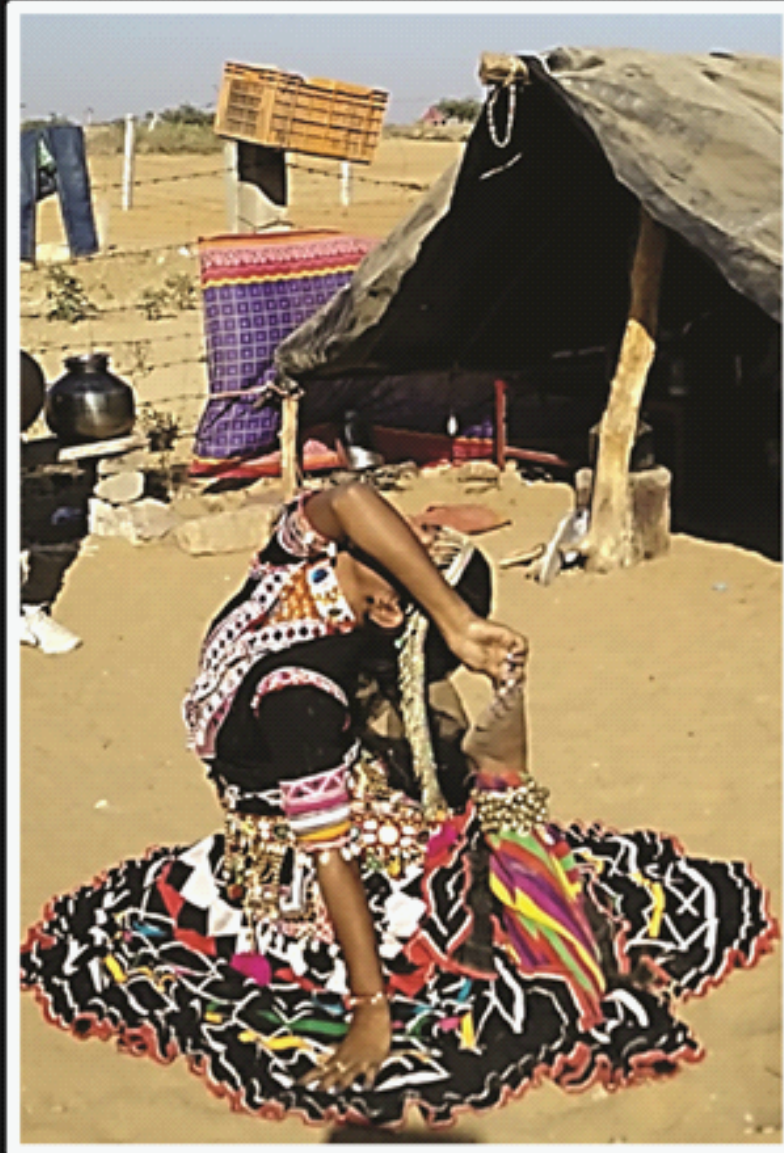




A Tradition of Transience:

The Kalbelia Dance



3/2/2016



A Tradition of Transience:

The Kalbelia Dance

3/2/2016



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report entitled “A Tradition of Transience: The Kalbelia Dance” submitted by the undersigned research team was carried out under my mentorship. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

Sr. No.	Name of the Student	Designation	Signature
1	Ganesan Aarathi	Content Writer, Audio-Visual Team	
2	Karishma Shah	Accounts Team, Logistics Team	
3	Pooja Bohra	Creative Team, On Field Research, Accounts Team	
4	Pranjali Kulkarni	Content Writer, On Field Research, Creative Team	
5	Shivani Kedia	Creative Team, On Field Research, Accounts Team	
6	Surbhi Lodha	Group Leader, Accounts Team, Audio-Visual Team, Logistics Team	
7	Tanisha Gandhi	Content Writer, Audio-Visual Team, Creative Team	
8	Tharika Arun	Content Writer, On Field Research	
9	Viyona Mohan	Content Writer, Audio-Visual Team	

Name of the Faculty Mentor: K.S. Mochish

Signature:

Date:



Table of Contents

Topics	Page No.
Title Page	i
Certificate	ii
Acknowledgement	iv
Abstract	vi
List of Maps, Figures, Boxes and Tables	vii
Chapter 1: “ <i>Padhaaro Mhare Desh</i> ”- Introducing the Kalbelia Dance	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	7
Chapter 3: “ <i>Inro Shuruwat</i> ”- Origins	15
Chapter 4: “ <i>Rehen Sehen aur Samajo Sthithiyo</i> ” - Outlining Lifestyle and Social Status	28
Chapter 5: “ <i>Ainae Nach</i> ” - Documenting the Grammar of the Performance	37
Chapter 6: “ <i>Kal Raha Na Raho Ke Khabar</i> ” - The Place of Kalbelia Dance in the Future	63
Chapter 7: “ <i>Aakhri Baath</i> ” – Conclusion	70
References	75
Appendices	79
Glossary	88



Acknowledgements

The successful completion of the Discover India Project (DIP) would have been impossible without the guidance and support of key individuals.

We thank Dr. Devi Singh (Vice-Chancellor, FLAME University), Professor Santosh Kudtarkar (Associate Dean, FLAME University), Professor Neeti Bose (Chair, Discover India Program) and the DIP Committee for facilitating this project. To Professor K.S. Mochish (Group Mentor) and Professor Ashutosh Potdar (Report Mentor) we extend our warm gratitude, for their constant guidance, suggestions and support.

The extensive primary research conducted lies at the core of this research project.

We extend our gratitude to Mr. Raphael Treza (Director of *Cobra Gypsies*) for his invaluable insights into the Kalbelia tribe and for providing us with our initial grounding on the topic.

To Mr. Banna Nath Sapera, Mrs. Rajbala Sapera and all the families of Kalakar Colony we extend our thanks, for their warmth and invaluable discourse on their tribe and its culture. To Mr. Amar Nath Sapera, Ms. Kiran Nath Sapera, Ms. Anu Nath Sapera and all the families that we interacted with in the Pushkar desert, we extend our deepest gratitude, for providing us with exhibits and discourse on the tribe and its music and dance tradition. We extend our thanks to Mr. Sadhu Nath, for his discussions on the pre-performance aspects of the tribe. To Mr. Puran Nath Sapera, Mrs. Rajki Puran Nath Sapera and Mr. Lokesh Nath Sapera we extend our gratitude for training the performers in the dance form, as well as informing us on its key features. We thank Mr. Jagan Nath Sapera (snake charmer at Amer Fort), for his insights into the relationship between the Kalbelia tribe and the government.

We extend our thanks to Mr. Chhavi Joshi (Cultural Programme Officer, Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur) for his in-depth discourse on folk dance and Kalbelia dance, as well as for providing us



with literature integral to our topic. To Mr. Ramli Ibrahim (world renowned Odissi dancer), we extend our thanks for his invaluable insights into the structure of folk and classical dances.

Finally, we thank our families and well-wishers for their continued love and support throughout the duration of this research project.



Abstract

The Kalbelia Dance is a popular folk dance from the state of Rajasthan practiced by the Kalbelia tribe. Before the enactment of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the tribe earned their livelihood through snake charming and venom extraction. However post enactment, the tribe had to give up their previous profession and adapt to the profession of dance and music. Hence the past profession of snake charming is inevitably reflected in their performance. After advocating for folk dance status, the dance was declared as a folk dance by UNESCO in 2010 as a part of its Intangible Heritage List. The population of the dancers is found to be predominant in Bamer, Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Pali, Ajmer, Chittorgarh, Jaipur and Pushkar.

This report consists of primary data collected over a period of eight days in Jaipur and Pushkar. The report discusses in detail the origin of the tribe and dance. Further, the report also discusses the various features of lifestyle and social status studied in three regions i.e. Kalakar Colony, Bhojpura Bhati (Jaipur) and the outskirts of Pushkar. Since there is found to be a near lack of secondary research available on the grammar of the performance, the report attempts to document the Kalbelia dance in terms of music and lyrics, pre-performance, performance and post performance rituals. Through this documentation, the report attempts to analyse the implications of the grammar of the performance on lifestyle and social status. The report attempts to understand the evolution of the dance with the changing expectations of the audience and attempts to suggest a possible future of the dance.



List of Maps, Figures, Boxes and Tables

List of Maps

Map 1: Rajasthan on the Map of India

Map 2: Areas Visited

List of Figures

Figure 1: Poster of Gulabo Sapera

Figure 2: Rajbala Sapera

Figure 3: Crowds Gather at the Pushkar Dera

Figure 4: The Streets of Kalakar Colony

Figure 5: Banna Nath Sapera

*Figure 6: **Jagan Nath Sapera Performing at Amer Fort***

Figure 7: A Kalbelia Musical Performance

Figure 8: Dholak

Figure 9: Khadtal

Figure 10: Dafli

Figure 11: Harmonium

Figure 12: Been

Figure 13: Pathia

Figure 14: Punshi

Figure 15: Shoomar

Figure 16: Chapalki

Figure 17: Kamar Ka Patta

Figure 18: Mathe Ka Choga

Figure 19: Jeebe

Figure 20: Ghoongroo

Figure 21: Evolution of Costumes

Figure 22: Rajbala Sapera in Kalbelia Makeup

Figure 23: Spinning Skirts

Figure 24: The Flexibility of Kalbelia Dancers

Figure 25: Rajbala Sapera



Figure 26: A Young Child in the Kalbelia Costume

Figure 27: Kalbelias Perform at the Republic Day Parade

Figure 28: A Group Meeting at Jawahar Kala Kendra

List of Boxes

Box 1: The Rage of Rajasthan - Gulabi Sapera

Box 2: Case Study of Rajbala Sapera, a Kalbelia Dancer (Kalakar Colony, Jaipur)

Box 3: A Case Study of Banna Nath Sapera, a Dance Group Leader (Kalakar Colony, Jaipur)

Box 4: A Case Study of Jaga Nath Sapera, a Snake Charmer (Amer Fort, Jaipur)

Box 5: The Flip Side of Modernisation According to Rajbala Sapera, a Kalbelia Dancer (Kalakar Colony, Jaipur)

List of Tables

Table 1: Comparing Socio-economic Indicators Against Different Kalbelia Communities

Table 2: Instruments played by Kalbelia musicians

Table 3: Ornaments Worn by Kalbelia Dancers

Table 4: The Varied Interpretations of the Title 'Kalbelia'



Chapter 1: “Padharo Mhare Desh” - Introducing the Kalbelia Dance

1.1. Overview

"We sat on the charpai under the glistening sun waiting to witness the art that had from the very beginning ignited our curiosities. How can someone dance like a snake? How do they make their living out of this? Is this even possible? With questions like these we waited in anticipation as something within the dera caught our attention. The colour, the vibrancy, the designs, the makeup and more importantly the grace with which all of this was carried stole our heart in a glance. The enchanting tune of the wooden instrument pierced the silence that surrounded us and this increased our anxiety to witness their snake come alive. The precision of their movements and elegance of their stride stole our soul and our minds. The colours flashed in our eyes and the flexibility made us gasp in awe. That's when we realised that they deserved to be India's pride."

Colour, culture, and tradition are the roots of the desert state of India, Rajasthan. This state is a humble abode to a multiplicity of cultural art forms which claim their identity from variegated tribal groups. Amongst the numerous art forms, the most popular and celebrated folk dance form both nationally and internationally, is the Kalbelia dance that is indigenous to the Kalbelia tribe (Joncheere, 1).

Snake charming, extraction of snake venom and trading the poison was the traditional occupation of the members of the Kalbelia community (Robertson, 2). Along with this they used the snake to entertain the villagers, where the men would carry the serpent in a box and go door to door, and the women would perform in front of the house to the enchanting tunes of the wooden musical instrument called *been* while narrating mythological stories (A. Saper, Personal interview). As the tribe is of a low caste, the members of this tribe never received respect or acceptance in the society that they lived in (Singh, 5). Despite the hostile treatment offered to them by the society that they lived in, the Kalbelias took immense pride in what they did and although their situations have witnessed a large change they still continue to do so. The

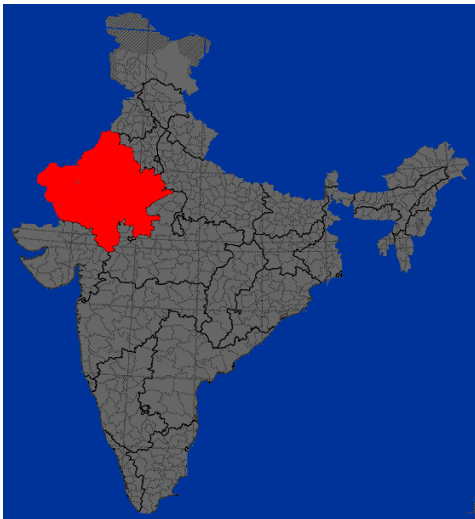


peaceful existence of the members of the Kalbelia community was distorted with the imposition of the 1972 Wildlife Protection Act (Ancheri, 2).

With the imposition of the act, the Kalbelias were stripped from their occupation; according to the policies of the act, it was now illegal to catch snakes, keep them, and trade their venom (A. Sapera, Personal interview). This new development imposed by the Indian government posed a severe threat to the survival of the Kalbelia community. Despite the disruption of their livelihood, the Kalbelias soon found a rather unique way of sustaining themselves. They took up dancing as their main means of survival and incorporated the experiential knowledge and different nuances acquired in their previous profession into the dance which later went on to be recognised as a folk dance form of Rajasthan (B. Sapera, Personal interview).

