



**A Comparative Study of *Kanhaiyā daṃgal* and *Huraṃgā* of Rajasthan  
A Participant's Observation**

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**Abstract**

*Kanhaiyā daṃgal* and *huraṃgā* are two folk music forms of Rajasthan. People in the *Mīṇā* and *Gurjar* communities of rural Sawai Madhopur, Dausa, Karoli, and Bundi perform *kanhaiyā daṃgal*. They use folk percussion instruments *Gherā* and *Naubat* for accompaniment. *Huraṃgā* is a musical form performed prominently in the Deeg region of Rajasthan during Holi. In the past, scholars did scores of research on several folk musical forms of Rajasthan but did not focus on *kanhaiyā daṃgal* and *huraṃgā*. The current project investigated if there were similarities between the performance styles or if these musical forms exist as separate art forms. The investigators collected data through participant observations and used open-ended interviews. The results reveal that both *kanhaiyā daṃgal* and *huraṃgā* exist as distinct art forms, but their performance styles have a significant resemblance.

**Keywords:** Folk musical forms, *kanhaiyā daṃgal*, *huraṃgā*, Rajasthan

**Introduction**

The folk music of Rajasthan is well-known for its diverse and vibrant flavour. There are mainly three main genres of folk music in Rajasthan - *panihārī gīt*<sup>1</sup>, oral epic ballads, and *māṇḍ*<sup>2</sup>.

1 *Panihārī gīt* is generally sung by women in which the lyrical part emphasises water or wells.

2 It is the most popular singing style carried forward by the Langaniyar and Manganiyar communities of Rajasthan.

The epic ballads are narrative traditions which include folklore related to the deities<sup>3</sup>. These traditions are associated with particular communities in Rajasthan. There are studies on folk musical forms like *panihārī gīt*, *pābūjī kī pād*, *tejā gīt*, and *māṇḍ* of western Rajasthan. The forms pertaining to the eastern part of Rajasthan were neglected to a great extent. This study aims to identify and investigate two popular group singing traditions of eastern Rajasthan i.e. *kanhaiyā daṃgal* and *huraṃgā*. These two forms have several identical features and approaches regarding performance structure. Hence this work is a comparative analysis to find the resemblance and distinctiveness of these forms. The study is limited to the observation of only two performance groups of *kanhaiyā daṃgal* and *huraṃgā* (one each).

The researchers could obtain only one published source mentioning a few group singing forms of Rajasthan such as *saṃgīt daṃgal*, *hele kā khyāl*, *jikarī bhajan*, *kanhaiyā gīt* and *Bam* or *rasiyā* (Verma 52-54)<sup>4</sup>. This source describes "*kanhaiyā gīt*" which has similar characteristics to *kanhaiyā daṃgal*. It can be assumed that the nomenclature of this form is changed over the course of time. It also mentions *Bam/ Rasiyā* Dance which has some resemblance to *huraṃgā*. However, the specifications differ significantly from the researcher's observations for both forms.

**Kanhaiyā daṃgal**



The origin of *kanhaiyā daṃgal* is not even known to its performers. They naturally learnt this from listening to their elders. It was known as “*kanhiyā gīt*” because of the mythological stories describing Lord Krishna's pastimes and recreations. The researcher could not find any published works or information about its evolution and journey from a native recreational activity to its performance on a larger platform. A unique practice is *Kagaz Bhejna* i.e. sending invitations to other villages by the Sarpanch or the Head of the Group of Performers. Once they accept the invitations, they can participate in the Dangkal. This community respects their tradition to a great extent and still follows the traditional system of playing *naubat* to call the fellow performers for practice or performance.

3 Like Ramdevji, Gogaji, Tejaji, Devnarayan Bhagwan, and Pabuji.

4 The article was published by Sangeet Natak Akademi in the year 1998 based on the field study during 1980-1991

Dangkal is a competition among groups of performers. All the artists would come and perform their art and receive gifts from the audience. Hence it is known as *kanhaiyā daṃgal*. This form is popular in Tonk, Sawai Madhopur, Bundi, Dausa, Karoli, and Alwar Region.

*Kanhaiyā daṃgal* is so popular that the audience's presence may increase by up to five thousand on special occasions. The audience awards the excellent performers with money and garlands. The money is usually given in the performer's hand or pinned to his pocket with a thin stick.

## Huraṃgā

*Huraṃgā* originated in *Vṛindavan*<sup>5</sup> of Mathura<sup>6</sup> district. According to Amar Singh, *huraṃgā* is as old as the stories of Lord Krishna (Singh, Amar). *Huraṃgā* is closely associated with Holi - the festival of colours, mostly performed in the month of *phāgun*. The popularity status of *huraṃgā* can be judged by the huge audience, which sometimes increases to five thousand. The main presenters are twelve to fifteen, but the number goes up to fifty. Most of the time very active participation of the audience is seen. Out of excitement they start singing and dancing with the performers and shower money on them as an expression of joy and praise.

