

Women's Role in Bundelkhand Folk Culture

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Abstract

The present research paper analyses the role of women in the folk culture of Bundelkhand from a cultural and sociological point of view. Bundelkhand, a unique cultural landmass spread across the border districts of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, is known for its rich oral tradition, folk songs, folk dances, folk dramas, and murals. The presence of women is at the heart of this entire cultural heritage. She is not only the proponent of these traditions, but also their mother, protector, and bearer. This study presents a detailed analysis of women's contributions to folk songs such as Sohar, Gari, Dadra, Kartik, Chakia and Phag, dance forms such as Rai, Badhaai and Naurata, women-centric folk dramas like Jogia Baba, and folk paintings such as Suraiti and Morila. At the same time, it draws attention to the deep contradiction in which folk memory glorifies women as heroines, but in real life they face low literacy, economic dependency, and social inequality (Bundelkhand Research Portal, n.d.). Research concludes that the continuity of Bundeli folk culture is based on female labour and female creativity, and modern media have given new visibility to this role.

Keywords

Bundelkhand, folk culture, Women's role, Bundeli folk songs, Folk dance, and oral tradition

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Introduction

Culture is the collective memory of any masses, and folk culture is that living form of that memory that resides not in the texts, but in the daily routine of the people, their songs, their feasts, and the art of their hands. Located in the central part of India, Bundelkhand is such a cultural region where this folk consciousness still breathes with its full vibrancy. Stretching from Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jalaun, Hamirpur, Mahoba, Banda and Chitrakoot to Sagar, Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Damoh and Panna, this vast area is culturally fertile despite its arid plateaus, drying rivers, and rocky land. While the soil here has created countless tales of valour and sacrifice, it has also preserved within itself a gentle, musical, and creative world.

The role of the force that has been most profound and least recognized in creating and sustaining this cultural world is the Bundeli woman. When a child is born in the courtyard of the house, it is welcomed with a sober song from the woman's throat; When the time comes for a daughter's marriage, it is the women who colour the occasion by singing abuses and Dadra; When the holy month of Kartik arrives, the songs of the groups of women going to the river in the darkness of dawn fill the atmosphere with devotion. Be it the Chakia song hummed while grinding the mill or the Phag that resonates during the days of Holi, the female voice is present at every turn of Bundeli's life. This appearance is not accidental, but a coherent cultural role in which the woman transfers knowledge, rites, and artistic sensibilities from generation to generation.

But this role is not limited to songs alone. Be it the Suraiti painting decorating the walls on Diwali, the Nauraat composed by the girls in Navratri, or the Jogiya Baba folk drama performed by women on marriage, the creative presence of women is clear in all these. In the world of folk dance, a genre like Rai is the product of this region, at the centre of which is the art of dancer. In this way, the Bundeli woman simultaneously plays the role of singer, dancer, painter, narrator, and ritualist.

Yet there appears to be a deep gulf between this cultural centrality and the socio-economic reality of the woman. On the one hand, the Bundeli folk tales extol heroines like Rani Lakshmibai and Rani Durgavati and idealize feminine valour; On the other hand, the region has a low rate of female literacy, limited economic autonomy, and the burden of hardships like water crisis falls on women's shoulders. This contradiction gives rise to the central curiosity of this research: why a woman who appears so powerful on the cultural stage is so struggling in social reality, and how folk culture acts as a bridge between these two situations.

The present research paper focuses on this question. The aim is to systematically discuss the role of women in various forms of Bundeli folk culture, to understand the social and cultural meaning of that role, and to highlight the interrelationship between cultural ideals and social realities. This study believes that the most authentic way to understand the

folk culture of Bundelkhand lies in understanding the contribution of its women, as they are the silent but indispensable axis of this tradition.