1.2. A Geographical Survey of the Kalbelias

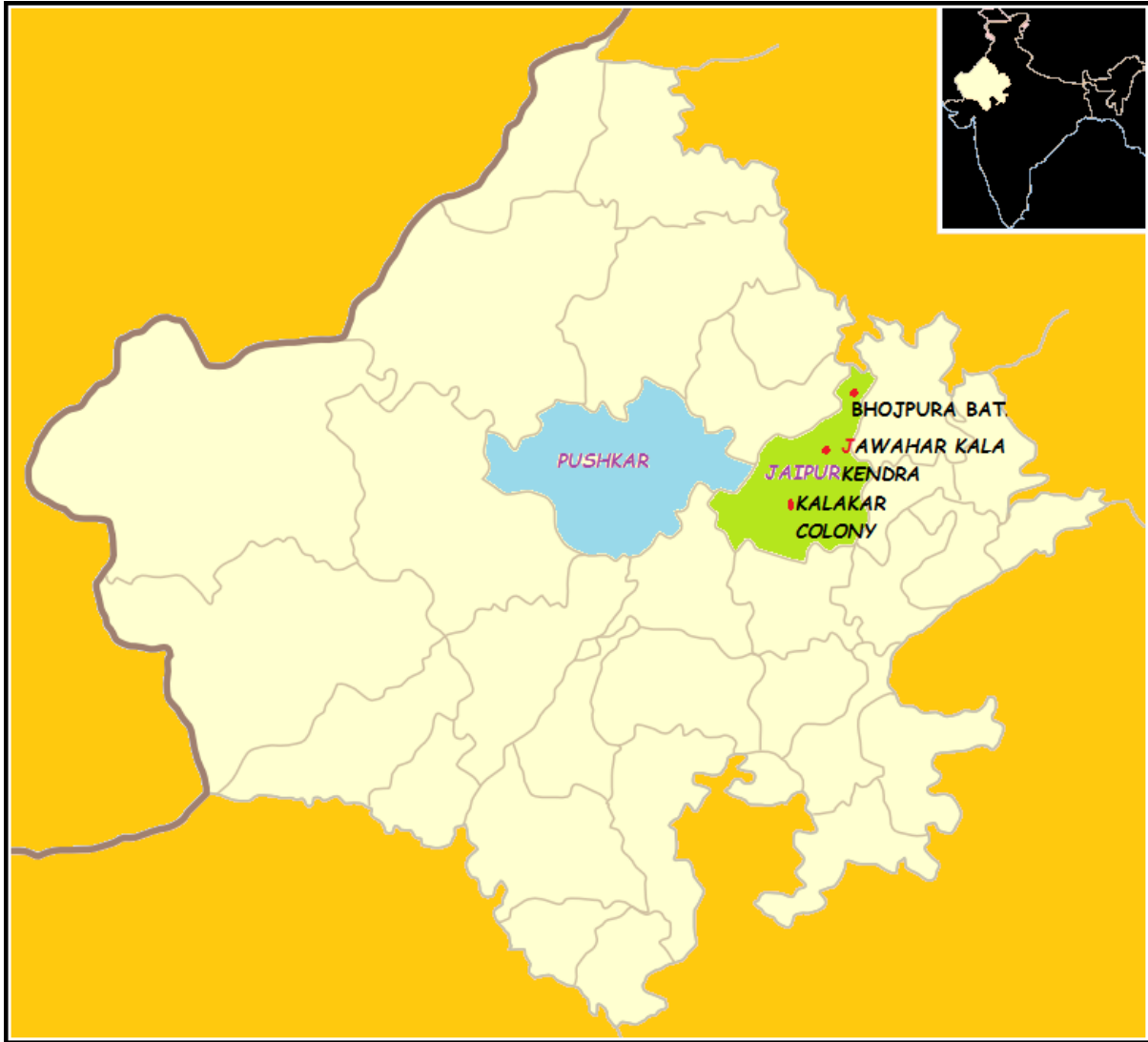
Rajasthan is undoubtedly one of India's most traditionally and culturally diverse states. Situated in the northwest arid region, this largest state of India covers a total of 10.4% of the country with



Map 1: Rajasthan on the Map of India (NCERT)

an area of 342,239 km. This kite shaped state adjoins the Indian states of Punjab and Haryana in the north and northeast, Uttar Pradesh in the east, Madhya Pradesh in the southeast, and Gujarat in the southwest; Rajasthan also shares a border with Pakistan (Sharma, Kulshreshtha, and Rahmani 4).

The Kalbelias are spread across the desert state, with the highest concentration being in the region surrounding the temple city of Pushkar. It is a famous pilgrimage site for the Hindus and a popular tourist destination in Western Rajasthan and is situated at the edge of the Thar Desert and at the foot of the outer fringes of the Aravalli mountain chain. Today concentrated in the Rajasthan districts of Pali, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Ajmer, Chittorghar and Udaipur, the Kalbelia caste consists of twelve exogamous clans (Angelillo 79).



Map 2: Areas Visited (Wikimedia Commons)

Although the tribe members inhabit several regions of the arid state, the research conducted will focus on the following areas:-

1. Kalakar Colony, Jaipur
2. Bhojpura Bhati, Jaipur
3. Jawahar Kala Kendra, Jaipur
4. The holy town of Pushkar



1.3. Research Statement

“To explore the grammar of the Kalbelia performance and to understand the lifestyle and socio economic aspects of the performers.”

1.4. Aims and Objectives

1. Trace the origins of the Kalbelia dance.
2. To document the performance; music, lyrics, pre-performance, grammar of the performance, and post performance.
3. Understand the impact of the dance on the livelihood of the performers
4. Understand the impact of the dance on the social status of the performers.
5. To determine the place of the dance in the future.

1.5. Research Methodology

The researchers used both primary and secondary data collection in order to fulfill the aims and objectives. The various methods that were employed are:-

1. Interviews: The researchers conducted both structured and unstructured interviews with several stakeholders as listed below:-
 - a. Structured Interviews:
 - i. Chhavi Joshi (Cultural program officer, Jawahar Kala Kendra)
 - ii. Raphael Treza (A documentary maker, France)
 - iii. Ramli Ibrahim (Renowned Odissi performer, Malaysia).
 - b. Unstructured Interviews:
 - i. Banna Nath Sopera (Group Leader, Kalakar Colony)
 - ii. Amar Nath Sopera (Musician, Pushkar)
 - iii. Sadhu Nath (Group leader, Pushkar)
 - iv. Puran Nath Sopera (Group Leader and Performer, Bhojpura Bhati)
 - v. Madhu Nath Sopera (Dance Performer, Kalakar Colony)
 - vi. Rajki Puran Nath Sopera (Dance Performer, Bhojpura Bhati)
 - vii. Kiran Nath Sopera (Dance Performer, Pushkar)
 - viii. Rajbala (Dance Performer, Kalakar Colony)



2. Focused Group Discussions: The researchers conducted a focus group discussion with the members of Kalbelia community, which included both men and women in Pushkar.
3. Audio Visual Documentation: The researchers effectively made use of this particular form of data collection by documenting the various aspects of their journey, the interviews, and the performances through numerous videos and photographs.
4. Observation: This mode of data collection was implemented by all the researchers in order to efficiently document the space and the setting of each and every area that they visited.
5. Secondary research: The researchers conducted extensive amount of secondary research before going on field. This facilitated their understanding of the Kalbelia tribe and the dance form to a great extent. Through secondary research method the researchers were able to identify several gaps and direct their area of focus.

1.6. Drawbacks

Throughout the various stages of the research project the researchers faced several obstacles that challenged and limited their efficient functioning. Although these obstacles were unwarranted, they proved to be extremely instrumental in aiding the entire process of learning the different nuances of conducting a research. The limitations faced by the researchers are mentioned below:-

1. Due to unavoidable circumstances the researchers had to digress from their original itinerary and cancel the visit to Jodhpur. The entire group unanimously agreed upon this decision as several members of the group were taken seriously ill and some had been bed ridden. Although the group did realise that it was vital to go to the fort city, they decided to extend their sample size and conduct interviews in Jaipur itself.
2. The group of researchers faced a major setback when they discovered that they will not be able to personally interact with the renowned social activist Aruna Roy, who had worked closely with the Kalbelias in raising their voices against their state of untouchability as she was in Philippines and would return only after a fortnight.
3. The researchers wanted to interact with NGO officials in order to get their perspective on the Kalbelia tribe, their members and the dance but unfortunately when the researchers



reached the location of the NGO, they discovered that it had been shut down and due to lack of time the researchers were unable to locate and visit another one.

4. The researchers were extremely disappointed to find the doors of the Colleena Shakti dance school in Pushkar shut. Despite the several attempts made by the researchers to contact the school, none of the emails were responded to and due to the lack of availability of a contact number no form of primary contact was established. Although the day proved to be extremely productive, the inability to interact with the dance school was definitely a limitation that the researchers regretted.



Chapter 2: Literature Review

Due to the tribes' fascinating rise to fame, the Kalbelias have been recognised and studied by both academics and non-academics. When conducting secondary research, the researchers reviewed journal entries, research papers, theses, books, articles, documentaries, websites and videos of the performances found online. An abundance of secondary information was discovered, which helped in answering most of the initial questions formed regarding the tribe, its origins and its dance. However, upon critical analysis of the available research, numerous points of contention emerged, which will be discussed across the body of this review.

2.1 Origin of the Tribe

All research, both academic and non-academic, conducted on the tribe has identified its original occupation as snake charming. However while research is available on the sociological origins of the tribe, it is more suggestive rather than absolute. This trend is echoed in the multiple myths surrounding the origins of the tribe.

1. The Sociological Origins of the Tribe

When reading the numerous secondary sources available, the researchers were reminded time and again of the nomadic nature of the tribe. However, the researchers were unaware of the relationship between nomadism and the dynamism of the tribe itself. In Maria Angelillo's **Rethinking Resources: Service Nomadism Adjusted (2013)**, the Kalbelia tribe is described as peripatetic service nomads. Such nomadic communities share similar values and belief systems, such as language, geographical imagination, mythology, religion, artistic practices etc; however, almost any community (nomadic or otherwise) can be defined as such. Peripatetic service nomads are distinguished therefore, by their desire to sustain themselves during times of change (Angelillo 84-85). Therefore, using this sociological concept, the researchers desired to understand the unique trajectory of the tribe in sustaining themselves throughout their tumultuous history.

Another theory relating to the sociological origins was put forward by Carter Hawthorne Higgins in his thesis **Charming Images of History: Kalbeliya Memories of Itinerancy, Begging and Snake Services (2010)**. Higgins states that the tribe could have originated from a



medieval Saivite sect known as the Nath Siddhas. This subset of the Nath Siddhas would have later evolved into the Nath Jogi caste, under which the Kalbelia's exist as a subcaste. However, Higgins defined the Kalbelia's to be a lower subcaste within the Nath Siddhas (Higgins 54-59), without providing any further reasoning for this allocation. Therefore, the researchers were intrigued as to whether this hierarchy was recognised and accepted by members of the tribe themselves.

2. The Mythological Origins of the Tribe

When reading the available secondary literature, four myths relating to the origin of the tribe were found in both Maria Angelillo's **Rethinking Resources: Service Nomadism Adjusted (2013)** and Mohanlal Jod's **Kalbelia Geet Aur Nratya (2011)**. The three myths included in Anglelillo's paper conclude with either boons or curses; the researchers were eager therefore, to understand how these outcomes contributed to the tribe's own understanding of its socio-economic position. The lone myth in Jod's book however, deals with a popular legend from the Mahabharata. Critical readings of the Mahabharata refer to many legends within the epic that stand as metaphors for the assimilation of the marginalised into the mainstream. Given the low caste status of the community, the researchers again posed a similar question, wondering whether this particular legend is representative of the same phenomenon. In both cases therefore, the authorship and the intent of the myths is of great importance.

Additionally, when reading the mythology surrounding the tribe, one notices that the legends are not set in any particular time period; dating the tribe therefore becomes a difficult task. Therefore, we see that the legends themselves offer no historical or religious pointers to a period of origin; one has to entirely rely on the aforementioned hypothetical sociological theory.

3. The Original Occupations of the Tribe

There is a plethora of secondary data available on the previous occupations of the tribe. However, what is interesting about this research is that no correlations have been drawn between the original occupations of the tribe and its title of 'Kalbelia'. While a secondary source related the title to the Hindu Goddess Kali (Stoyko), this is an isolated understanding provided without any real academic backing. Therefore the researchers endeavoured to understand the various meanings of the nomenclature, either from the tribe or from deeper secondary research.



However, members of the tribe now refer to themselves as gypsies. In Ayla Joncheere's **Intangible Inventions: Kalbeliya Gypsy dance from recent creation to UNESCO recognition (2015)**, Raphael Treza's **Cobra Gypsies (2015)**, Madhavankutty Pillai's **The Gypsy Chronicles (2013)** as well as Maria Angelillo's **Rethinking Resources: Service Nomadism Adjusted (2013)** relationships are drawn between the Roma gypsies of Europe and the Kalbelia tribe. The researchers were curious as to why these relationships were drawn and as to how such titling of the tribe affected the community's socio-economic prospects.

Therefore, when studying both the sociological and mythological histories of the tribe, the aforementioned gaps in the literature were discovered and ultimately answered in the report.

2.2. The Origins of the Kalbelia Dance form

When considering the landmark events in the history of the tribe, the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 is unanimously agreed upon as being of extreme significance. It is this Act that resulted in an occupational shift of the tribe and ultimately forced it to resort to music and dance in order to sustain its livelihood. Therefore, the researchers endeavoured to discover the origins of the dance form, in order to understand it in its present form.

2.3. Origins of the Dance: Its History Up Till 1972

1. The Age of the Kalbelia Dance form

When going through the available secondary literature, the researchers were unable to discern an agreed upon age of the dance. Ayla Joncheere in her paper **Intangible Inventions: Kalbelia Gypsy Dance from Recent Creation to UNESCO recognition (2015)**, refuses to acknowledge the existence of the dance form before the 1972 Act; therefore one can infer that in Joncheere's opinion, the dance form would only be around forty to fifty years old. However, one cannot rely upon a single opinion; therefore, the researchers realised that the approximate age of the dance form constituted a huge gap in the available literature.

