also creates a musical rhythm that is conducive to meditation, and is connected to the cyclicity of tala.

Aesthetic Symbiosis: Traditional Music, Poetry and AI-Mediated Cultural Preservation

Both traditions (customs) show the interweaving of music and Poetry:

Alha Gayan transforms heroic verse into an oral-music piece that fosters community memory (memory).

Hanuman Chalisa elevated divine poetry to musical chanting which helps to maintain spiritual identity.

The ballad of Alha-Udal not only tells of the courage but also has a musical and tonal quality that resonates with the aesthetics of Indian classical music. The song about the bravery of Alha and Udal, who have become immortal in the memory of Mahoba:

“वीर पुरोधा गढ़ महोबे में, आल्हा ऊदल जिनका नाम।

Veer purodha gadh mahobe mein, alha udal jinka nam,

पलक झपकते जिन्ने बदले, कई एक युद्धों के परिणाम,

Palak jhapakte jinne badle, kayi ek yudhdhon ke parinam,

देखें दुश्मन ऐसे झपटें, जैसे झपटे कोई बाज़।

Dekhein dushman aise jhaptein, jaise jhapte koi baaz.

The fast rhythm pattern, alliteration and soldier like imagery demonstrates the impact of tala cycles. The depiction of the fighters flying like a hawk (falcon) is reminiscent of the improvisatory nature of “Classical Alap” with a wave of strength.

This shows that how poetic verse turns out into a performative-musical expertise, rhythmic pattern, historical fusion and aesthetics.

But the Hanuman Chalisa is full of spiritual lyricism, which is arranged in systematic meters (doha and chaupai) that have an inherent connection with musical chanting. This devotional musicality is illustrated in a popular verse:

सक्ष्म रूप धरि सियहिं दिखावा। विकट रूप धरि लंक जरावा।

Sukshma roop dhari Siyahi dikhava ,vikat roop dhari lank jarava,
भीम रूप धरि असुर सँहारे। राम चंद्र के काज संवारे।

Bhīma rūpa dhari asura saṁhāre, ram chandra ke kaaj sanware,
लाय सजीवन लखन जियाए । श्री रघबीर हरषि उर लाये॥

Layey sanjivan lakhān jiyaye, Shri Raghuvir harashi ur laye,
रघुपति कीन्ही बहुत बड़ाई । तूम मम प्रिय भरतहि सम भाई ॥

Raghupati kinhi bahut badai, Tum mam priya Bharat-hi sam bhai.

The oscillative imagery of subtle, savage and enormous (huge) forms of Hanuman is complemented by moves in cadence (tone) during recitation.

The rhythmic intonation reflects the series of tala and the spiritual repetition is in sync with the meditative unity of kirtan and bhajan.

The quatrain verse, when sung, is both deep and dramatic - A combination of poetic expression and classical musical (harmonious) style.

Poetic-Melodic Convergence: Structured Symmetry and Computational Possibilities

The study finds out that both Hanuman Chalisa and Alha Gayan use different alliterative rhythmic patterns but complementary to each other and it is also found that they are in sync with the Indian Classical rhythmic pattern.

Alha Gayan's improvisatory variations in tempo and tonal ascent are similar to 'Alap-Jor-Jhala progression' of dhrupad in which the strength of the narration is enhanced by the spreading of the rhythmic cycles.

On the Other hand Hanuman Chalisa is similar to 'Bandish Compositions' with its structured chaupai-Doha scheme. In 'Bandish Compositions' there is an established lyrical form, with musical improvisations in raga.

The 'verse symmetry' of the arrangement is reflected in the 'base' while 'musical modulation' brings 'dynamism', creating an aesthetic balance between stability and flexibility.

Such structural relationships may also be examined through computational musicology and AI-assisted audio analysis, which can identify recurring rhythmic, melodic, and tonal patterns across traditional performances.

Orality, Memory, Performance Aesthetics and AI-Assisted Preservation

The oral performance traditions of bundelkhand are connected to 'memory transmission and social (cultural) identity' of Alha Gayan. Its rhythms not only instil courage but also act as a mnemonic, making historical stories un-forgettable from generation to generation.

Hanuman Chalisa as a spiritual text, however, attributes the Sonic theology of Bhakti in a combined participation of the repeated chanting of the text, which has devotional values. Bhava (emotive mood) is tied up with individual and community in given out devotion, the Sonic power generates.

Aesthetic resonance can be understood through the theories of Rasa and Dhvani in Indian aesthetic thought. It is the theory of **Indian Classical Rasa**.

Aesthetic Resonance

Rasa (aesthetic flavour) and dhvani (suggestion) are the extract of artistic experience in Indian aesthetic theory (Natyashastra and later Sangita Ratnakara).

Alha Gayan is a rasa that is elevated through veer (heroic) sentiment which is raised by the use of percussive tala cycles, martial metaphors and vigorous delivery.

Hanuman Chalisa puts emphasis on bhakti rasa (devotional sentiment) which is derived from melodic chant, complete humility and invocation.

Comparative Semiotics: Heroic vs Devotional Tone in the AI Era.