2. Review of Literature

Studies on Bundeli folk culture over the past few decades highlight the multi-layered nature of the subject, though the discussion is recent from a women-centric perspective. Bharati (2020) in his study presented a systematic assortment of Bundeli folk songs, folk dramas and rituals and highlighted forms such as Sohar, Dadra and Jogia Baba, in which the role of the woman is decisive (Bharti, 2020). His work is important in the sense that he sees folk songs as a mirror of social institutions and not as mere entertainment.

Niranjan (2024) presented a nuanced analysis of the humour inherent in Bundeli wedding songs and showed how songs like abuse provide a safe space for criticism and humour to women even within the confines of social norms (Niranjan, 2024). This approach gave a new dimension to the question of female agency in folklore studies. Dubey (2026) conducted a field study of the heritage of Bundeli folk music in the context of Chhatarpur district and documented the continuity of the musical tradition at the local level (Dubey, 2026).

The ethnographic study of Rana, Sharma, and Ghosh (2020) assumes special significance in the context of Rai dance and the Bedia community, as it presents the complex interrelationship of art and exploitation without any oversimplification (Rana et al., 2020). Bajpai (2024) studied gender inclusion in the digitization of Alha folklore to show how modern technology is making it possible for women to enter traditionally male-dominated genres (Bajpai, 2024). Sengupta and Basu (2023) examined the relationship between folk memory and history by keeping historical female voices, i.e., Rani Durgavati and Rani Laxmibai at the centre of historiography (Sengupta & Basu, 2023).

In parallel, institutional, and authentic sources, such as the Bundelkhand Research Portal (n.d.), the Oxfam India (2017) report, and the material published by Development Alternatives (N.D.) on Radio Bundelkhand, document the true socio-economic status of women and efforts for cultural empowerment. The combined text of all these studies makes it clear that although women are the focal point of cultural production, there is still considerable potential for in-depth research focused on their economic agency, business models, and generational continuity. The presented research paper is an attempt to fill this void partially.

3. Research Objectives

The following major aims of this research study have been set. First, to present a systematic and authentic account of the role of women in Bundeli folk songs, folk dances, folk dramatic forms, folk paintings, and folk literature. Second, to analyse the nature of feminine expression in these cultural forms, its social context and cultural meaning. Third, to examine the contradiction between the idealized heroine image in folk culture and the

actual socio-economic status of women. Fourth, to highlight the role of modern media such as community radio, digital platforms and street plays in cultural preservation and women empowerment. Fifth, to find the existing research gaps in this subject and suggest directions for future studies.

4. Research Methodology

The present study is based on qualitative and descriptive-analytical methods. Since the nature of folk culture is verbal and demonstrative, its study demands cultural interpretation rather than quantitative data. The research uses secondary sources such as research journal articles, dissertations, institutional reports, authentic news articles, interviews, and reliable web sources.

A thematic analysis of the collected material was carried out, under which the material was classified into six major categories: (1) Folk Songs, (2) Folk Dances and Dramas, (3) Folk Paintings and Crafts, (4) Folk Literature, (5) Socio-Economic and Spiritual Perspectives, and (6) Media and Cultural Preservation. In each category, the role of women was examined in terms of cultural meaning, social function, and historical continuity. The limitation of the study is that it is not based on field-based direct interviews, but on available documented sources; Therefore, its findings can be further corroborated by future fieldwork. All references and quotes are presented in the style of APA Seventh Edition.

5. The Socio-Cultural Landscape of Bundelkhand

Before understanding the role of woman in Bundeli folk culture, it is necessary to understand the socio-cultural land in which this role takes shape. Bundelkhand is an agrarian but environmentally challenging region, where erratic rainfall, frequent droughts and limited employment opportunities profoundly affect the structure of social life. These difficult geographical conditions have given rise to a special kind of collectively, tolerance and festivity in the life of the people here, which is expressed in the form of folk culture.