2. Why Was the Kalbelia Dance form Performed?

A theory presented by Ayla Joncheere in her paper **Intangible Inventions: Kalbelia Gypsy Dance from Recent Creation to UNESCO recognition (2015)** states that the dance form of the Kalbelia tribe arose out of a historical theory presented by the West and was later popularised in the film *Latcho Drom* (1993). This theory states that the Kalbelia tribe were originally inhabitants of Rajasthan; however, they later migrated to Europe and the Middle East,



retaining their status as nomadic gypsy communities. The theory presented by Joncheere further claims that it is this recognition of the Kalbelia tribe by the West that led to the practice of a Kalbelia dance form at all. Joncheere states that before this recognition, the Kalbelia dance form held negligible importance in the diverse milieu of Rajasthani cultural heritage, as well as within the tribe itself (Joncheere 71-73). This theory discredits any real historical credibility of the dance form, thus disregarding any pre-existing form of dance practiced by the tribe.

However, it is impossible for a dance form to simply emerge from thin air, without any sort of predecessor. Maria Angelillo in her paper **Rethinking Resources: Service Nomadism Adjusted (2013)** refers to the historical practice of Kalbelia dance, stating that it was only performed within the tribe to promote intra-communal harmony. Additionally, Angelillo states that Kalbelia dance was never performed for any commercial purposes (Angelillo 89). This claim is completely refuted by Joncheere, who states that the dance had always been performed by the tribe while begging (Joncheere 80). Therefore, there is a conflict as to whether the dance form was performed only as an expression of culture, or for economic motives.

However, keeping in mind of the motives of the performance, the researchers were unable to discern as to whether dance had *always been* a facet of the tribe's culture. The answer to this question would help in resolving the previous conflict and subsequently help in understanding the adaptive mechanisms of the tribe better.

2.4. The Rise in Popularity of the Kalbelia Dance

All secondary data has confirmed the almost absolute shift to dance as a form of income generation; however, it is imperative to market the dance form for this occupational shift to be economically viable.

In Ayla Joncheere's **Intangible Inventions: Kalbelia Gypsy Dance from Recent Creation to UNESCO recognition (2015)**, the popularity of the dance is explained by the aforementioned theory on the connection between the Kalbelias and the gypsies. However, Joncheere mentions that this popularity only occurred in the early 2000s, almost three decades after the occupational shift (Joncheere 71-72). Therefore, the researchers were curious about the other marketing strategies employed by the tribe up until Joncheere's mentioned time period.

Another factor of critical importance is the classification of the tribe as a folk dance by UNESCO. The Kalbelia tribe filed a petition for the same which was first rejected and ultimately



accepted. The **Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Nomination File No. 00340 (2010)** recognises the dance form as a folk dance form. This recognition had a definitive impact on the lives of the performers as well as the status of the tribe. Therefore, the current popularity of the dance form originates from these events; the researchers were curious therefore, as to how the dance form as well as its performers continue to sustain this popularity.

2.5. The Kalbelia Dance Form

Vast amounts of academic research is present on the socio-economic standing of the tribe and its occupational shifts. Therefore, given this vested interest, it is extremely surprising that there has been almost no research conducted on the intricacies of the dance form itself. Data regarding various aspects of the dance such as music and lyrics, makeup, costumes, jewellery, pre-performance rituals, movements, energy, choreography and post-performance rituals was unavailable. Therefore, there exists a vast gap in the existing literature on the dance form, which the researchers endeavoured to fill.

1. Music and Lyrics

While it has been reiterated that the Kalbelia dance is considered to be a folk dance, there have been no attempts to place the corresponding music within such a category. It is imperative to ascertain as to whether Kalbelia music can be considered folk music, in order to analyse its evolution over the years.

In his book **Kalbelia Geet Aur Nratya (2011)**, Mohanlal Jod describes the gender roles at play within the musical orchestra. Barring this, the researchers were unable to retrieve secondary sources regarding the actual composition of the orchestra, save for literature that discussed the relationship between the Kalbelia tribe and the Manganiyar tribe. Sources such as Ayla Joncheere's **Intangible Inventions: Kalbelia Gypsy Dance from Recent Creation to UNESCO recognition (2015)** and Dibyajoti Chaudhuri's **Music is in Our Genes (2013)** state that the orchestra often comprised of men from the Manganiyar tribe. Joncheere states that the Manganiyar men are *integral* to the Kalbelia performance (Joncheere 91). However, given the fluidity of the dance form itself, to make such an absolute statement is erroneous. Therefore, the researchers were curious about alternative perspectives on this relationship between the two tribes.



Additionally, there has been little documentation on the evolution of the musical instruments used during the performance. Again, while academia is aware of the modernisation of the tribe's culture, no concrete examples or unbiased reasoning has been provided to substantiate the same.

Resources such as Mohanlal Jod's **Kalbelia Geet Aur Nratya (2011)** and Elizabeth Wickett's **Songs of the Jogi Nath Kalbelia of Jaisalmer (2013)** provide ample discourse on the lyrical traditions of Kalbelia music. However, given the high geographic individuality of Wickett's research, much of the content of the paper was deemed too regionally specific. Jod's description of the lyrical traditions however, offers a pan-Rajasthan inventory of songs. When going through Jod's work however, the researchers noticed that no analysis had been made regarding the themes of the lyrics, various instances of modernity and their implications.

2. Modern Kalbelia Dance

a. The Performance

As mentioned earlier, there has been no mention of how the Kalbelia performance actually takes place. Despite categorising the dance as a folk dance, there is no literature available on how exactly Kalbelia dance fits within this framework. No literature is available on the makeup or jewellery worn by the performers and costumes are merely described as 'black' (Stoyko). While all sources state that the dance is inspired by the movements of a snake (Peretz)(Joncheere 71-72)(Jod 13), there is no literature available on the actual movements that are performed or the significance behind them. Additionally, the secondary literature available makes no reference to props used during the performance, the energy of the performance or the space used.

b. Influences on the Kalbelia Dance Form

Considering the nomadic nature of the Kalbelia tribe, it seems natural that the dance form it practiced would be influenced by numerous other regional dance forms. In her paper **Dances of the "Roma" Gypsy Trail From Rajasthan to Spain: "Rajasthani Dance" (2006)**, Miriam Peretz states that the Kalbelia dance form itself would have most probably been influenced by various other nomadic tribes, as these tribes have extremely similar social and cultural traditions. This line of thought is echoed by John Napier in his book, **They Sing the Wedding of God: An Ethno-musicological Study of the Mahadevji ka Byavala as Performed by the Nath-Jogis of**



Alwar (2013). Napier states that the Kalbelia dance form owes its popularity to the representation of key facets of Rajasthani culture, which are exhibited by other Rajasthani dance forms as well (Napier 294).

Additionally, when recognising the Kalbelia dance, UNESCO stated that the Kalbelia dance form claimed its' origins from the Matku and Lur dance forms. In her paper **Intangible Inventions: Kalbelia Gypsy Dance from Recent Creation to UNESCO recognition (2015)**, Joncheere flatly negates this claim with primary research, which shows that most members of the Kalbelia tribe are unaware of Matku, however some are obtusely aware of Lur (Joncheere 80).

In scholarly research, there has been no mention of other folk dance forms that have been influenced by the Kalbelia dance. Therefore, it is impossible to assume that Kalbelia dance is being influenced, without any kind of reciprocity. In this aspect therefore, scholarly research falls short and contradicts itself .

2.6. Lifestyle and Social Status: Understanding the Kalbelia Dance and Tribe Post 1972

Ayla Joncheere in **Intangible Inventions: Kalbelia Gypsy Dance from Recent Creation to UNESCO Recognition (2015)** states that after the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the Kalbelia tribe were simply regarded as “entertainers” and viewed with contempt by many Rajasthani communities as prostitutes (Joncheere 71-72). These thoughts are echoed by Elizabeth Wickett in **Songs of the Jogi Nath Kalbelia of Jaisalmer (2013)**. Wickett states that members of the Kalbelia tribe view dancing for commercial purposes with extreme hostility; tribesmen associated the female Kalbelia dancers with prostitution for their actions (Wickett 3,7,17).

However, given the fact that the Kalbelia performers are now world renowned, such perceptions of dance seemed surprising. The researchers were extremely curious therefore, as to how the perceptions of the tribe, both societal and from within the tribe, have evolved over time, given the current popularity of the dance form. The researchers desire to ascertain as to whether there is a connection between the popularity of the dance form, government support and the social status of the tribe. Such questioning will naturally also address whether the caste bias that the tribe has faced is still prevalent. In addition to this, the researchers are interested in discovering how the discussed gender roles have transformed along with this modernity.



A running theme throughout the secondary sources reviewed is the modernisation of the dance form and whether the dance form is 'authentic' or not. However, regardless of its authenticity, the dance form does contribute largely to the income of many Kalbelia families. The researchers are curious therefore, as to how the tribe's lifestyle has changed as a result of this. Whether this change in lifestyle is uniform across the entire Kalbelia population is also a point of contention.

However, in order to sustain the popularity of the dance form as well as alleviate their lifestyle and social status, the tribe will have to include new aspects to their performance. Again, such references are absent from secondary literature; the researchers endeavour to fill this gap.

2.7. Future of the Dance

In his documentary **Cobra Gypsies (2015)**, Raphael Treza mentions that he is hopeful for the future of the tribe, due to its dynamism and adaptive capabilities. In papers such as Ayla Joncheere's **Intangible Inventions: Kalbelia Gypsy Dance from Recent Creation to UNESCO recognition (2015)**, Maria Angelillo's **Rethinking Resources: Service Nomadism Adjusted (2013)** and **Caste In The Making, Dance In The Making (2012)**, these facets have been used to analyse the dance up until the present. However, they have not been used to analyse how the dance will succeed in the future, a point of contention that the researchers wish to address.



Chapter 3: Intro Shurwat - Origins

3.1 Origin of the Tribe

The Kalbelia tribe falls under the ‘service nomad’ banner. Service nomads are discrete nomadic communities, which provide sedentary communities with specific services. Because of the limited demand for their work in a single area, they move from place to place; therefore, we see that their livelihood depends mostly upon the desires of settled communities. Within service nomad’s, the tribe is classified as peripatetic service nomads. Peripatetic service nomads are those social groups that share similar values and belief systems, such as language, geographical imagination, mythology, religion, artistic practices etc. However, any community could fall under this banner, not just the Kalbelia tribe. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the distinguishing factor between peripatetic communities and any community in general: the zest for survival. The Kalbelia tribe is adept at reading socio-economic fluctuations around them; in order to sustain their livelihoods they consistently adapt according to the fluctuations, *creating a dynamic culture*. (Angelillo 84-85)

The purpose of this section therefore, is to study this dynamism of the tribe, through its occupational shifts. The section will initially cover the tribe’s socio-cultural history and mythological origins, in order to provide insight into traditional occupational structures and societal perceptions. It will then discuss the landmark event in the tribe’s narrative (the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972), in order to study the subsequent occupational shift that occurred in response to it.

1. The Socio-cultural Origins of the Kalbelia Tribe

a. The Nath Jogi Community

The sect of the “Nath Siddhas” was concretised between the 12th-13th centuries by its inculcation into the medieval text on tantric and ascetic practices, *Nath Sampradhaya*. It was Gorakh Nath, believed by scholars to be a figure of prominence at the time, who brought about this conflation. Throughout medieval history in Western India, there has been literary documentation of religious leaders heading Saivite sects (sects dedicated to Shiva). Gorakh Nath is believed to be one of these leaders, he is now immortalised as the principal guru of the Nath Jogi community (Higgins 54).



The Nath Jogi community exhibits a clear dichotomy: there exists Nath Jogi ascetics and Nath Jogi householders. The community distanced itself from Brahmanical practices; for example, the Nath Jogi community buries its dead in areas of close propinquity to their settlements. Additionally, the Nath Jogi community enjoys a strong musical tradition called *jagaran* that is performed on the 11th day of a Hindu funeral. Gorakh Nath was believed to be a great practitioner of *hatha* yoga, which was adopted by his disciples from generation to generation. The cult's eccentricity during medieval times proved fascinating for many regional communities; this could have led to widespread practice of Nath Jogi customs (Higgins 55-59).

b. Drawing Relationships Between the Nath Jogis and the Kalbelia tribe

The Nath Jogi caste is indigenous to Rajasthan and is subdivided into many small castes; the Kalbelia tribe falls into the lower echelons of these sub-castes. Parallels run between the two communities regarding burial practices, societal identification (with asceticism, nomadism) and religious markers (Gorakh Nath). It is possible therefore, that the Kalbelia tribe may have constituted one of the regional communities that was enamoured by the Nath Jogis, which could effectively describe their socio-cultural origins (Higgins 59). Modern day members of the tribe identify nine ascetic disciples or Naths of Gorakh Nath; from one of these Naths, the Kalbelia community emerged, further corroborating this theory (A. Sapera, Personal Interview).

However, members of the tribe do not view themselves as a lower sub-caste within the Nath-Jogi caste. According to Sadhu Nath, a Kalbelia tribesman from Pushkar, the Kalbelia tribe forms the main caste under which Nath, Jogi and Sapera communities fall (S. Nath, Personal Interview). Additionally, in an interview conducted with Banna Nath Sapera, the researchers were made aware of the fact that all Kalbelias have the term 'Nath' in their names. This 'Nath' is representative of the individual from whom the subsequent community emerged; examples of such individuals being Gorakh Nath, Kanipav, Vusun Nath and Jalan Nath. Sapera explained that since his community were followers of Kanipav, their names ended with Nath (B. Sapera, Personal Interview). Maria Angelillo corroborates this usage of the word, as Nath is a honorific title that is bestowed on members of the tribe. (Angelillo 195) Irrespective of the hierarchy of the sub-castes however, the Kalbelias have historically been marginalised by society, due to their nomadic lifestyle (Singh 7).

2. The Mythological Origins of the Kalbelia Tribe



In the holistic research of any community and their practiced art form it becomes imperative to understand how the Kalbelias recognise themselves. Do they view their present socio-economic status as a result of a historical tragedy or blessing? Furthermore, what elicits these theories to form within the community? From the secondary research conducted, four prominent fables explaining the origins of the tribe were found.

In the first legend, Gorakh Nath cursed the guru of the Kalbelias, Kanipav. Kanipav, when asked by Gorakh Nath to fill a cup with the knowledge of his art, filled the cup with snake venom instead. An angered Gorakh Nath cursed Kanipav, declaring that his descendents shall forever live on the outskirts of society and would be forced to wander aimlessly throughout their existence. Another legend describes how Shiva blessed Kanipav; Shiva was impressed by Kanipav's devotion, and encouraged him to embrace the profession of snake charming (Angelillo 80).