Most of the performers are farmers. They perform *huraṃgā* as their hobby. The knowledge of art got transferred while observing their fathers and other elders. They did not receive any formal training from their fathers. (Singh, Rotang)

## Methodology

A Participatory Observation method was employed for the study. The researcher met the performers at their village and observed their day-long performance and other activities before and after the performance. The author met Meena, Malkhan and his co-performers of *kanhaiyā daṃgal* at village Gawadi (karoli district) and Singh, Rotang and his party at village Behej (Deeg district).

5 A place known for Lord Krishna's *rās līlā*.

6 Lord Krishna's birth place.

Meena, Malkhan, Singh, Rotang, and Singh Amar were interviewed by the author to obtain additional details regarding their art forms and social life.

## Results and Discussion Performing Style

*Kanhaiyā daṃgal* starts with *mātā kī bhavānī manānā*<sup>7</sup>; praising and worshipping Kul Devi of the village to make the performance successful. After *bhavānī manānā*, starts the main performance,

which is divided into four parts: *kahānī*, *barhāv*<sup>8</sup>, *jhakkaṛ*<sup>9</sup>, *suḍḍhā*. *Kanhaiyā daṃgal* is performed in two semi-circular formations by *joṭh* holding hands and *meḍiyā-s* at the centre.



### *The formation of kanhaiyā daṃgal*

The two large percussion instruments *gherā* and *naubat* are kept within the semi-circle facing one another. This helps the instrument players interact easily. *Meḍiyā* sings a non-rhythmic couplet praying to Lord Ganesh, Lord Hanuman, which is repeated by the *joṭh* in a rhythmic format. After all this, comes the main story “*kahānī*” which may be mythological, religious, or folk. At the end of their performance, they greet the audience through *suḍḍhā*<sup>10</sup>. The performers

7 A ritual in *kanhaiyā daṃgal* in which all the artists stand in a circle and pray to Devi Bhawani for a successful performance.

8 It is a four-five lined couplets sung before the main story as an introduction to the main story.

9 It is sung to alert the *joṭh*. After this they sit down and sing.

10 It is included in *kanhaiyā daṃgal*. Before this, it is sung by a single person without any repetition. It is two lined verses.

are full of energy and enthusiasm, holding hands, dancing, and enjoying each other. The performance continues throughout the day. As *kanhaiyā daṃgal* is competitive, sometimes three or more parties are involved at a time.

*Huraṃgā* also starts with *Mātā kī bhavānī manānā* as a ritual. The main performance starts with *bhagavān kṛṣṇa kī horī* followed by *Rasiyā*. In which they describe the pastimes of Lord Krishna through verses. The surprising part of *huraṃgā* is the participation of women with equal importance. It is a glamorous form as compared to the *kanhaiyā daṃgal*. The performers dressed in colourful traditional attire sing *rasiyā* and play *Bam* simultaneously. Women perform *carkholā nṛtya*<sup>11</sup> in the middle of the performance, and men dance with holding *jhaṇḍiyā*<sup>12</sup>. In the end, they sing a verse in which all the metropolitan cities like Jaipur, Agra, and Delhi are described. This is mandatory to end the performance (Singh, A). In *huraṃgā*, instrument players and dancers sing with equal importance. The *nagādā* is kept at the center and *mañjīrā* and *jhāñjh* players stand on both sides. The dancers holding the *jhaṇḍiyā* stand after the instrument players. They move the *jhaṇḍiyā* up and down and do some acrobatics intermittently.



*Formation in huramgā*

11 It is a dance form in which women dance with a big drum (nagādā) on her head.

12 It is a decorated long stick with a mirror at the top.



*Woman performing carkholā nṛtya*



## Accompanying Instruments and Rhythmic patterns

The accompanying instruments for *kanhaiyā daṃgal* and *huramgā* are percussions only. *Kanhaiyā daṃgal* include *nagādā (naubat)*<sup>13</sup>, *gherā (ḍhaph)*<sup>14</sup>, *ḍholak*<sup>15</sup>, *jhāñjh* and *mañjīrā*<sup>16</sup> whereas *huramgā* performers use *nagādā* (Bam), *ḍholak*, *jhāñjh*<sup>17</sup>, *mañjīrā* and *cimaṭā*<sup>18</sup>.

13 It is a big round instrument made of iron. Open-end is covered with buffalo skin. It is played with two bamboo sticks called deka, the upper end of which is covered with a cloth to prevent the skin.

14 It is a round-shaped instrument similar to the ḍhaph. One end is covered with buffalo skin, and the other remains open. It is played with hand and contains some round small metal plates beneath the skin, which produce a jhāñjh - like sound while playing.

15 Two-

headed hand percussion instrument made of wood like Indian Rosewood, Mango Wood, and teak Wood. Both ends are covered with goat skin.

16 A pair of metals similar to the clash cymbals mainly used in bhajan and Kirtan.

17 It is a rectangular-shaped instrument containing circular metal plates. It is played with both hands by shaking back and forth.

18 It is a long, flat piece of steel or iron. A metal ring is attached near the fold and there are jingles along the sides.