The social structure of the region is woven with the fabric of caste, clan, and rural community. Different castes and occupational groups have developed their own songs, dances, and rituals, which make up the diversity of Bundeli folk culture (Bharti, 2020). The position of the woman in this structure is dualistic. She is the inner axis of the household, the conductor of rites and rituals, but her participation in the public and economic sphere is often limited. This duality comes to the fore again in the sections that follow, because every form of folk culture is built in the shadow of this social reality.

It is noteworthy that women are highly respected at the cultural level in the Bundeli society. The worship of heroines in folklore, worship of folk goddesses and Kanya Puja in rituals are symbols of this honour. But this symbolic respect does not always translate into practical equality, and it is in this space that folk culture becomes a platform where women express their creativity, their labour, and sometimes their resistance.

6. Women in Bundeli Folk Songs

Bundeli folk songs are the most vocal and widespread form of folk culture here, and the presence of female voices is the strongest among them. These songs are inextricably linked to the rites of the life cycle, the changes of seasons, daily labour, and religious faith. Their biggest feature is that they do not expect any platform or formal training. They spontaneously sprout in the courtyard, on the ridge of the field, on the riverbank and on the axis of the mill, and their main carrier is the female (Bharti, 2020). The following subsections provide a discussion of these major song forms.

6.1 Sohar: The Songs of Birth and Motherhood

Sohar Bundeli, sung on the birth of a child, is the most joyous form of folk song-tradition. When a child is born in a house, the women of the family and the neighbourhood gather and sing Sohar collectively. These songs express the welcome of the newborn, the good fortune of the mother, the prosperity of the family and the continuity of the lineage. The cultural significance of Sohar is not limited to the celebration alone; It also underlines the collective role of the women-community in taking emotional and ritual leadership during life's most important moments (Bharti, 2020). In Sohar songs, the desire for the birth of a son is often vocal, which reflects the social values of the time; But the real power of these songs lies in their collectively, their affection and the feminine camaraderie they create.

6.2 Gari and Dadra: Wedding Songs and the Politics of Humour

Marriages are the most elaborate cultural event in the Bundeli society, and women's songs play a significant role in it. Among them, the place of 'Gari' songs is special. Curses are humorous and teasing-loving songs that the women of the bride's side sing while addressing the groom's side. On the surface, these songs are entertainment, but there is a deep social structure hidden within them. Abuse provides women with a culturally accepted space where they can comment on taboo topics, such as male behaviour, social decorum, and in-laws' and in-laws' relationships, openly but under a cover of humour (Niranjan, 2024).

This ritualistic humour temporarily reverses the balance of power between the two families. In the moment of marriage, when traditionally the groom's side is considered superior, the women from the bride's side achieve symbolic superiority through their songs. Thus, abuse is a subtle yet powerful expression of female agency (Niranjan, 2024). Parallel to this, the song 'Dadra' is usually sung by a group of women on the arrival of the newlyweds at their in-laws' place. These songs give voice to the reception of new relationships, the feeling of love and the process of assimilating the bride into the family (Bharti, 2020). Both Sohar and Dadra show that the Bundeli woman takes linguistic and emotional leadership on key family occasions such as marriage and birth.

6.3 Kartik and Devotional Songs

Kartik month is a special spiritual period of Bundeli woman's life. In this month,

women see a fast and, in the Brahma Muhurta, even when it is dark, go out in groups to bathe in groups towards the river or pond. In this journey, she sings Kartik songs based on the character of Lord Rama and Krishna, which fills the atmosphere of dawn with devotion. This collective devotional practice is not just a religious act; It is also an opportunity for women to socialize, collaborate and have collective identity (Outlook India, 2022). Beyond daily household obligations, it is a time when women create an autonomous community space, where their voices are prominent.

6.4 Chakiya and the Songs of Labour

One of the features of the Bundeli folklore tradition is that art and labour are not separate from each other. In the daily household labour, especially during mill grinding, women sing 'Chakia geet'. These songs transform the monotonous pace of the mill and the fatigue of labour into a rhythmic, creative experience. In these songs, the joys and sorrows of a woman's life, the memory of the maternal home, the pain of separation and the aspirations of the future are mixed. Labour-songs are proof that for a Bundeli woman, art is not a separate, exclusive activity, but an integral part of her labour life (Bharti, 2020). Through these songs, she also gives expression to her loneliness and makes the rigors of domestic labour bearable.