A third myth surrounding the Kalbelia tribe states that Gorakh Nath had held a gathering, to which Kani Pav was invited. Gorakh Nath had placed begging bowls covered with cloth in front of the guests and asked them to visualise their most desired food; whatever they wished for would materialise in the bowl. Kani Pav visualised snakes and lizards and at once, his bowl was filled with them. Upon seeing this, Gorakh Nath was angered and cursed Kani Pav; he was exiled from the party, after which he was banned to a life in the forest. His disciples who followed him later became the original ancestors of the Kalbelias and they reared many mammals and reptiles in the forest (Higgins 33).

The outcomes of these myths are either boons or curses. These varied interpretations have vast implications on the socio-economic standing of the tribe as well as the tribe's perception of itself. Many Kalbelias believe that the curse of Gorakh Nath is the main reason for their low socio-economic standing; it is also responsible for their originally nomadic lifestyle (Higgins 38).

Another interesting myth presented is related to a popular legend derived from the Indian epic, Mahabharatha. In the legend, Arjuna (one of the five Pandava brothers), married a woman from the Naga community called Ulupi. The Nagas were an anthropomorphic race, that is, they were half snake, half human. It is extremely important to note that the Nagas were slightly marginalised and lived outside the realm of Brahmanical society. Arjuna and Ulupi bore a son



called Naga (also known as Iravan); Arjuna rejected his son and eventually left his family. As a distraction, Ulupi decided to teach her son the art extracting venom from snakes and scorpions after which, the two of them went to join Kani Pav as disciples (Jod 13).

The legend is representative of a legion of similar others, that represent the inculcation (albeit reluctant) of marginal communities into the Brahmanical mainstream (Abraham and Misrahi-Barak 66). Therefore, the marginalisation of the modern Kalbelia tribe can also be understood by this legend.

3. Service Nomadism at Work: The many facets of the Kalbelia tribe

a. The Kalbelia Tribe as a Nomadic Community: Understanding Traditional Occupations

The Kalbelias have always existed at the fringe of mainstream society; according to members of the tribe, this is because they were often chased out of settlements if they stayed there for too long a time period, by virtue of their caste (A. Sapera, Personal Interview). They lived in makeshift camps called "*deras*" outside the villages, consisting of 7-8 families. Being a nomadic tribe, the Kalbelias did not have a stable habitat; they moved their "*deras*" from one place to another ("Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" 3)(Jod 13). The tribe mostly moved around the following districts of Rajasthan: Jodhpur, Pali, Ajmer, Chittorgarh and Udaipur. (Jod 13)

Using this heritage, it is possible to understand the meaning of the word 'Kalbelia' itself. The word *Kal* means border. As the tribe is nomadic, sleeping in settlements in the jungle or in the desert, they are never associated with a sedentary village/town settlement. Therefore, as soon as any village border ends, the domain of the Kalbelias begins. Therefore, the tribe believes that Kalbelia means to live beyond the border (A. Sapera, Personal Interview).

However, scholars have also stated that the nomadic status of the tribe need not be entirely attributed to marginalisation. While they were known as entertainers, the tribe also possessed an immense knowledge on catching venomous snakes and treating snakebites. Members of the tribe would often be called from one village to another, as and when their services of removing snakes and treating snakebites was required (Angelillo 85). Again the word Kalbelia can be reinterpreted, by splitting it into three different sections: *kal*, *bel* and *lia*. *Kal* means to grasp (naturally referring to the grasping of the snake), *bel* means to catch and *lia*



means to take. Therefore, the word Kalbelia would mean ‘catch a snake’ (A. Sapera, Personal Interview).

b. Diversity in Occupational Practices

Originally, members of the Kalbelia tribe would move from village to village, carrying only a *been* (an instrument used to charm snakes) and a *khanjari* (a small circular handheld drum). In order to earn a living, they would catch snakes regularly and perform with them in the village; it is from here that the practice of snake charming is derived (B. Sapera, Personal Interview). Female members of the tribe would dance and beg while these performances would take place (A. Sapera, Personal Interview). Therefore one sees that the tribe has seemingly always been associated with performance (in some form) as an income generation technique.

Traditionally, the Kalbelia tribe were also practitioners of their own unique brand of herbal medicine. Men would extract the snake’s venom and mix it with medicinal plants; these medicines would later be sold in the market (Jod 13) The tribe is also known for making *kajal* with snake venom and herbs. (L. Sapera, Personal Interview). Additionally, the Kalbelias were also known for trading snake venom ("Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" 3).

However, an extremely interesting contradiction arises when considering the sale of snake venom as an occupation: some members of the tribe strongly deny it, stating that while they extracted it, they never sold snake venom, fearing its misuse. (Angelillo 82) While performing these occupations Kalbelias passed on mythological stories that revered the cobra and advocated the protection of the reptile. They were known for their non-violent manner of catching snakes that found their way into the houses of the villagers (A. Sapera, Personal Interview).

3.2. The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972

The peaceful existence of the Kalbelias was hampered when the Wildlife Protection Act was passed in 1972; the Act prohibited them from catching snakes and trading snake venom. All the different species of snakes that the Kalbelia usually reared had now come under the protection of the government. The Act displaced the Kalbelias from their traditional occupation and this posed as a threat to survival. In true peripatetic service nomad style, they overcame their engulfing identity and occupational crisis, by focusing their attention towards dance and music



and pursued them as their primary occupations ("Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" 3).

However, why did the tribe decide to choose music and dance as their new occupation? Scholarly work states that the Kalbelia dance originally lacked any kind of rigorous structure and was highly improvised; it was never performed for any commercial purposes (Angelillo 89). However, this statement is severely contradicted by the previous section, which explicitly states that women used to dance and beg while men would perform snake charming. Therefore, one can confidently state, that dance has always been a part of the income generation process for the tribe (A. Sapera, Personal Interview).

We see that a conflict arises regarding the nature of the Kalbelia dance form itself. It is impossible to understand the occupational shift of the tribe, if one is unaware of its performing arts traditions and the various societal factors that shaped it. Academia is under the impression that the tribe never performed for commercial purposes; it is imperative therefore, to discern whether this is true or not. This will allow for greater clarity when discerning the seemingly 'abrupt' nature of the occupational shift of the tribe.

3.3. The Origins of the Kalbelia Dance and its Rise in Popularity

Should academia desire to attribute the origins of the Kalbelia dance entirely to economic need post 1972, then one would have to assume that the dance form did not exist within the tribe prior to 1972. However, such an occurrence is impossible; while the tribe may be characterised by its ability to reinvent itself, it is impossible to 'invent' an entirely new dance form, without the existence of a pre-cursor. All dance forms originate out of a shared cultural experience (Ibrahim, Personal Interview); in this case, the serpentine culture of the tribe. Therefore, a predecessor to the current dance form simply *has* to exist, in order to explain its cultural nuances.

Therefore, a historical narrative of the dance form facilitates an understanding of the nature of its rise in popularity and its subsequent demand to be recognised as a folk dance; these objectives lie at the core of this section.

1. A Historical Overview of the Kalbelia Dance

As found in most tribes, the Kalbelia tribe developed their own distinctive style of dance and music, that evolved based on the tribe's central motif, the snake. It is difficult to discern the exact age of their dance form, as multiple perspectives have been provided. While the



government believes that the dance form is around 60-80 years old, (Joshi, Personal Interview), members of the tribe from Pushkar state that it has been practiced for approximately 7-8 generations (A. Sapera, Personal Interview). A member of the tribe from Jaipur explicitly stated that the dance form has been present since 1917 (L. Sapera, Personal Interview).

Therefore, from this data one can determine that the dance form is at the very least, sixty years old.

According to Banna Nath Sapera, the tribe never really danced for a living, however they did sing and charm snakes. When Kings would set up tents in the desert, members of the Kalbelia tribe would be called to perform. Only the men would perform at these events, bringing nothing but their *been*'s, *khanjri*'s and snakes to the performance. Should the request arise, men would also dance to the music. If the king was pleased with their performance he would often pay them. Women were never allowed to perform at these events (B. Sapera, Personal Interview).

However, this did not mean that Kalbelia women didn't dance at all. Kalbelia women would often imitate the movements of the snakes that they held captive; over time, these movements were slowly developed into a dance form. As the dance form matured, some women started dancing within the community, while others sang and men played instruments (B. Sapera, Personal Interview). This is corroborated by secondary sources, which states that in the early days of the dance form, women only danced at religious events within their community (Angelillo 89) and in public during the Hindu festival of Holi. However, during these performances, the women would keep their faces covered with a *chunni*, or a veil. (Robin)

2. Using the dance form to Earn a Living

Therefore, we can establish that the dance form was moulded by prevailing gender norms and cultural motifs. While the dance form was later practiced for commercial purposes, it gained its character through intra-communal performances; therefore the statement that the dance form originated from *only one* of these processes is invalid. We see therefore, that the choosing of dance to sustain the tribe's livelihood is a natural outcome; the tribe was simply marketing their pre-existing culture, in order to make a living.



3. The Recognition of Kalbelia Dance Post 1972

The initial performances of the dance form were limited to the roadside. As time passed, the number of performers engaged in these roadside performances increased drastically, providing the dance form with greater visibility. This resulted in the official recognition of the dance form by government officials, who subsequently provided the performers with an opportunity to perform at state-organised cultural fairs. (L. Sapera, Personal Interview)

A major contributing factor to the rise in popularity of the dance form is the rise of Gulabo Sapera, the most well known of Kalbelia dancers. In 1986, Sapera travelled to the United States to perform, a historic moment as this marked the beginning of the international interest in Kalbelia dance. As the West identified the tribe as a gypsy tribe, the dance form began to get slowly incorporated into worldwide projects aimed at collating Gypsy culture. The popularity of the Kalbelia dance reached its peak in the late 1990s to early 2000s, with around 50 international Kalbelia performances (Joncheere 71, 72).



Box 2: The Rage of Rajasthan- Gulabi Sapera

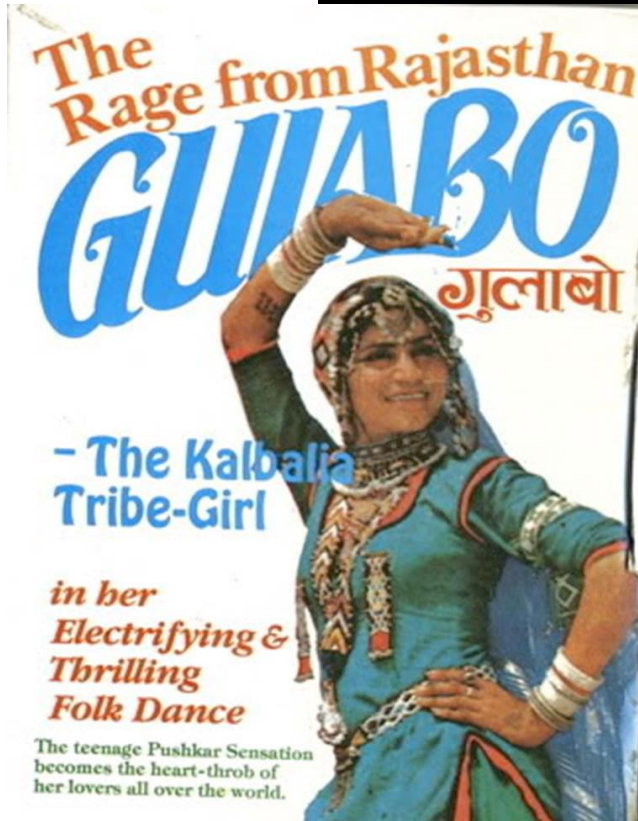


Figure 1 Poster of Gulabo Sapera

Gulabi Sapera, born in 1972, is known to be the most popular Kalbelia dancer in the world. Being a recipient of the prestigious Padma Shri, Gulabi has transformed the dance from an unknown tradition to one of the most popular folk dances of Rajasthan. She is known very often to be the ‘creator’ of Kalbelia dance. Soon after birth, she was saved by her aunt after being buried by the elders of the family for being born a girl. Her career started when she was spotted at the age of thirteen by the officials from the Rajasthan tourism department at the Pushkar Mela. She claims that the steps she performs have been inspired by observing the movements of the snake that her father charmed using the

been. After returning from a performance in Washington, she was soon elected as the President of the caste association. She popularly came to be known as ‘Gulabo’ after her name was published as a typing error in a magazine. At the age of forty four, Gulabi received the Padma Shri in December 2016. She is the first recipient of the award from her community and her community members have now declared to have become proud fathers of daughters in the hope that they will follow her footsteps. She has performed in a hundred and sixty five countries. She is against putting any copyright on her dance as she believes that the knowledge of the dance needs to be spread without any shackles (“Padma Shri recipient Gulabo: Sapera dance has a beginning but no end, it just goes on and on”).

The reinvention of the tribe vis-à-vis its dance form during the 1990’s was echoed in the title of the tribe itself. It is now fairly common for members of the tribe to refer to themselves as a gypsy tribe. Academia is sceptical of this nomenclature, stating that the tribe uses this tactic



when interacting with foreign tourists. With the release of the French film *Latcho Drom* (1993), associations were drawn between the Roma gypsies of Europe and the Kalbelia tribe, stating that the former descended from the latter and later migrated to Europe. Certain scholars believe that this romanticised perception of the tribe as ‘gypsies’ has been used by the tribe to market themselves to foreign tourists. Therefore, this terminology simply feeds into the *ideal* of what the tribe should be, as imagined by the West. (Joncheere 71)(Angelillo 81). However, some members of the tribe believe that the title ‘gypsy’ is of traditional usage, having being first used by ancient forefathers. Interestingly, these members of the tribe are aware of the English origins of the word, yet believe in this legend. (A. Sapera, Personal Interview) Regardless of its origins, this nomenclature, along with the popularity of Gulabo Sapera, greatly helped the popularity of the dance form gain traction.