The symbolic tones are quite different:

In Alha Gayan, martial energy is foregrounded highlighted by powerful diction and brisk talas that mimic the rhythm of battle. The semiotic register of courage generates a social memory of identity and resistance, especially in Bundelkhand's socio-political history.

The devotional surrender in Hanuman Chalisa is expressed in the cyclical rhythm and in the melodic chanting, which is gentle, and these are in accordance with the devotional ethos of the Bhakti tradition. When repeated it produces meditative vibration, which is in keeping with the philosophy of surrender to divinity (Prapatti).

Cultural Preservation in Modernity: From Oral Archives to AI-Enabled Digital Preservation

Oral memory is described by Alha Gayan as a cultural archive, with an emphasis on the resilience of oral memory as a cultural archive that shows how regional identity can exist without written canons.

Hanuman Chalisa is flexible and is being performed in classical, folk and digital spaces through popular devotional platforms and public recitation and media broadcast.

In this way, their ongoing work provides a blueprint for cultural sustainability, in which heritage is not merely preserved in the past, but is strongly reinterpreted.

Cultural Continuity and Digital Transformation in the AI Era

Alha Gayan is a regional identity and a regional oral tradition, while Hanuman Chalisa is a devotional unity across the Pan-Indian region. The presence of their songs in temple bhajans, folk songs and, more recently, on digital platforms bears witness to their adaptability, and oral-musical traditions continue to flourish despite the changes in contemporary culture.

The emergence of AI-driven platforms further expands the possibilities for cultural continuity by enabling digital documentation, multilingual dissemination, audio preservation, and computational analysis of traditional performances.

Interdisciplinary Implications: Musicology, Cultural Studies, Digital Humanities and AI

- **Ethnomusicology:** Illustrates how local and spiritual music (filled with devotion) interact with classical frameworks.
- **Cultural Studies:** Emphasizes intersections between pan-indian religiosity and regional identity.
- **Performance Studies:** Demonstrates the embodied nature of singing/chanting, where voice, gesture, and rhythm together spread intangible heritage. This multi-disciplinary lens supports the argument that both Alha Gayan and Hanuman Chalisa are not isolated traditional customs but– “**living laboratories of aesthetic symbiosis**”.
- **Digital Humanities and AI:** Explores how artificial intelligence, computational analysis, digital archives, and emerging technologies can support the documentation, preservation, analysis, and dissemination of traditional musical and poetic heritage.

Results and Discussion: Traditional Aesthetics and AI-Era Cultural Preservation

The study finds that both Alha Gayan and Hanuman Chalisa are intrinsically musical and are in harmony with the Indian classical aesthetics. Alha Gayan is a semi-sung (chanted) recitation of spoken and sung texts in which there are rhythmic climaxes, improvisatory changes in tone (music) and responsive patterns, together with the regional oral memory (remembrance). In comparison, the Hanuman Chalisa has structured meters (chaupai, doha) which naturally and normally fits into the raga based chanting of kirtan and bhajan traditions (practices) and is meditative and resonates with religious significance (repeatedly). Relational, both traditions express the connection of metre to melody, and cadence (rhythm) to the presentation of performance, revealing a clear symbiosis between the classical musical (melodic) structures and the poetic (lyrical) form. Except aesthetics, the findings call attention to their cultural purpose– Alha Gayan conserves regional (local) identity and heroic memory, on the other hand the Hanuman Chalisa supports communal spirituality and devotional belief.

Together, they demonstrated how oral-spoken (musical) traditions (practices) feeds unsubstantial heritage and indigenous aesthetic continuity in a swiftly modernizing social-community. From an AI-era perspective, the findings suggest that traditional oral-musical forms can benefit from digital documentation and AI-assisted analytical tools. Such technologies can facilitate the identification of rhythmic, melodic, linguistic, and performative patterns and can support the creation of accessible digital archives. Nevertheless, technological intervention must remain sensitive to cultural context and should complement rather than replace traditional practitioners and community-based transmission.

Conclusion

Preserving Indigenous Musical Heritage in the AI Era: Exploring the Interrelationship Between Indian Classical Music, Poetic Forms, and Digital Preservation through the explorations of both Hanuman Chalisa and Alha Gayan shows how Indian classical music and poetic form come together to form a cohesive cultural aesthetics. Alha Gayan preserves the memory of heroes through musical (rhythmic) recitation (chanting),

while the Hanuman Chalisa refills the religious practice with harmonic chanting. In spite of their distinct genres, both personify an enduring symbiosis of verse and sound, assuring the continuation of indigenous customs (traditions). Performing these reaffirms the purpose of oral-musical traditions as essential custodians of India's abstract cultural heritage. In the AI era, the preservation of these traditions can move beyond conventional documentation toward dynamic forms of digital archiving, computational analysis, and wider cultural dissemination. AI technologies can assist in preserving oral histories, analysing musical structures, documenting regional variations, and making indigenous traditions accessible to younger and global audiences. However, technological advancement must be guided by cultural sensitivity, ethical responsibility, authenticity, and the active participation of traditional knowledge holders. Thus, AI should function not as a replacement for human creativity and cultural memory but as a complementary instrument for sustaining the living heritage of Indian music and poetry.

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