6.5 Faag, Kajri and Seasonal Expressions

Phag is the most famous season song of Bundelkhand, which is associated with the arrival of Holi and spring and the joy of harvesting. Folk poets like Isuri gave Phag literary heights. Although the public performance of Phag is usually in men's circles, women also sing Phag in household and women's groups and make it a medium of expression of love, nature, and the cycle of seasons (Bharti, 2020). Kajri, sung in the rainy season, is also mainly a women's song, in which the greenery of Sawan, the feelings of swing, separation and union are expressed. In addition, in categories such as Alha, Khayal and Lamtera, women are active as both listeners and co-performers, and in contemporary times, they are also appearing as prominent artists in some genres.

6.6 Lamtera, Viraha and Songs of Longing

The voices of devotion and separation are also deeply embedded in the Bundeli folk song tradition. Lamtera songs are associated with devotion to God and are sung on occasions of pilgrimage after the rabi harvest, usually between January and March; Both men and women take part in these and offer gratitude to God (Bharti, 2020). Parallel to this is a rich stream of separation songs, in which the loneliness, pain and aspiration of a woman waiting for her husband who has gone abroad due to migration find expression. The migration of men to cities for employment in Bundelkhand has been a social reality, and this reality has given the woman's voice a distinctive poetic language of separation. In these songs, the woman appears not just as a lover in waiting, but as a strong but lonely entity bearing the

full responsibility of the home, farm, and family. In this way, the songs of separation document both the emotional and economic realities of the Bundeli woman simultaneously.

7. Women in Folk Dance and Drama

The folk dances and folk theatres of Bundelkhand reflect the complex interrelationships of place, caste, and sexuality. The role of women in these performing arts is diverse. Some forms are completely feminine, some involve male-female participation, and in others, the presence of women has been a subject of social conflict and controversy.

7.1 The Rai Dance and the Bedia Community

Rai is the most famous and ancient folk dance of Bundelkhand, and at its centre is 'Bedni' i.e., dancers, who traditionally come from the Bedia community. The dancer, dressed in a veil and a heavy, girdled lehenga, dances to the beat of the dholak and the sound of the drum in a rapid, rhythmic motion like the scattering of mustard seeds; Due to this feature, it is called 'rye' (mustard). Often, Isuri's phages are sung in it. Artistically, the Rai is an extraordinarily sophisticated dance, requiring high skill in rhythm, balance, and expression.

But the social history of rye is as complex and painful as its artistic superiority. Ethnographic studies underline that under the feudal patronage system, the dance became associated with an institutional exploitation structure, which led to social stigma and marginalization of Bedani women (Rana et al., 2020). Thus, the rye is the pinnacle of Bundeli's artistic talent on the one hand, and a symbol of the control of society and power over the female body on the other. In contemporary times, with the efforts of patrons like Ram Sahai Pandey and many resolute artists, efforts are being made to restore this dance to its artistic prestige and set up it as a respectable stage-art by separating it from the history of exploitation (Bundeli Jhalak, 2024). This duality of rye symbolizes the broader status of the Bundeli woman in which art and exploitation; respect and stigma go hand in hand.

7.2 Badhai Dance

Badhaai dance is a group dance performed on birth, marriage, and other auspicious occasions as a gesture of gratitude to Goddess Sheetala and the family deities. Unlike rye, both men and women take part in the greetings, and it symbolizes the collectively of the celebration. It consists of joyous dance to the accompaniment of drums, drums and shehnais. The congratulatory dance exemplifies the shared cultural participation of men and women, where the gender divide is relaxed and the entire community celebrates together (Bundeli Jhalak, 2024).