Box 1: Case Study of Rajbala Sapera, a Kalbelia Dancer (Kalakar Colony, Jaipur)



Figure 2 Rajbala Sapera

Initially, Rajbala and her other female relatives would only dance within their houses. A male guest once viewed their performance at home and was greatly impressed; he requested her to perform on stage at another venue, promising her a handsome remuneration, food and shelter. Initially, Rajbala and her friends were apprehensive about taking up the request; however, the man assured them of their safety, even telling them to bring their husbands along to the performance for their security. Rajbala and five of her friends finally agreed to perform, taking their husbands with them, along with their instruments, a *dafli* (a small drum) and a *been*. Initially, Rajbala and her friends were nervous about performing; however, once performed and saw the audience’s reaction, their confidence increased tremendously. Rajbala then decided to start performing her dance form publicly, showcasing the alacrity and vivacity of her culture on national and international stages. (R. Sapera, Personal Interview)

4. Struggle for Folk Dance Status

A folk dance is characterized as “a certain kind of dance with a distinctive style or some other distinguishing feature. It is not a universal genre of dance. When folk dances are compared



from one culture to another, they have in common no universal movement, figure, form, style, or function,” (Kealiinohomoku, 2016). The Kalbelia dance is classified as a folk dance form, yet not very many know of the battle that it took to get it there. It was trusted that the Kalbelia dance did not satisfy the necessities required for a dance form to be characterized as a 'folk dance' structure. In any case, as indicated by Chhavi Joshi, a folk dance is a dance form that, in the past, hadn't reached the darbar or royal courts. The music and dance forms that do come to the darbar are the classical dance forms and folk dance form and music was almost given life by their non acceptance into these royal courts. Traditionally, the folk dance and music forms that made it to the darbar were defined as "classical." In the interview with Mr. Joshi the researchers learnt that Kalbelia as a dance form did not qualify as an classical dance form, but rather, as a folk dance of Rajasthan. (Joshi, Personal Interview).

In the 2003, the Kalbelia tribe requested the government to concede their dance the status of a folk dance by depicting it as the fundamental representation and "cultural gatekeeper" of their legacy. The reasons they cited for pushing for the folk dance status were two fold. Initially, it was an endeavor to enhance the community's economic well-being at neighborhood, national and global levels and second, to keep up their "distinctive identity" (Joncheere 73). As a part of their plea were the accompanying words:

The Kalbelia song and dance forms are a matter of pride for the community, a marker of their identity. They were on the margins of society, but they persisted with their cultural practices, innovated and carried them out with faith; and now they are recognized artists of a great talent and repute (UNESCO 4).

There were additionally other inconspicuous purposes behind the need of the folk dance status. The women in the Kalbelia tribe were being looked down upon on account of the provocativeness of the dance form. They were considered to have 'low self regard' and to be of 'easy virtue' in the local community. The folk dance status would ideally support them with more regard. Another reason and likely the most vital are the financial advantages that would accompany being broadly recognized both in India and abroad. The tribe's plan to convert their performance into a "business" for its potential financial improvement was highlighted more than once in the nomination form. The passing of the nomination form would lift and meet the social and monetary needs of the Kalbelia tribe. Additionally stressed upon multiple times was the fact



that amid the conception of the nomination form, each Kalbelia tribe member was counseled and the consistent accord was pro folk dance status (Joncheere 79-82).

Following the primary dismissal of the move for folk dance status, UNESCO approached the Kalbelia tribe about making a documentary and this conveyed considerably more attention to the Kalbelia tribe. However, the members of the Kalbelia tribe were neglectful of what UNESCO was, the force it held and the level of acknowledgment they got due to it. UNESCO recognized Kalbelia as a "protected" art form. Taking after the UNESCO intercession, the Kalbelia dance form picked up fame and they received invitations to perform around the nation. UNESCO stressed on the importance of passing on the Kalbelia dance form and this prompted the beginning of the Kalbelia dance school in Jaipur. Following the fast heightening in the significance of Kalbelia as a dance form, both socially and financially, the government at long last passed the nomination and Kalbelia authoritatively turned into a recognized folk dance of Rajasthan, India. The ubiquity of Kalbelia has definitely expanded over a range of a couple of years to such an extent that they were even consolidated in the Republic Day parade representing Rajasthan (Joncheere75-81).

Thus, we touch base at the present rendition of the Kalbelia dance form that is widely seen in Rajasthan. From their initial treatment in the public arena, to them approaching the government to help their social situation, appealing to the government for monetary profits, being turned down, gaining UNESCO acknowledgment, to at long last being conceded with the title, the world neglects to see the battle that went into the dance gaining folk dance status. Furthermore, from what the researchers observed, it wasn't only 'the rest of the world', but also those individuals who encounter the Kalbelias on an everyday premise.

3.4. In Conclusion

This chapter has covered the origins of the Kalbelia dance. We see that the dance form, even at the least conservative of estimates, is fairly young. From its origins to its usage post 1972, we see that there has been a definitive shift in the gender roles that initially characterised the dance form. The wide usage of the dance for commercial purposes is representative of an overwhelming shift in usage of the dance; from this chapter therefore, we are able to clearly outline the *proportions* of this occupational shift.



When studying the rise in popularity of the dance form however, the ‘folk dance’ status that was ascribed to the form marks a particular point of contention. As mentioned in this chapter, barring the desire to preserve the unique cultural identity of the tribe, there were very calculated motives behind the petition. It has been reiterated that the tribe has been a victim of caste prejudice and have always lived at the fringes of society. Therefore, when reading through the petition and the subsequent analysis, one realises that the main motive is to alleviate the social status of the tribe, through its well known dance form. However, how successful was this strategy of the tribe? Can one truly say that the current popularity of the dance form has alleviated the tribe in terms of its social status and lifestyle? It is imperative to answer these questions therefore, in order to understand the interdependent relationship that exists between the reinvented dance form and the socio-economic standing of the tribe.



Chapter 4: Rehen Sehen aur Samajo Sthithiyo - **Outlining Lifestyle and Social status**

*Against the reflection of a golden ocean,
Infinite is a land of colour and vibrance;
A sudden storm of radiance in motion,
Is black and yet a vivid brilliance;
Alone they wander under a spotlight sun,
Dancing and pleasing someone, anyone;
A king, a peasant and sometimes none,
A beauty ignored a livelihood to shun.
A home as stable as the riding wind,
What day is today? What year is tomorrow?
Unknown they live, with pride they sing,
In a pacing change too hard to follow;
An identity so blurred, a stranger almost,
A human, a snake, a gypsy behold;
What binds those, would define most,
But doesn't a snake shed what's old?*

One recognizes that the lifestyle of the Kalbelia community is like their dance: evolving and yet in some way reminiscent of what it used to be. Although the modernization may vary depending on the region they inhabit or the income that they are able to generate, the community is found to bind together through its shared past and the pride that it holds towards its dance. What is most significant is that the lifestyle is found to reflect through their dance form. From the costumes they wear to the songs they dance to, every aspect is related in some way to their past life of nomadic snake charming. As told by a Kalbelia artist from Pushkar, the word Kalbelia is itself derived from the two words *kal* which means dark one (cobra) and *bel* which means to take, hence the one who is unafraid to take the cobra snake (A. Sapera. Personal



Interview). Through the research conducted, one also understands how the dance transcends into the economy of tribe as well. Depending on the popularity of the group, one observes a stark variation in standards of living, education levels and income generation. These differences were most highlighted in two colonies of Jaipur and in a settlement in Pushkar.

4.1. Pushkar

Pushkar, famous for the Brahma temple and annual Pushkar carnival, is found to consist primarily of a tourist population. The carnival is of great significance as every year there are



Figure 3 Crowds gather at the Pushkar *dera*

numerous folk dance performances (Nath and Kapoor 6) that take place including the Kalbelia dance performance. During the course of the research, the researchers visited Pushkar exactly one day after the carnival had ended. The Kalbelia performers had settled themselves in a humble dwelling on the outskirts of the town; although the shelter was minimal, the group was rather modernised (and well versed with android technology!). The paper 'Intangible Inventions' by Ayla Joncheere, emphasises through an interview how the tribe prefers their new occupation of dancing as compared to their previous profession of snake charming as it has led to a greater social inclusion of the tribe in the community (Joncheere 88). However, within the group in Pushkar there was found to be a form of resistance to the need for being included. They claimed to enjoy their isolation in the forest and preferred to reside on the outskirts of the town. Residing in a humble settlement is a choice they have made on their own as they identify *themselves* with it. They take pride in having a home in the forests, and stand firm against the government for changing that lifestyle. Although the group spoke with great pride in regard to their home in the outskirts, Amar Nath Sapera, a Kalbelia musician from Pushkar, emphasised upon the difficulties the tribe faces in the present on account of being displaced constantly from one region to another by the government. He disapproves of this interference by the government as the community now wants to educate their children for a brighter future (A. Sapera. Personal Interview). Hence, the constant moving around and instability prevents the children from receiving a sound and stable education.



Therefore, with the changing times, the group has recognized the significance of settling down to educate the newer generation; it is aware of the urgencies of modernisation, yet desires to retain its own lifestyle. Hence, it is not the idea of settling down that the group is against but much rather the idea of the government facilitating this settling down process. Therefore one understands that the settlement in Pushkar resists any form of sympathy and interference by the government in changing their lifestyle as they take pride in living the way their forefathers had before them.

4.2. Kalakar Colony, Jaipur



The living standards of the group in Kalakar Colony were found to be slightly more advanced than the settlement in Pushkar. Here, the houses are more permanent in nature (made of bricks or cement) and the children are known to receive some form of education. The individuals in the colony, including the Kalbelia group are involved in various means of income generation other than dance; for instance handicraft toy making, kite making, household help and even in some cases begging.

Figure 4 The Streets of Kalakar Colony

These means constitute an extra form of income generation, whereas the main means of livelihood continues to remain dance for the community. The group here however was unsatisfied with the lack of government initiative regarding the growth of the dance. According to Kalbelia group leader Banna Nath Sapera of Kalakar Colony, the future generation is losing interest in pursuing the art form on account of the meagre income it generates (B. Sapera. Personal Interview). Hence while the Pushkar community is against government interference, it is the lack of this very interference that the Kalakar Colony group is unsatisfied with.



Box 3: A Case Study of Banna Nath Sapera, a Dance Group Leader
(Kalakar Colony, Jaipur)

Banna Nath Sapera, the group leader of a Kalbelia dance group that resides in Kalakar Colony, is unsatisfied with the minimal amount of money that is given to the dancers for their performance. The Kalbelia group under his leadership is usually asked by the government to perform in various festivals in different cities for the sum of approximately six hundred rupees. Recently, Banna Nath's group performed at a festival in Allahabad upon being contacted by the



Figure 5 Banna Nath Sapera

government to do so. The amount that was promised to them however did not get successfully credited into Banna Nath's account even after repeated requests to the government officials to facilitate the transaction. Banna Nath believes that even with the amount of six hundred given to them, they earn absolutely no profit as the money is used to cover their travel expenses. Hence with the minimal amount given to the them, the group members face a total loss, hence discouraging them to accept performance offers in the future by the government (B. Sapera. Personal Interview).

4.3. Bhojpura Bhati, Jaipur

The last house visited by the group of researchers was of Rajki Sapera and her husband Puran Nath Sapera which was located in the Bhojpura Bhati colony in the heart of Jaipur. The living condition of the family was observed to be far better, and the children were relatively much better educated. Rajki had been a remarkably prominent Kalbelia dancer from the time of her youth and had travelled within India as well as abroad to performance. Her son (Lokesh Nath) was skilled in both Hindustani music as well as traditional Kalbelia music. The couple performed in various hotels in Jaipur in order to sustain their livelihood. In addition to this, they also performed in various functions organized by the government to promote the culture of Rajasthan. The family was also involved in making Kalbelia dance jewellery, distinctive by



its colourful use of tiny bead and bells. They also claimed that they made their own costumes by hand as they were integral to their culture(R. Sapera, Personnel Interview).

Hence, income generation through dance was found to directly affect the standard of living of the three locations visited. The most popular of all the Kalbelia artists, Rajki Sapera, was found to live in a far better housing society than the rest. Hence depending on the income the group generated from the dance, there was difference found not only in livelihood but also in the way they recognized their music, dance and social status in the society.

4.4. A Difference in Opinion

Another significant observation is the vast difference in opinion that exists with regard to the dance from the perspective of a government official. According to Chhavi Joshi (Cultural Programme Officer, Jawahar Kala Kendra), the state of the Kalbelia performers has improved vastly in the past forty years, and the performers no longer need to depend on other occupations for earning their livelihood (Joshi, Personal Interview). This is in complete contradiction to what was observed in the Kalbelia families in Jaipur, who relied on various other means of income generation as well. According to Raphael Treza, the tribe performs in various functions during the evening and during the day they are involved in various farming activities. According to Treza, the income of the tribe varies depending on the time of the year, as the tribe is called more for performances during certain seasons of the year(Treza, Cobra Gypsies).

Further, the Kalbelia communities of Pushkar and Kalakar Colony are found to be completely unsatisfied with the minimal amount allocated by the government for the various dance groups and their performances. However, according to Chhavi Joshi the government officials can do very little to provide more to the Kalbelia dance performers, as they are given a fixed minimum amount of eighty five lakhs that needs to be split equally in the promotion of art forms of Rajasthan(Joshi, Personal Interview). Given the vast array of art forms that exist within the state, the funds that are allocated would naturally be of a smaller denomination.

Hence, there exists an obvious discord in the monetary aspect of the performance, between the tribe that performs and the government that attempts to promote their performances. Although efforts are being made in the direction of welfare of the dance, these efforts discourage rather than encourage the community as they accrue very little profit to the dancer.



Therefore, in the three areas visited a distinction is observed in aspects such as housing and education. A varied response is also observed in the tribe's response to government interference, future and acceptance to change in accordance to the evolving demands of the audience. Further the government's viewpoint on the dance form and livelihood is completely oblivious to the dissatisfaction held by the members of the community. This communication gap has therefore resulted in a poor understanding of the actual needs of the Kalbelia in terms of monetary support, better housing, and education for their children.

