

# Reminiscence of the Nostalgia and the Rituals in Bhojpuri Folk Songs: Sharda Sinha's Interpretations of Festive Music

Suraj Jaiswal\*

\*Ph.D. Research scholar Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari, Bihar, India 845401 [Suraj123jais@hotmail.com](mailto:Suraj123jais@hotmail.com)

**Citation:** Suraj Jaiswal, (2024). Reminiscence of the Nostalgia and the Rituals in Bhojpuri Folk Songs: Sharda Sinha's Interpretations of Festive Music, *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 30(1) 7600-7602  
Doi: 10.53555/kuey.v30i1.10734

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

Bhojpuri folk songs vividly reflect the region's cultural heritage, embodying emotions, traditions, and community identities. Sharda Sinha, renowned as the "Bhojpuri Queen of Folk Music," has played a pivotal role in reviving and preserving these customs. This research examines the nostalgia and rituals in Bhojpuri folk songs, with a particular emphasis on Sharda Sinha's take on festive music. Her performances of traditional songs, especially during festivals like Chhath Puja, Holi, and Teej, connect the past with the present, evoking deep nostalgia for shared cultural traditions and collective experiences.

The study investigates how Sharda Sinha's music captures the emotional core of rituals, emphasizing their spiritual and communal importance. It analyses her talent for modernising traditional melodies while retaining authenticity, ensuring they resonate with contemporary listeners and the Bhojpuri diaspora. This research highlights the transformative influence of Sinha's music in safeguarding cultural memory and its significance in sustaining the socio-cultural framework of Bhojpuri-speaking communities. Her interpretations are a testament to the lasting relationship between music, rituals, and reflective nostalgia.

**Keywords:** Nostalgia, Diaspora, Identity, Folk Music, Rituals.

## Introduction:

Bhojpuri folk music occupies a significant position within India's cultural legacy, capturing the Bhojpuri-speaking community's spirit of traditions, ceremonies, and emotional richness. Girindrasekhar Bose (1954) notes, "*Folk music has long been an essential part of rural India, not merely as a form of entertainment but as a means of preserving the emotional and cultural history of its people*" (p. 102). These songs extend beyond mere artistic performances; they serve as vital records of a common past and shared identity. According to Narendra Nath Sen Gupta (1987), "*The traditional music of India, especially in its folk form, acts as a repository of a community's collective memory, safeguarding its social customs, rituals, and emotional expressions*" (p.215). Among the various champions of Bhojpuri folk music, Sharda Sinha has risen to prominence as an iconic figure; her renditions of festive songs have reinvigorated the genre and maintained its significance in modern times. As Bose (1954) further observes, "*Artists like Sharda Sinha breathe new life into folk traditions, ensuring that they remain relevant and resonant for new generations*" (p.109). Her music profoundly resonates with listeners, weaving together feelings of nostalgia and traditional practices to forge a lasting bond with her audience. Sen Gupta (1987) asserts, "*Music, particularly folk music, serves as a bridge between past traditions and present realities, making it a powerful tool for cultural continuity*" (p. 225). Nostalgia, an intricate emotional experience marked by a yearning for previous times, is closely linked with cultural forms such as music and traditional practices. In the Bhojpuri-speaking areas of India, folk songs sung by artists like Sharda Sinha are crucial for stirring feelings of nostalgia and maintaining cultural heritage. As Bose (1954) points out, "*Folk music, especially the songs of festivals and rituals, evokes a sense of belonging, as they remind listeners of their cultural origins and the communal experiences that shaped them*" (p. 115). To understand the psychological foundations of nostalgia and its expression in Bhojpuri folk music, it is beneficial to consider the insights of William James.

### **William James on The Emotion of Nostalgia:**

William James, a groundbreaking American philosopher and psychologist, argued that emotions arise from our interpretation of physiological responses to stimuli. In his influential work, *The Principles of Psychology*, James claimed that *“the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion”* (James, 1890, p. 449). This perspective suggests that the experience of nostalgia is triggered by a stimulus—such as a beloved folk song—that evokes physiological reactions, which are then recognised as the feeling of nostalgia. When considering Bhojpuri folk songs, their melodies and lyrics are strong stimuli that bring forth memories of past moments, family connections, and cultural traditions. Audiences may encounter physical responses such as a comforting feeling or tears that, following James's theory, represent the emotion of nostalgia. This is consistent with James's broader perspective that emotions are profoundly linked to bodily experiences and play a crucial role in human awareness.