7.3 Naurata, Jhinjhiya and Girlhood Rituals

The 'Naurta' ritual performed by virgin girls during Navratri is an important platform for cultural training of Bundeli girls. In this, girls draw traditional figures on the wall, dance 'Jhinjhiya' with an earthen lamp on their heads, and sing a group song (Bharti, 2020). Similarly, on Akshaya Tritiya (Akti), girls perform a symbolic marriage of dolls and sing

songs. These rituals are not just games; Through these, girls unwittingly rehearse the social experiences associated with marriage, migration, and the role of women, and at the same time become a sequel to the cultural continuity by engaging with the tradition of collective singing and ritual.

7.4 Jogiya Baba and Women's Folk Theatre

'Jogiya Baba' is a typical Bundeli folk drama performed only by women on marriage. This is a striking example of a female-centric performance tradition, where the entire responsibility of acting, dialogue and presentation is on women (Bharti, 2020). In contrast, in traditional folk drama forms such as 'Swang' and 'Rawala', although female characters have historically been played by male actors, their plot often revolves around the reality of rural women's life, their struggles and their sense of humour. Consequently, women are sometimes present on the folk stage as a live presenter, and sometimes as the centre of the story.

8. Women in Folk Art and Craft

The creative role of Bundeli women in the field of folk painting and crafts is particularly visible. The folk painting here is ritual-centric and is often created by women. On Deepawali, women depict Lakshmi, Vishnu, and other auspicious figures in the 'Sureti' mural art that adorns the walls of the houses. This art is a confluence of religious faith, aesthetic sense, and the desire for family prosperity (Bharti, 2020).

On Navratri, girls make 'Naurat' or 'Udeshad' paintings with clay, ochre and turmeric, while rural women create 'Morila' paintings with peacock pairs on the walls, which are painted with ochre and other natural colours when dry. On occasions like Kajari Navami, women paint on the floor with rice batter in a dark room, and worship them for fifteen days by growing wheat or barley sprouts in bowls of leaves. It is a symbolic ritual of agricultural cycle, fertility, and feminine faith (Bharti, 2020).

Along with these paintings, traditional jewellery is also an integral part of Bundeli women's culture. Jewellery like Bichhiya, Anobha, Kada and Nupur are not only a means of adornment, but also an indicator of the social identity and status of a married woman. It is particularly noteworthy that murals and other folk arts also become a supplementary source of income for many families, making this creative role of women religious and aesthetic as well as an economic dimension. As a result, folk art becomes a confluence of all three, expression, faith, and livelihood for women.

9. Women in Folk and Regional Literature

The tradition of women writers in the creation and promotion of Bundeli literature has been long and rich. A bright link in this tradition is the seventeenth-century poetess Rai Praveen, who was associated with the Orchha court and was proficient in music, dance, and poetry. Rai Praveen, a disciple of the famous poet Keshavdas, was renowned for her poetic

talent and eloquence; The story of his poetic dialogues related to Akbar's court is still alive in Bundeli cultural memory. Rai Praveen is a testimony to the fact that the Bundeli woman has been active and prestigious not only at the folk level but also at the higher level of classical and court literature.

This tradition was carried forward by Mirabai's devotional verses, and in modern times by writers like Dr. Maya Singh and Maitreyi Pushpa. Maitreyi Pushpa's fiction presents an authentic document of the life, struggle, and aspirations of a woman of Bundelkhand and provides literary dignity to folk reality. Apart from this, in Bundeli folk-memory, the stories of heroines like Rani Lakshmibai and Gond Rani Durgavati are revered as cultural symbols of feminine valour, which are repeatedly remembered in folk songs and heroic tales like *Alha* (Sengupta & Basu, 2023). Thus, in both folk and classical literary streams, women have been central sometimes as creators and sometimes as sources of inspiration.