	Housing Stability	Education	Government Interference	Future generation	Acceptance towards change
Pushkar	No permanent housing. Move around constantly throughout the year.	No formal education being given to children.	Are against interference by the government, which forces them to be constantly displaced from their <i>deras</i> .	The tribe is interested in educating their children. Wish for the children to take up more profitable professions.	Are accepting to the 'gypsy' name given to them by tourists.
Kalakar Colony, Jaipur	Stable living conditions.	Some form of basic education is given to children within the colony.	Unsatisfied with the little interest taken by the government in their welfare, in terms of funding.	Allow for their children to decide their profession.	A mixed opinion: a few readily accept the gypsy image and conform to the wishes of the population, whereas a few others claim to be completely



					against its usage.
Bhojpura Bhati, Jaipur	Stable living conditions	Educated children , well versed in classical music as well as Kalbelia music.	N/A	Are open to their children deviating from Kalbelia to other art forms.	Are found to use Bollywood music; their performance varies from the traditional style.

Table 1: Comparing Socio-economic Indicators Against Different Kalbelia Communities

Box 2: A Case Study of Jagan Nath Sapera, a Snake Charmer (Amer Fort, Jaipur)



Figure 6 Jagan Nath Sapera Performing at Amer Fort

Jagan Nath Sapera, a Kalbelia musician, plays the *been* (traditional Kalbelia snake charming instrument) under a stairway at the Amer Fort in Jaipur. He plays the instrument all day, attracting hundreds of visiting tourists to the cobra snake that sways to the music from the small basket placed in front of him. He plays a variety of melodies ranging from popular Bollywood songs to more traditional Kalbelia music.

When asked how he was able to continue with the snake charming profession *even after* it has been banned by the government, he claimed that it was through the government's permission that he was able to sit in the fort. He claimed that it was the government that paid him to sit in the fort and attract various tourists to boost the fort's popularity (J. Sapera. Personal Interview).

4.5. Social Standing



When it came to the social well being of the Kalbelia tribe, the researchers found varying data on the subject of untouchability. Being a marginalized community, the Kalbelias inhabited the fringes of town and village settlements (Joncheere 73). As discussed earlier, the researchers observe that the community in Kalakar colony and Pushkar inhabited temporary shelters called *deras*. The shelters in Pushkar were made of sticks and a plastic sheets and were located on the outskirts of the town. Hence, even today the Kalbelias are found to inhabit areas in the fringes and follow a lifestyle that is deeply rooted with having been marginalized in the past. So where precisely do the Kalbelias stand in the social progressive system? Are they still seen as marginalized community or is it a lifestyle choice that they make?

When concern regarding their untouchability status was raised, Chhavi Joshi claimed that the social gap that existed between the Kalbelias and the remains of society was and is constantly narrowing. According to him, it is the ever increasing popularity of the dance and subsequent changes in the way of life that is propelling this narrowing down process forward. He specified that in present day India, issues of untouchability are hardly heard of.(Joshi, Personal Interview). However, the group observed that there was no stark visibility of changes in lifestyle and subsequent change in social status. Their living conditions were not enhancing either on the grounds that despite everything, they lived in improvised interim homes. In a survey directed to review the way of life of the Kalbelia tribe, it was found that 95% of the Kalbelia families lived outside the town's' boundaries and 75% of the group had complaints about barbers declining to trim their hair. A Hindu article also reported that a woman from the community was forced to give birth on the streets after being denied entry into the hospital.(Sebastian, 2012). According to Aruna Roy (Social Activist), the Kalbelia community is deprived of a lot of facilities. They are known to made to live in sub-human conditions in the margins of towns, even denied the space to provide a resting place for the dead.(Sebastian, 2012).

The government has incorporated several provisions in order to provide sustained income to the Kalbelia performers. The government distributes a yearly spending plan of 85 lakh rupees to take care of all the folk dances of Rajasthan. While considering the variety of folk dance forms and the number of families who perform regularly so as to make a living from it, the funding is rather unsatisfactory. In any case, the government accounts for this by claiming that if the monetary conditions in India enhance, the financial backing for not only the Kalbelias but all



folk artists will increase; until then they will have to work within the available amount. Apart from this, the Kalbelias additionally get paid for performing at nearby bars, eateries and even five star hotels but this seldom benefits the performers as more often than not they are not paid or are given much lesser than the discussed amount.

When the researchers enquired the government officials with respect to the present living conditions of the Kalbelia community, Chhavi Joshi, the cultural program officer at Jawahar Kala Kendra stated that, most of the kalbelias live in the deras not because they cannot afford a better living condition but because they choose to do so (Joshi, Personal interview). This was seconded by the tribe members dwelling in Pushkar, who said that they will continue to live in the deras as it is their culture to do so.

Hence through the on-field research the group was able to achieve a wider insight into the social status of the tribe. Chhavi Joshi;s opinion was found to be integral in in effectively understanding the government's perspective. Through his perspective, the researchers realised that there existed a huge gap between the tribe and the government regarding marginalisation. This ignorance of the government only accentuates the fact that caste bias is still discretely practiced in modern day India, a fact that the government may be choosing to ignore. Therefore, we see that the tribe still faces social discrimination, perhaps not glaring, but still tangible.



Chapter 5: Ainae Nach - Documenting the Grammar of the Performance

*We sat on the sand dunes,
To watch them dance to the enchanting tunes;
It is then that we realised,
There is more to what we had fictionalized;
Dance is a part of their mystique,
The colour, makeup, costumes and music;
Is what makes them unique,
These intricacies of their performance;
Is the secret to their elegance.*

In order to effectively understand the close interconnection of the dance with the lifestyle and social status, it is imperative to document the nuances of the performance and understand how certain aspects reflect through in it. This chapter will discuss the various intricacies of performances, that is, the music and lyrics, pre-performance, performance, post performance and also discuss the implications of the grammar of the dance on lifestyle and social status.

5.1. Music and Lyrics

One cannot study the Kalbelia dance form without studying the music that accompanies it. Filled with energy and the sounds of the desert, the musical traditions of the Kalbelia tribe fit perfectly with the alacrity of the performance. However, when one looks beyond the surface of the musical tradition, one finds a plethora themes that help in understanding the motifs, livelihood and social status of the tribe. The purpose of this section therefore, is to provide a comprehensive study of the Kalbelia music tradition, with further analysis on its socio-cultural nuances.

1. Kalbelia Music as Folk Music

As the Kalbelia dance is classified as a folk dance, it seems only natural for its music to be classified as folk music. However, how exactly does one define folk music and does Kalbelia music fit within this definition?



Unlike classical dance forms, folk dance lacks royal patronage; therefore, we see that the location from which it emerges and is enjoyed is the village (Joshi, Personal Interview). Perhaps the most distinctive feature of folk music is that it is created and nurtured by the community itself and consequently, becomes part of that community's identity. In order to make the music accessible to everyone, folk music often ignores the rigidity of meter, language and style that classical music employs. As there is no formal structure that has to be understood in order to truly appreciate the music, folk music is often enjoyed and practiced by anyone and everyone in the community (Jod 25).

Therefore, one can identify three salient features when describing folk music:

1. Widespread popularity within and outside the community that originally composed it.
2. Composed collectively and consequently, subject to change due to multi-variate expression.
3. Songs are often thematic in nature (Jod 25).

When considering the Kalbelia tribe, one notices that:

1. Many of their songs have become extremely popular and have now become identified with the state of Rajasthan. An example of this would be the song *Kaalyo Kood Padyo*; originally a Kalbelia song, it has now become wildly popular in the state, with many other regional dances now incorporating it into their musical repertoire (Joshi, Personal Interview).
2. All the members come together to compose the lyrics of their songs, which often focus on their nomadic lifestyle (A. Sopera, Personal Interview).
3. Because of the multiple composers, there are multiple themes that are essayed in the music (A. Sopera, Personal Interview).

Therefore, if one considers the above definition, then Kalbelia music can definitively be considered as folk music. It is this enticing music that is performed alongside the dance form, providing a perfect complement to the execution of the dance. The following sections of the report will provide a detailed insight into the nature of the music tradition within the tribe when performing, and how it has evolved with time.



2. Music



Figure 7 A Kalbelia Musical Performance

a. Orchestra

During the performance, the orchestra consists of around eight musicians; a chorus of three accompanies a lead vocalist, while there are around four instrumentalists, all of whom are seated on the floor. (Joshi, Personal Interview). In some Kalbelia communities, it is the men who form the vocalists while in some it is the women (L. Sapera, Personal Interview). However, what remains absolute is the fact that all instruments are played by men. (Jod 25).

- An Age Old Association: the Manganiyar Tribe

However, in some secondary sources a relationship between the Manganiyar tribe and Kalbelia tribe has been drawn, regarding the orchestra. The Manganiyar tribe is also nomadic and its population largely follows Islam. Sources state that the tradition of male members of the Manganiyar tribe singing during the performances and female members of the Kalbelia tribe dancing is age old. This is corroborated in a newspaper article entitled “A Treat for the Senses”, which describes a performance in which the Manganiyar men are singing and Kalbelia women are dancing. The group leader Ghazi Khan concisely essayed the relationship between the two communities:

“Though we are Muslims, we also sing Meera bhajans and the Kalbelia Hindu tribes dance for our songs. Art transcends differences.” (Shrikumar)



Ayla Joncheere states that in recent times, local group leaders/managers have been encouraging the tribe to hold ‘authentic’ Kalbelia performances; this means that this association between tribes would essentially be severed, as then both vocalists and dancers would be Kalbelia. She further claims that the tribe themselves have admitted to the superiority of the Manganiyar musical tradition; in an effort to continue their ‘age old’ tradition, they have started dressing up Manganiyar men as Kalbelia vocalists during their performances. (Joncheere 91)

However, what has to be understood is that this relationship is *not* absolute. While there certainly may be performances where the two tribes come together, it is not a prerequisite that they *should* perform together. Therefore, Joncheere’s claim that the tribe is dependent on the Manganiyar musicians is invalid, as the performance itself is always shifting in its nature. The tribe and its culture is evidently dynamic, therefore integration of newer performance elements or discarding them at times is a natural outcome. (Joshi, Personal Interview)

b. Instruments

The original Kalbelia instruments are the *khanjari* and the *been*; it is these that were initially used in early performances (B. Sapera, Personal Interview). The *been* is the most important instrument in the performance and is only played by male members of the tribe. The instrument can be made out of two different materials: *laukhi*, also known as bottle gourd, or out of *wans*, which is a rare desert plant. Members of the tribe from Pushkar do not manufacture the *been* on their own; the instrument is made by the local potter (L. Sapera, Personal Interview)(K. Sapera, Personal Interview).

However, the tribe does manufacture percussion instruments, such as the *khanjari*, by using the skin of monitor lizards and snakes. The skin of these reptiles is preferred due to the elasticity of the sound that is produced when struck. It is interesting to note that this practice has continued well after the government banned it; filmmaker Raphael Treza hopes that as this is an extremely small-scale industry, no immediate threat is posed to the wildlife. (Treza, Email Interview)

As the dance form has become more popular, there has been a demand for faster paced and highly energetic music. Consequently, a host of new instruments have entered the orchestra, such as the *dholak* (a medium sized drum), *ektara* (a violin with a single string), *dafli* (a small handheld drum), *chan* (a small toy instrument), *mer* (sea organ) and harmonium (S. Nath,



Personal Interview)(Joshi, Personal Interview)(R.P. Sapera, Personal Interview). Additionally, instruments such as the *thua* and *changa* have been incorporated into the orchestra, as they produce sweeter sounding music. (B. Sapera, Personal Interview).






Instrument	Picture
Figure 8: <i>Dholak</i>	
Figure 9: <i>Khadtal</i>	
Figure 10: <i>Dafl</i>	
Figure 11: Harmonium	
Figure 12: <i>Been</i>	

Table 2: Instruments played by Kalbelia musicians



This is an extremely interesting occurrence as we see that the tribe has modified its musical tradition simply for external popular demand, *not* for internal popular demand. We see that this tradition deviates from the traditional characteristics of folk music, wherein changes are brought about due to internal and external popularity. Therefore, one realises that the music tradition of the Kalbelias is being removed further and further from its origins, not by its traditional aesthetic but by overtly commercial demands. While the researchers acknowledge that the dance form as well as its musical tradition has always been subject to external commercialisation, the proportions of the influence of this commercialisation has increased drastically.

However, the tribe would not arbitrarily sacrifice its traditional heritage to so large an extent. Again, this drastic change in the orchestra finds its roots in the tribe's desire to market itself better to a more diverse audience. As the diversity that encompasses the musical tradition increases, the dance form will become far more accessible to larger audience, which will ultimately generate larger incomes for the tribe. As mentioned earlier, we see that despite the desire to maintain their cultural heritage, the tribe has ended up sacrificing the very elements that classify its tradition as 'folk' in the first place.

2. Lyrics

a. Language

Marwari, also referred to as Rajasthani, is a language indigenous to the geographical locales that the Kalbelia tribe moved around in. Marwari is the speaking language of the tribe and all of the tribes original songs are composed in this language (Wickett 6)(“Marwari”).

b. Themes

The themes covered in Kalbelia songs are immense, however, one can classify these songs into broad categories based on where and why they are sung:

- *Sanskaar Geet* or Sacrament Songs

Such songs are usually sung at birthdays, religious rituals (*puja*), marriages and childbirth ceremonies (Jod 25).

One example of such a song is *Halriyo*, which is sung by the women of a household when a child is born. The song describes a newborn baby being placed gently in a crib and being



fed milk. The child is passed from relative to relative, all of who shower their love and affection on the child (Jod 45).

Another example of such a song is *Dulha Aarti*, which is sung by the women of the household to the groom during marriages. The lyrics describe the women using sandalwood, turmeric and rose petals while performing *aarti* (worshipping) for the groom. The expectant bride is restless and requests them to hurry up, so that she may spend some time with the groom (Jod 47).