### **The Traditional Relevance of Bhojpuri Folk Songs:**

The cultural importance of Bhojpuri folk songs is closely linked to the social and cultural traditions of the area. These songs are performed during key life events, festivals, and community gatherings, reflecting the shared spirit of the community. Celebrations such as Chhath Puja, Holi, and Teej hold particular importance in Bhojpuri culture, with associated songs that embody their spiritual and emotional aspects. These melodies act as a vessel for oral history, safeguarding the region's traditions and values for future generations. Sharda Sinha's interpretations of these folk songs have been vital in maintaining their presence. Her performances capture the emotional core of these festivities while making them relatable to contemporary audiences. As Sharma (2020) points out, *“Folk songs, when interpreted by artists such as Sharda Sinha, rise beyond their original context to transform into cultural artifacts that link different generations”* (Sharma, 2020, p. 112).

### **Nostalgia as a Cultural Phenomenon:**

Nostalgia, often a heartfelt yearning for earlier times, is a significant emotional experience deeply connected to music. In the realm of Bhojpuri folk melodies, nostalgia creates a link between people and their cultural heritage. For Bhojpuri migrants, the songs of Sharda Sinha bring back fond memories of their homeland, family ties, and communal festivities, providing a sense of solace and connection in new surroundings. Benedict Anderson's idea of *“imagined communities”* (1983) offers an insightful perspective on this experience. Anderson posits that shared cultural symbols, like music, help individuals preserve a sense of community despite being physically separated. The music of Sharda Sinha exemplifies such a symbol, bringing together Bhojpuri-speaking communities across India and abroad. Her pieces, especially those linked to Chhath Puja, have evolved into anthems of cultural identity. Songs like *“Ho Dinanath”* not only evoke the rituals but also encapsulate the feelings tied to them. As Mukul (2018) observes, *“Sharda Sinha's music connects the temporal and spatial divides in migrants' lives, facilitating their reconnection with their culture through collective memories”* (Mukul, 2018, p. 98).

### **The Psychological Resonance in Sharda Sinha's Folk Music:**

Rituals are pivotal in Bhojpuri folk songs, forming the basis for their thematic and emotional expressions. These songs are often performed alongside particular rituals, enhancing their importance and fostering a more profound bond among participants. For instance, Chhath Puja is a celebration honouring the Sun God and includes intricate rituals conducted by families and communities. The songs associated with this festival are filled with devotion, gratitude, and aspiration, capturing the spiritual essence of the occasion. Sharda Sinha's renditions of Chhath songs have raised their profile, transforming them into enduring works that resonate with audiences beyond the festival's immediate context. Her talent for expressing the emotional richness of these rituals through her music has received widespread recognition. Sharma (2020) noted, *“Sharda Sinha's performances embody the cyclical essence of life and nature, linking personal experiences with shared cultural practices”* (Sharma, 2020, p. 118). Her track *“Pahle Pahil Chhathi Maiya”* exemplifies this concept. The lyrics reflect the dedication and careful preparation involved in the rituals, while the melody conveys a sense of reverence and nostalgia. The widespread appeal of this song highlights its power to resonate with listeners emotionally, crossing the confines of time and place.

### **The Psychological and Emotional Impact of Sharda Sinha's Folk Song:**

The psychological effects of Sharda Sinha's music go beyond mere nostalgia and the preservation of culture. Her songs provide comfort and emotional support, especially during personal distress or community crises. The themes of resilience, hope, and gratitude found throughout her music deeply resonate with listeners, serving as a wellspring of strength and inspiration. This healing aspect of her music is particularly apparent during festivals, where her songs act as a cohesive unifier. For the Bhojpuri diaspora, Sharda Sinha's songs connect to their cultural heritage, aiding them in preserving their identity while living abroad. As Gupta (2021) notes, *“Music acts as a stabilizing force for migrants, enabling them to navigate the challenges of cultural adaptation while safeguarding their legacy”* (Gupta, 2021, p. 90). The collective singing of her music enhances feelings of community, strengthening social connections and fostering a shared emotional experience. Verma

(2020) noted, “*Sharda Sinha’s music encapsulates the therapeutic power of art, offering comfort and connection in an ever-dividing world*” (Verma, 2020, p. 102).