10. Socio-economic and Spiritual Dimensions

The significant role of women in folk culture cannot be understood in isolation from its socio-economic reality, as cultural expression often stems from that life experience. The most serious environmental crisis in Bundelkhand is water scarcity, and the biggest burden falls on women. Rural women often walk several kilometres to carry water with a pitcher on their heads. This harsh reality finds poignant expression in the proverb 'Mori Gagar Na Phote, Chah Balam Mar Jaye', which simultaneously underlines the horror of the water crisis on the one hand and the inevitability of female labour on the other.

The role of women in spiritual and ritualistic life is particularly powerful. Women are at the forefront of fasting, Navratri rituals, and the worship of folk deities, and through this they become the spiritual axis of the family and community (Forward Press, n.d.). Elements of matri-focal traditions are also reflected in these rituals, where the worship of female goddesses and rituals conducted by women affirm the symbolic centrality of women in the social structure.

From an economic point of view, women's participation is paradoxical. She contributes to agricultural labour, animal husbandry, domestic work, and folk art, but her contribution is often invisible and does not receive equal economic recognition or reward. Reports by organisations such as Oxfam India (2017) document efforts to mobilise and empower women from marginalised communities and show that women can transform their economic and social status through collective organisation (Oxfam India, 2017). The Bundeli woman thus performs multi-layered responsibilities of labour, devotion and creativity at the same time, and folk culture is a cultural expression of these experiences.

11. Media, Modernity and Cultural Preservation

In contemporary times, modern media has played a significant role in preserving Bundeli folk culture and empowering women's voice. The most important example in this

context is the community radio 'Radio Bundelkhand' ran from Orchha. The radio has compiled and recorded hundreds of original Bundeli folk songs from local folk singers, enabling digital preservation of an endangered oral heritage. More importantly, through programmes like 'Sakhi-Saheli' and 'Stree Ek Kahani Meri Bhi', the radio has provided a public platform for women to tell their stories, share their experiences and take cultural initiatives (Development Alternatives, n.d.).

The digital revolution has also given unprecedented access to folk artists. Platforms like YouTube have brought Bundeli folk singers like Satish Yadav and many women artists to a wider audience, giving both livelihood and recognition to their art (Outlook India, 2022). Female alha-singers like Sanjo Baghel have broken a significant gender barrier by entering the traditionally male-dominated alha-singing genre, and digital platforms have further accelerated this inclusion (Bajpai, 2024; ETV Bharat, 2026).

Another powerful form of cultural expression is associated with social resistance. Women's organizations like 'Vanangana', active in areas like Chitrakoot and Banda, have made the question of domestic violence and women's rights a subject of public debate through street plays and street plays. These demonstrations transformed personal suffering into community dialogue and redefined the tradition of folk performance as a tool for social change (Uppal, 2016). In this way, modern media and traditional folk forms are together giving new power and new visibility to the female voice.

12. Folk Proverbs, Sayings and Oral Narratives

Apart from folk songs and dances, an important dimension of Bundeli folk culture is its proverbs, proverbs, and oral stories, in which the experience of women's life and folk wisdom are stored. These proverbs often express in a brief but sharp way the daily labour of women, their relationships, and their social status. The famous saying 'Mori Gagar Na Phote, Chah Balam Mar Jaye', expressing the pain of a woman struggling with water crisis, is a poignant example of this, which underlines the necessity of water on the one hand and the centrality of women's labour on the other.

The bearer of the oral narrative tradition has also been women. The grandmothers, grandmothers and mothers of the house narrate folk tales, fables and heroic tales to the children at night, thus making an informal transfer of cultural values and collective memory. Be it the heroic tales of Alha-Udal or the stories of the bravery of Rani Laxmibai and Rani Durgavati, the role of women's reading has been decisive in keeping them alive from generation to generation (Sengupta & Basu, 2023). Through these stories, boys and girls not only get entertainment, but also imbibe the values of courage, sacrifice, dignity, and social responsibility.