- *Gatha Geet* or Sonnet Songs

A sonnet literally translates to a little song; while the Western sonnet follows a specific meter, the Kalbelia sonnet follows a specific sequence of events. The Kalbelia's sing sonnets in praise of Bhomiya (a Jain deity that protects the forests), Bharthari (a saint and folk legend, popular in North India), Gopi Chand (a King), lovers Nihalde & Sultan (a popular Rajasthani folktale) and Lord Shiva. Such songs enumerate the popular legends surrounding these regional deities. (Jod 26). However, while translating these songs, the folk legends seem to be abruptly joined together, rendering it hard for an outsider to truly grasp the meaning.

For example, in *Bhomiye Ji Ka Geet* (a song for Bhomiya), the lyrics initially describe how during a battle in the forest, a thud of someone's head falling to the ground was heard. The lyrics then describe how Bhomiya never troubles peaceful, solitary cows as if he did, his heart would start thumping and he would start shivering, as if swords were cutting his insides up. The lyrics then suddenly describe how brave men are sitting on a carpet, of 'soorma' colour (Jod 56). Within the Kalbelia tribe, this song naturally makes sense; however for an outsider, the relationship between the jilted lyrics and Bhomiya is impossible to understand.

- *Parva Geet* or Festival Songs

Such songs are sung during Hindu festivals such as Diwali, Holi, Janamashtami, Chaat, Teej, Jitiya, Bahura, Pidiya, Ram Navami and Naag Panchami (Jod 27).

The most famous example of this type is *Kaalyo Kood Padyo*, originally sung during the Naag Panchami festival, but now sung regularly due to its immense popularity. The song is usually sung by women and describes the flirtatious jibes that are exchanged between men and women during their initial stages of courtship (Jod 38).



Another popular example is *Holi Ri Gulab*, sung during the Holi Festival. The song revolves around two lovers, who are playfully throwing *gulal* (coloured powder) at each other (Jod 65).

- *Rin Geet* or Climate Songs

Climate songs are either performed in particular seasons or climatic conditions or have a specific climatic condition as their theme (Jod 27).

A particularly wonderful example of this category is *Panihari*, again a popular song in Rajasthan. The song describes a young woman who is caught in the middle of a thunderstorm. A young man approaches her, asking her why she hasn't applied any makeup, even though all her friends have. She replies stating that her husband is travelling, so she has no real need to apply it, unlike her friends whose husbands are all at home. Upon hearing this, the young man asks her to run away with him and she refuses angrily by cursing him. Once she finally reaches home, she regales the incident to her mother in law, who informs her that the young man had actually been her husband (Jod 43).

- *Pasha Geet* or Career Songs

These songs are sung when performing a particular task (Jod 27). For example, *Praat Kaal Geet* is sung by women in the morning, when waking their husbands up. The song invokes the Sun God, requesting him to shower the family with gifts of horses and elephants (Jod 49). Another excellent example would be *Tera Dera Ladiya Jaayega*, which translates to 'we do not stay fixed to a particular place': this refers to their nomadic lifestyle. (A. Saper, Personal Interview)

- Love Songs

A stand out theme in the Kalbelia musical repertoire is love. The theme is exhibited in various ways:

- a. Bangles: Bangles are a popular motif in Kalbelia music. However, there is a strict dichotomy in the treatment of bangles in Kalbelia songs:

- i. In songs such as *Banna*, *Shaadi ka Geet*, *Bichudiya* and *Cham Cham Chamke Chudiyon* bangles are presented to women by their male lovers (Jod 42,63,64). In these songs, the gifting of bangles is representative of a deep love.



ii. In *Punsiyo*, a woman's bangles have been given to someone else, which represents romantic betrayal (Jod 59), while in *Laal Peeli Aankhiyan* refusing to wear bangles gifted by a husband represents defiance and protest when treated unfairly in marriage (Jod 60).

b. Through separation: in songs such as *Deewana*, *Punle Ri Aaveni*, *Pati Yaad Main*, *Banda Geet* and *Lavriyo* the separation of lovers is discussed extremely passionately (Jod 40,44,65).

c. Analysing the Musical Repertoire of the Kalbelias

- Gender Roles

What stands out in the musical repertoire of the Kalbelias are the glaring gender roles. As mentioned earlier, separation of lovers is a major theme; however, what is interesting about these songs is that they are all sung from a woman's perspective. In all of these songs, women pine for their husbands/lovers, who have gone far away to work. This representation of men being the primary generators of income and of women being unemployed is striking, as it reflects how dramatically the gender roles of the tribe have shifted. It is interesting that despite the fact that women have been the primary generators of income for the past forty years, these changes are yet to be reflected in the lyrics of the tribe.

Through this aspect, as well as others (which will be further enumerated) we see that the Kalbelia tribe emerges as fairly patriarchal. In the song *Panihari*, one sees that patriarchy reigns supreme, as a young woman is questioned for not wearing makeup; her bare face would be insufficient in pleasing her husband. Additionally, in *Praat Kaal Geet*, a woman wakes up her husband and prays for his well being. We see therefore, that Kalbelia women are often viewed as functions of their husbands; they exist to service his needs, both practical and sensual.

However, when considering the lyrical traditions of the tribe, one notices that the presence of women themselves dominates over the presence of men. The lyrics of the songs are almost entirely sung from the perspective of a woman. Even when both men and women are included in the lyrical discourse, it is the woman who is introduced first and who often dominates the content of the lyric. Earlier sections of the report have mentioned the fact that originally, it was women who would sing and dance, while the men played the instruments. Therefore, the researchers believe that the reason the lyrics of Kalbelia songs are so woman-



centric, is the fact that most of them would have been composed by women themselves. Therefore, despite the obvious patriarchy present in the tribe (the fact that women have been disregarded, whether deliberately or not, as generators of income), the women of the tribe have managed to find an outlet to voice their opinions and desires.

- The Assimilation of Kalbelia into the Mainstream

When reviewing the songs that fall under *Parva Geet* or Festival Songs, one notices that the festivals mentioned are usually celebrated by the higher castes of Hindu society. Historically, there has always been exclusion of untouchable castes from celebrating such festivals (Kumar 14). This provides an extremely interesting insight into the tribe and the workings of Indian society at large. No time period can really be ascribed to the lyrical tradition of the tribe, therefore, one is unsure of when such festival songs were transcribed. This could be interpreted therefore, as an attempt by the tribe to integrate itself into mainstream society. Should this theory hold true, then one notices that again, the tribe has changed its cultural dynamics in order to uplift its societal standing.

- Modern Times, Modern Lyrics

As time has passed, motorbikes and cars have replaced the camels of the desert. These vast bounds in technology and subsequently lifestyle have been reflected in the songs that are sung by the tribe. There are two main categories that can be described when discussing modernism in Kalbelia songs:

- a. Internal modernity: songs that fall under this section are developed by the tribe and contain a few symbols of modernity. The significance of this is that these songs only allude to the changes in lifestyle and do not diverge from their traditional counterparts in tonality or genre.

- i. For example, in *Dinga Geet* the young woman refers to her lover who owns an Indica car (Jod 41); songs like *Kangsiye Ray Karne*, *Dhoram* and *Lalu ki Yaad Mein Gaana* refer to motorcars as well (Jod 54,55,62) (although they lack the specificity on the exact model). In *Banna Geet* not only is a motorcar described, but a modern tap as well (Jod 53).

- ii. Another interesting motif is seen in *Setardli*. Here, a lover asks her husband to sell his expensive watch and buy a house in Bombay (Jod 58). As the



popularity of the tribe has increased, along with its education standards and connectivity with mainstream society, the geographical imagination of the community has simultaneously extended. The specificity here is key, as in traditional songs far away locales are always referred to as foreign lands or abroad.

- b. External Modernity: songs that fall under this category are not developed by the tribe, however are used by the tribe in order to attract audiences. In some Kalbelia performances, the dancers perform to Bollywood music. Some members of the tribe are disappointed by this development, stating that the individuality of the dance form and subsequently the tribe gets tarnished. However, such performances are gaining traction, largely due to audiences who relate better to Bollywood music than the musical tradition of the tribe itself. (B. Saper, Personal Interview)

3. In Conclusion

This section of the chapter has provided a thorough description of the musical traditions of the tribe. When reading it, one notices that there has been a definite evolution in the instruments used, in the songs sung and the motifs addressed. Such digression from the traditional suggests a much larger social change that the tribe is responding to. We see that the tribe is *choosing* to discard facets of its originality for the demands of highly commercialised performances.

However, the musical tradition of the tribe cannot change without the dance itself transforming. The grammar of the Kalbelia performance has to be outlined therefore, in order to understand the afore mentioned social change, as well as the rationale with which the tribe is operating.

5.2. Performance

Dance, be it of any kind, is an important aspect of a performance. Performance can be defined as an act of staging or presenting a play, concert, dance, or any other form of entertainment in front of an audience (“Performance”). The Kalbelia folk dance form owes its popularity not only to its dance but also to the various nuances that contribute in the successful presentation of their performance. In order to have a better understanding of these nuances, it is important to first understand the meaning of "folk" dance. Folk dance is generally a type of



dance that is vernacular; it is usually recreational and an expression of a past or present culture . The tradition is usually passed down from one generation to another through oral recitation and mere observation("Folk Dance"). In this section of the report the various contributing factors of the Kalbelia folk dance will be documented and discussed in their entirety.

1. The Performers

The performers are undoubtedly identified as an integral part of any performance. It is extremely vital to understand who these performers are, why they perform, when they perform and the different community dynamics that govern their performances before we progress.

a. The Dancers and the Singers

Although the entire Kalbelia community is involved in one way or the other in the folk dance form, the women have been observed to hold a prominent position when compared to that of the men. The main performers of the dance form are predominantly women. The number of performers during a performance usually varies from one to four. More often than not the orchestra has men playing the instruments and women performing the vocals. Traditionally, the female members of the group constituted the roles of the lead singers, but with changing times there has been a shift in this practise. It is now observed that both men and women sing interchangeably or together, but the occurrence of this phenomenon is quite rare in the arena of the dance form. The traditional Kalbelia folk dance witnessed the involvement of only women as dancers, while the men abstained from performing. Mr. Amar Nath Sapera, a member of the Kalbelia community in Pushkar provided the researchers with an explanation for the same by stating that,

"Men are not allowed to perform because the society we live in objects it. We are looked down upon and it becomes very hard for us to find a suitable bride." (A. Sapera, personal interview).

b. The Changing Gender Roles

The researchers found a stark contradiction in the manner in which the male and female performers were viewed originally and their perception today within the tribe. As mentioned earlier, the Kalbelia women were looked down upon by the members of their own community and were branded as prostitutes as they would sing and dance in front of people. Today, the Kalbelia community has evolved to be more accepting of their women performing and they also



encourage them to continue to do so even after they get married. Despite this development it is quite unclear as to whether the women performers are more accepted due to the monetary benefits associated with their skills or due to the equal treatment offered to them by their community. The researchers observed that during one of the focused group discussions, the Kalbelia women were rarely provided an opportunity to speak as the men of the community did not approve of their active participation. At several occasions they were stopped mid sentence. This is in contradiction to their performance where women are given more importance and are an integral part of the very manner in which the art is recognised. As stated earlier by Amar Nath Sapera, the Kalbelia community also posed problems for male performers as they were looked down upon and faced severe problems in having matrimonial alliances. Therefore it can be observed that men along with women were and are still within the framework of certain norms structured by their community and this gives rise to the persisting gender dynamics within the tribe.

c. When Do the Women Begin Performing?

The Kalbelias do not have a specific age which determines the beginning or end of their career. The members of the community are exposed to the dance from their childhood; the reason for this being that the girl's watch the older women perform and learn from them through observation. There is no structured manner in which the art form is passed down from one generation to the other. Due to this, the Kalbelia dance has undergone and will continue to undergo several modifications, with the passing of each and every generation.

d. Group Leader

Another important member belonging to the performer's community is the group leader. The Kalbelia tribe has innumerable groups and each of these groups have a group leader. The group leader is the mediator between the members of his group and the various sources that provide the Kalbelias with a platform to perform and showcase their art. He is in charge of negotiating the price for their performance and distributing the money received amongst the members of their group (B. Sapera, Personal interview). With the increasing commercialization of the art form, group leaders have become an essential part of each and every group. With the emergence of the group leader and the significance of the role performed by them, the researchers acknowledged that this new position is required for the survival of the performers.



Upon interaction with various members of the Kalbelia community, the researchers became aware of the fact that more often than not, the performers are not paid the discussed amount for their performance and due to their position in society and lack of effective communication skills, they are often taken advantage of (B. Sapera, Personal interview). Based on the above mentioned reasons, the group leaders within each troupe are identified as the important people, who possess negotiation skills and fluency in both Hindi and English in order to communicate effectively.

After having clearly established the roles and responsibilities of each and every member involved in the performance, the report will now focus on the pre- performance, on stage performance and post performance aspects of the Kalbelia Dance.

5.3. Pre-Performance

1. Pre-Performance Rituals

Invoking a deity before the commencement of any important activity has always been a significant aspect of every Indian family, culture, and community. This holds true for the nomads of the desert land too. Mrs. Kiran Nath Sapera from Pushkar stated that,

"Before going on stage for any performance we invoke our *guru*, Gorakh Nath, in our heart and seek his blessings" (K. Sapera, personal interview).

Whereas Mr. Banna Nath Sapera, from Jaipur, stated that, "We do not perform a specific ritual before the commencement of our performance, but we do join our hands and seek the blessings of Lord Ganesha during the *Ganesh vandana*" (B. Sapera, personal interview).

Mrs. Rajbala Sapera, hailing from Kalakar Colony in Jaipur believes that, the Kalbelias possess their art due to the blessings of Goddess Sarasvati and will continue to perform with all their might and passion as long as she pleases.

Although there is a lack of a uniform ritual practice amongst the different Kalbelia families, they still join their hands and bow their heads in front of different deities in order to seek blessings and bring in good luck.

The researchers found this feature of the pre-performance rituals to be extremely intriguing as the members of the tribe who belong to a marginalised section of the Indian society, have deviated from their worship of Gorakhnath to other deities such as Ganesha and Saraswathi that were traditionally never known to be a part of the rituals followed by the tribe. This is



perhaps indicative to the fact that the community is slowly shifting their ritual practices and beliefs from what is indigenous to them to what is popularly followed in most pre-performance rituals.