Though the other instruments are played in *kanhaiyā daṃgal*, the performance mainly depends on the accompaniment with *gherā* and *naubat*. There is no specific tala, but they have various rhythmic patterns for the different sections of the performance. These patterns are 2+2, 4+4, 1-2 1-2, 1-2 1-2 1- -- and 1-2-3-4. The dynamics of rhythm change according to the emotion of the story. In *huramgā* also, the beat pattern is 2+2 and 4+4 is played in different ways with a break between the songs. It involves varied laya-s as Madhya, Drut, and Ati Drut laya.

In both the forms, the rhythmic pattern resembles the Keharwa taal.

## Lyrics of kanhaiyā daṃgal

Its lyrics are in a regional language which is called *bāgarī*<sup>19</sup>.

*mātā kī bhavānī*

*o jagamaga jagamaga bhavan kare merī māta karolī bādī ko |ai h  
e kelā bijāsan jagadambe māta bhavānī ko ||  
merī rakhiyo lāj karolī bādī |*

*raghurājā kī kathā*

*o bolyo rāvan baladhārī, sunale ho prāṇan pyārī |mero  
tīn lok meṃ nām, yoya jāṇe duniyā sādī || baṛhāv  
hare sun rāvan kī bāt bol rahī nārī  
hai kā yā dharatī*

*pe bhot paḍe hai baḍe-  
baḍe baladhārī ho gae avāḍpurī bhūpāl r  
aghu tapadhārīkahānī*

*ho mere man meṃ nahiya śamkā, mero meghanāth raṅ vaṃkā  
|ho maiṃne jīta liyo saba deśa, mero baje bijay ko ḍamkā ||*

19 Bāgarī is a dialect combining Haryanvi, Rajasthani, and Punjabi.

*jhakkar*



*o mero meghanātha balavāna vikaṭa raṇa vaṃkā re |m  
ero saba duniyā meṃ baje vijaya ko ḍaṃkā re ||  
suddā  
a ra ra ra mero chāyo re gaḅba ko rova hukuma  
mero cāle re |gelā meṃ ho cālū jaba dharatī dhailā jāve re ||*

## Lyrics of huramgā

Every verse of *huraṃgā* is two, four, or six lines related to the stories of Lord Krishna andis in *Brij bhāṣā*. It has mostly spoken language in the Brij Region<sup>20</sup>. In *Rasiyā* Part, *Sakhī* tells Lord Krishna-

One sing this-Other replies-

*are mo pe bol sahe nahīm jāe balam ghar banavāi de nyāro |choḱī choḱī naṭiyā  
le de ban jāū har vāro ||*

“are mere man ke man me rahī śyām te nā khelī horī”

*“tere man ke man me rahī śyām te nā  
khelī horīnā khelī horī śyām te nā khelī horī”*

Sometimes the lyrics are erotic as well.

“terī carar marar kī sej rāt parosī ḍarapyo re”

20 The region lies in central western Uttar Pradesh, the eastern extremities of Rajasthan (Bharatpur, Dholpur).

Fig.1.1. Comparative Chart of the components observed in Kanhaiyā ḍaṃgal and Huraṃgā

Components	Huraṃgā	Kanhaiyā ḍaṃgal
Performance style	Group Singing/ 10-15 Performers	Group Singing/ 40-50 Performers
Instruments	nagādā (Bam), ḍholak, jhāñjh, mañjīrā and cimataḱā.	nagādā (naubat), gherā (ḍhaph), ḍholak, and mañjīrā.
Lyrical Part	Stories of Lord Krishna	Religious Stories, Mythological Stories, Stories of King, Folk Tales, Stories of Devotees and God



<b>Main Singer</b>	Rasiyā	Meḍiyā
<b>Chorus</b>	Rasiyā	joṭh
<b>District</b>	Bharatpur, Deeg, (Brij Chetra)	Bharatpur, Sawai Madhopur, Alwar, Tonk, Karoli, Dholpur,
<b>Costume</b>	kuratā, pajāmā, sāphā	dhotī, kuratā, gamachā
<b>Taal/Rhythm</b>	Keharwa taal, Rhythm Variation	No specific taal, Rhythm variation
<b>Language</b>	Brij bhāṣā	Bāgarī
<b>Structure of the Performance</b>	mātā kī bhavānī, kṛṣṇa kī rās līlāe, rasiyā	mātā kī bhavānī, kahānī, baṛhāv, jhakkar, suḍḍhā
<b>Involvement of Females</b>	Yes	No
<b>Dancers</b>	Yes	No

## Conclusion

After observing the performance of *kanhaiyā daṃgal* and *huraṃgā* as a participant, it is concluded that both exist as distinct art forms in different regions and are performed by different communities of Rajasthan. There are similarities with respect to the (a) performance style, (b) nature of the instruments used for accompaniment, (c) rhythmic Patterns, and (d) structure of the performance. However, there are differences in terms of (a) Language, (b) theme of lyrical content (c) Involvement of female members and dancers.

The present paper reflects the observations of only two groups of performers; hence there is a scope for a detailed study with more groups and geographical locations within the practising area and connecting the chronological transitions through oral history.

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