In this way, proverbs and oral stories highlight the dual role of the Bundeli woman. On the one hand, he is the subject of these sayings and narratives, and on the other hand, his

chief patron and bearer. This oral tradition has proved to be the most reliable medium of cultural continuity in the absence of written records, and its vibrancy is attributed to women's memory and women's speech.

13. Discussion: Cultural Iconography versus Social Reality

From the above analysis, a clear and striking contradiction appears, which is the central insight of this research. On the one hand, Bundeli folk culture bestows profound respect and symbolic superiority on women. She finds heroines like Rani Lakshmibai and Rani Durgavati, worships folk goddesses, and bestows divinity on women through Kanya Puja in rituals (Sengupta & Basu, 2023). On the other hand, social indicators in the same region present a different reality: low female literacy, limited economic autonomy, and violence and inequality at both the household and public levels (Bundelkhand Research Portal, n.d.).

The depth of this contradiction is further illustrated by statistics. According to a study cited by the Bundelkhand Research Portal, agricultural women in the region work for about 8.75 hours per day on average, while men do about 4.72 hours; Yet women labour neither gets equal reward nor equal social recognition (Bundelkhand Research Portal, n.d.). Thus, women, despite being the custodians of cultural identity and the backbone of the economy, remain marginalized in the areas of decision and resources.

This paradox shows that cultural idealization and social empowerment are not necessarily comparable to each other. Symbolic worship is not a guarantee of real equality. But there are also signs of change within this gloomy reality. The increasing self-representation of women artists in genres such as Rai and Alha, the platforms provided by community radio, and the voices of resistance rising through street plays are all meaningful efforts towards bridging this gap (Bajpai, 2024; Uppal, 2016). Folk culture is thus not only a mirror of the status quo, but also a potential tool for change.

14. Research Gap and Future Directions

Although the available literature presents a comprehensive description of the role of women in Bundeli folk culture, there is a clear gap in research in certain areas. First, detailed statistical and field-based studies on the economic empowerment of women associated with folk arts such as rai, badhai and mural painting are limited. Second, an in-depth qualitative assessment of the long-term social impact of cultural interventions such as street plays against domestic violence has not been adequately evaluated so far.

Third, in this era of globalization, urbanization and migration, there is a need for a comparative study on the changing relationship between the new generation of Bundeli girls and traditional folk forms, because it is important to know how young women are accepting, rejecting, or adapting these traditions. Fourth, from the point of view of women from marginalized populations like the Bedia community, in their own voice, the study of

arts like Rai is still needed. Research based on field-based oral history, in-depth interviews and participant observation will be particularly useful to fill these gaps.

15. Conclusion

From the entire discussion of this study, the role of women in the folk culture of Bundelkhand is multi-dimensional, profound, and central. She imparts cultural meaning to important occasions and seasonal cycles of life through songs such as Sohar, Gari, Dadra, Kartik, Chakia and Phag; In genres like Rai, she herself is present as an artist and participates in the congratulatory and the nourishment; Mural paintings like Suraiti, Morila and Naurat embody their creativity in traditional jewellery; And she makes her presence felt as a creator in the literary tradition from Rai Praveen to Maitreyi Pushpa.

The analysis of all these forms proves unequivocally that the Bundeli woman is not just the presenter of folk culture, but its principal mother, protector, and bearer. It is the surviving axis of the oral tradition, without which this cultural heritage could neither be created nor passed on to the next generation. Despite the deep contradiction that exists between cultural ideals and social reality, women have been consistently expressing labour, devotion, celebration, and resistance through their art and thus keeping their cultural agency.

In contemporary times, modern mediums such as community radio, digital platforms and social theatre have given new visibility and new strength to this role, enabling women to amplify their voices and actively preserve their heritage. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the history, present and future of the folk culture of Bundelkhand are incomplete without the contribution of women. The most important direction for future research is to find ways to translate this cultural centrality into social and economic equality, so that the strong woman of the cultural platform can be equally empowered in the social reality.

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