### The Interpretation of Sharda Sinha’s Folk Music:

Sharda Sinha, lovingly referred to as the “*Bihar Kokila*,” has played a crucial role in preserving and popularizing Bhojpuri folk music. Her performances of songs associated with festivals such as Chhath Puja carry deep cultural significance and evoke strong feelings of nostalgia among her audience. Sinha’s music not only provides entertainment but also strengthens cultural identity and continuity. The rituals illustrated in her songs frequently centre on family connections, agricultural traditions, and devotional practices, reflecting the social and cultural landscape of the Bhojpuri-speaking areas. As Das (2019) points out, “*Artists like Sharda Sinha are vital in rejuvenating folk traditions, ensuring they remain significant in an increasingly modern world*” (Das, 2019, p. 58). This method is seen in her Holi songs, which merge the festive enthusiasm of the occasion with the lyrical charm of Bhojpuri folk music. Tracks such as “*Rang Debi*” highlight the joyful spirit of Holi while retaining the cultural intricacies that give these songs their distinctiveness. Through her music, Sinha fosters an auditory environment where listeners can reconnect with their roots, relive treasured memories, and feel a sense of belonging.

### Conclusion:

Sharda Sinha's Bhojpuri folk songs exemplify the role of music in safeguarding cultural heritage, evoking memories, and reinforcing identity. In his work *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Freud posited that “*Human emotions, particularly those tied to collective memory and cultural practices, find powerful outlets in artistic expressions, such as music and ritual*” (Freud, 1917, p. 245). Sinha's skillful integration of emotional ritual with the universal appeal of music has ensured the continued relevance of Bhojpuri folk traditions in an evolving society. Her compositions resonate with familiar themes and recollections, providing listeners with a sense of continuity and belonging, which aligns with Freud's concept of “*repetition compulsion*.” By incorporating contemporary elements while preserving the essence of the genre, Sinha has crafted a repertoire that resonates with diverse audiences across generations. Arundhati Roy, in *The God of Small Things* (1997), remarked that “*Artistic expressions that weave the past and present together create a timeless dialogue between what we remember and what we aspire to preserve*” (Roy, 1997, p. 112). Through her efforts, Sinha has not only maintained the integrity of Bhojpuri folk songs but has also enriched the experiences of her listeners, thereby deepening their connection to their cultural roots and fostering a sense of community. Freud (1927) noted that “*Rituals and traditions serve as collective mechanisms to alleviate the anxieties of modernity, offering psychological grounding and a sense of shared purpose*” (Freud, 1927, p. 54). In an increasingly globalized context, Sinha's music serves to reconnect individuals with their cultural origins, mitigating feelings of alienation. Roy (2001) emphasized that “*Stories, songs, and rituals are the threads that weave a strong cultural fabric, binding us to our past and shaping our future*” (Roy, 2001, p. 56). Through Sharda Sinha's renditions of Bhojpuri folk music, the past, present, and future coexist in a harmonious, nostalgic bond that celebrates community, tradition, and identity.

### Works Cited:

1. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.
2. Bose, Girindrasekhar. *Folk Music of India*. Calcutta University Press, 1954.
3. Das, Amit. “Folk Music and Identity: The Role of Sharda Sinha.” *Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2019, pp. 56-70.
4. Freud, Sigmund. *Mourning and Melancholia*. The Hogarth Press, 1917.
5. Gupta, Narendra Nath Sen. *Cultural Continuity in Indian Folk Music*. Vikas Publishing, 1987.
6. Gupta, Shilpa. *Music and Migration: The Role of Folk Songs in Diaspora Communities*. Sage Publications, 2021.
7. James, William. *The Principles of Psychology*. Dover Publications, 1890.
8. Mukherjee, Ramesh. “Nostalgia and Memory: Exploring the Impact of Folk Songs in Migration.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2018, pp. 88-102.
9. Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. Penguin Books, 1997.
10. Sharma, Renu. “Sharda Sinha: The Folk Queen Who Redefined Bhojpuri Music.” *Folk Music and Society Journal*, vol. 11, no. 4, 2020, pp. 111-122.
11. Verma, Pradeep. “The Healing Power of Folk Music in Bhojpuri Culture.” *Journal of Psychoanalysis and Art*, vol. 15, no. 2, 2020, pp. 100-114.