2. Costumes






"Clothes make a statement. Costumes tell a story"

- Mason Cooley

The elaborate designs, intricate detailing, distinctive colour combinations and delicate jewellery are the factors that actively contribute to the uniqueness of the Kalbelia Costume. The Kalbelia costumes are traditionally black in colour and have three main parts; the first being the *ghagra*, the second, the *choli* and third, the *chunni* (K. Sapera, Personal interview). Snake motifs are intricately designed and recreated with the help of various colourful ribbons on the costume worn by the women with great precision. This extensive work is done on a plain black dyed polyester cloth (R. Sapera, Personal interview).

One striking feature of the Kalbelia costume is the usage of mirror embroidery and colourful beads to make their costumes more attractive. The Kalbelia costume is always complimented with handmade bead and silver jewellery. There are different ornaments for different body parts namely, *phatia* or the neck piece, *punshi* or the bracelet, *shoomar* or the earrings, *chapalki* or the second neckpiece, *kamar ka patta* or a belt worn around the stomach, *mathe ka choga* or an ornament worn around the forehead and *jeebe*, which is fastened on different places of the blouse (R. Sapera, Personal interview).



Ornaments	English Meaning	Picture
Figure 13: <i>Pathia</i>	Neck Piece	
Figure 14: <i>Punshi</i>	Bracelet	
Figure 15: <i>Shoomar</i>	Earrings	
Figure 16: <i>Chapalki</i>	Second Neck Piece	
Figure 17: <i>Kamar Ka Patta</i>	Belt Around the Waist	






<p>Figure 18: <i>Mathe Ka Choga</i></p>	<p>Worn Around the Forehead</p>	
<p>Figure 19: <i>Jeebe</i></p>	<p>Beaded Strip Worn on the Costume</p>	
<p>Figure 20: <i>Ghoongroo</i></p>	<p>Anklets</p>	

Table 3: Ornaments Worn by Kalbelia Dancers

These ornaments are made by the Kalbelia women with colourful *motis* (beads), which they usually procure from the nearby market or from other cities. The Kalbelias also wear silver jewellery made by the people belonging to the *Ghummakad samaj* in Rajasthan (Nath, Personal interview). Amongst the various Kalbelia communities that the researchers interacted with, it was observed that some of these families made the costumes and the ornaments on their own, whereas a some got the dresses made from external tailors. It takes around two men and between two to four weeks to make the thirteen meters long dress (R. Sapera, Personal interview). Ornaments such as *Kamar ka patta*, take approximately five to six people and four to five months time to make, whereas the *jeebi* takes only one person and a week to be made (R. Sapera, Personal interview). Another important part of the Kalbelia costume is the



Figure 20 Evolution of Costumes



odhani, which is again made out of black polyester cloth and is worn around the head by women during their performance (R. Sapera, Personal interview). These costumes and jewellery are usually made by the older Kalbelia women who no longer perform (Nath, Personal interview). The costumes of the men are comparatively simpler and comprise of a white *dhoti*, *kurta* and *wagah* with a traditional Rajasthani turban on their head (Joshi, personal interview). They adorn this attire during the formal stage performances, whereas they usually wear shirt and trousers for informal and impromptu performances.

a. Evolution of Costumes

With the changing times, there have been several observable modifications introduced in the various aspects of the Kalbelia community; a direct effect of this modification can be observed in the dramatic evolution of the costumes adorned by the Kalbelia women. Although the Kalbelia dance is popular for its traditional black dress, in the recent past digressions from this 21 Evolution trend led to the emergence of more colourful versions of the original costume. This shift was observed to occur in order to please the audience's demands and make the costume more appealing. Along with the variation in colour there are several noticeable modifications in the designs too. Mr. Sadhu Nath, a well known Kalbelia performer, hailing from Pushkar region of Rajasthan stated that,

"The designs on the dress differ from one region to the other. We put in our own creativity each and every time we make a dress, to make it look more attractive and appealing" (Nath, personal interview).

When the researchers enquired as to whether taking a video of the dress making process would be permitted, Mr. Sadhu Nath objected by stating that,

"This is our culture. We do not want others to learn it because that will pose as a threat to our means of survival. We have nothing left apart from this with us. The government is also not very supportive. We are lucky and happy that we have our art with us" (Nath, personal interview).

Although the Kalbelias love for their art is unquestionable, the researchers could not help but notice the fact that more often than not their culture is used to mask their monetary needs. As Sadhu Nath mentioned that the replication and selling of the costumes by outsiders will pose a severe threat to their existence, the researchers believe that another reason that the Kalbelias hold



on tight to their culture, is in order to ensure continued income. The Kalbelias are sustaining themselves by selling their culture in the form of various commodities.

The hesitation to let the researchers visually document the process of making the costume was prevalent amongst most of the Kalbelia communities that the researchers interacted with. Through this, the researchers observed that the costumes and the jewellery are sacred to the members not only for their attractive qualities, but also for their survival. This is because the Kalbelias not only use the costumes for their performances but also sell it to their students (outsiders who learn dance from them), tourists, researchers, and to the foreign market when they perform abroad (Nath, Personal interview). Each costume ranges from rupees fifteen thousand to twenty thousand and the various beaded ornaments range between two hundred to five thousand rupees (R. Sapera, Personal interview).. This has now become a constant mode of income for the tribe. The cost of the jewellery depends on its size and the effort put in. Along with their costumes they also make and sell small souvenirs, like, beaded key chains, dolls, etc (R. Sapera, Personal interview).

b. Income Generation

A major part of the Kalbelias income is generated through the selling of their jewellery, costumes and souvenirs. This helps them in sustaining themselves at times of low market demand for their performances. Although the material used to make the costume and the jewellery is cheap, the Kalbelias sell them at exorbitant prices, which yields large amount of profits. The Kalbelias often modify their costumes in order to please the tourists and make it more appealing for them to purchase it. Through this, the researchers observed that the Kalbelias did not only commercialise their dance but have also started forming a market base for their merchandise. A large number of tourists, students and researchers show enthusiasm in learning the Kalbelia dance form from the members of the tribe, while the women of the tribe are more than happy to share their art with them but only at a price. Although the rates vary from one region to another and one family to another, they still charge quite a sum. When the researchers inquired about this aspect, Rajki Puran Nath Sapera of Jaipur stated that,

“Of Course we teach everyone who is interested in learning our dance. In fact we are proud to share our art. I charge around five hundred rupees per person, but every Kalbelia household has its own price” (R. Sapera, Personal Interview).



3. The Makeup

Another important aspect of their costume is the makeup that the Kalbelias wear before their performances. It takes the women around half an hour to forty five minutes to complete their makeup. The makeup done is extremely convoluted and dramatic. There is a drastic transformation in the facial features of the Kalbelia dancers before and after the makeup. The process begins with the application of a thick layer of foundation which is followed by extensive eye makeup done with the help of Kajal and pink eye-shadow. This is preceded by applying a thick coat of pink lipstick and outlining of the edges with the help of black eyeliner. A total of

four *bindi's*, three red and one with a silver stone is put on the forehead, in an orderly fashion of two red *bindi's* followed by the silver stone and then another red *bindi*. Tiny black dots with the help of eyeliner are later put around the *bindi*. This marks the end of the makeup process.



Figure 22 Rajbala Sopera in Kalbelia Makeup

As Mason Cooley rightly stated, costumes tell a story, one cannot help but agree with the narrative impact that the Kalbelia costumes have. The intricate designs, colours, ornaments and makeup at a glance, establish the essence of Kalbelia dance. With increasing popularity, the world has now come to recognize the snake charming community through its splendid costume.

5.4. The Performance

It is always a vision to watch the Kalbelia dancers synchronise their graceful movements



Figure 23 Spinning Skirts

to the popular tunes produced by the percussion instruments. The dancers mimic the movements of the snake during their performance which is inspired from their previous profession of snake charming. Upon carefully observing and conducting informal interviews, the researchers discovered several aspects of the performance that play a crucial role in the overall presentation



of the folk dance form. These different aspects of the performance such as energy, space, flexibility and various elements incorporated in the performance will be discussed in their entirety in the succeeding section.

1. Energy

One of the most striking aspects of the performance is the tremendous energy that the performers execute their art with. The movements are swift and at the same time very graceful as they use numerous hand gestures and hip movements. Banna Nath Sapera of Kalakar Colony in Jaipur stated that,

"The performance that you see nowadays is not that energetic when compared to what we are actually capable of doing. If we Kalbelias put in our full energy, we will give such a powerful performance that the stage will break." (B. Sapera, Personal interview)

The singers and the instrumentalists display equal amounts of energy and enthusiasm while singing and playing the instruments. The quality of their powerful, shrill voices is indeed remarkable. Since most of the times the Kalbelias dance to live music, the energy with which the instruments are played is extremely important in order to complement the energy of the dancers.

2. Flexibility

Along with energy another important aspect is the flexibility of the performers. While bending on their backs, the dancers pick up notes with their mouths and rings with their eyelids. The hip movements and hand gestures are also a result of effortless flexibility. (A. Sapera, Personal interview) When asked as to how the women gain such flexibility, the community unanimously stated that the Kalbelias are born with it: since they practice the art form from a very young age, the flexibility in various movements comes naturally to them. This flexibility also makes the dance more attractive and hence increases their income(A. Sapera, Personal interview).



Figure 24 The Flexibility of Kalbelia Dancers

3. Space

While performing, the dancers utilize the space to the maximum; the vocalists and instrumentalists sit down behind the dancers or on either side of them (A. Sapera, Personal interview). Initially the Kalbelia folk dance was performed in a circular arrangement. This



included four to five women standing in a circle. The reason behind this arrangement was the usage of centripetal force, which would help them maintain their speed and perform for a longer period of time without getting tired, as spinning is a crucial aspect of their dance. (Jod 67) Although space is an important factor of the performance, it seldom affects the vigour with which the Kalbelias perform. The Kalbelias perform with the same passion on a big stage or a small area in front of their *dera*.

4. Different Types of Kalbelia Dance

The Kalbelia dance within itself possesses multiple variations. The following section of the report will discuss each of these in its entirety.

a. Indoni Dance

This particular dance form is often mixed with the Kalbelia dance. The dance is traditionally performed in circular motion in a slow pace to the tunes of the *khanjari* and *been*. The costumes are often of different colours such as black, yellow, red and blue, with intricate bead and mirror work on them. This form of dance has drawn inspiration from "Ghoomar" (another popular folk dance form of Rajasthan) and is very interactive in nature. This dance often witnesses immense participation by the audience. (Jod 68)

b. Shankriya Dance

This dance is also known as the Kalbelia couple dance. The couple often narrate a story through this dance. The themes usually surround around love and separation. The body language and facial expressions of the dancers are the defining features of this performance. The songs have deep meaning and are very easy to follow and hence encourage audience interaction (Jod 68). We see here that the popular themes prevalent in the Kalbelia music tradition are echoed in the Shankriya narrative.

c. Panihari Dance

Panihari is another form of couple dance which is quite popular amongst the audience. The dancers represent the artistic work of Kalbelia through this dance. As mentioned earlier, the narrative of the accompanying music is usually set alongside a river bank and is very popular amongst the foreign tourists who visit Rajasthan (Jod 68).

d. Agni Dance



This form of dance is dominated by men with an exception of a few children. The snake charmers are vividly known for this dance form. The dancers worship Lord *Jisnaji* and believe that they are blessed with a boon from their guru. With this belief in mind, they dance on hot burning coal in front of their *guru's* tomb which is located near Bikaner district in Rajasthan. The uniqueness of this dance emerges from the manner in which it is performed. Instruments such as *dhol* and *mer* are used to complement the singing of popular songs. Eventually, many elderly people and young children also join in the dance and with the increasing frenzy, the dancers get so involved that they start throwing hot coal on each other. Surprisingly, after the dance the dancers show no signs of burns or injuries on their bodies. The duration of this dance is for about half an hour and takes place in the month of February and March. Agni dance attracts a large number of audiences as it often mesmerises their viewers with the calm and composed expressions of the performers, which tricks the audience into believing that they are dancing on a bed of flowers instead of hot burning coal (Jod 69).

Apart from the above mentioned variations, upon interaction with various Kalbelia communities the researchers discovered that most of the other folk dance forms of Rajasthan, such as ghoomar, bhavai, etc have been incorporated by the Kalbelia dancers into their performances (A. Sapera, Personal interview). Many entertaining elements such as dancing on a plate, on a sword, on a bed of needles, with seven pots on the head and picking up of notes, rings, blade and coins with eyelids and mouth are also being regularly included in the performances to make it more entertaining for the audience (K. Sapera, Personal interview). Although these factors help in increasing the popularity of the dance form and generate more income for the performers, they are not indigenous to the Kalbelia dance and have been incorporated in order to make the art form more entertaining (R. Sapera, Personal interview).

5.8. Post-Performance

The post-performance period of the dance is usually characterised by attempting to generate additional income. During their primary research, the researchers observed that after concluding the dance, some form of monetary compensation was indirectly requested for by the performers. Barring this, no other post-performance activities were identified.

5.9. Analysing the lifestyle and social status of the performers through their performance



Box 4: The Flip Side of Modernisation According to Rajbala Sapera, a Kalbelia Dancer (Kalakar Colony, Jaipur)



Figure 25 Rajbala Sapera

Rajbala discussed the reason behind the increasing demand for coloured Kalbelia dresses when compared to the traditional black ones, when performing in hotels, public gatherings, etc. In recent times the traditional black dress is mainly worn during performances organised by the government, or when the Kalbelias represent the state of Rajasthan on national or international platforms. However, most of the local hotels that host foreign tourists ask the performers to dance in their colourful costumes (R. Sapera, Personal interview). The performers barely receive more than two to three performance requests from the government; as this is barely adequate to sustain their livelihood, they perform regularly in local hotels. The elaborate costumes representing the snake movement and the dramatic makeup aid the tourists in identifying them as "cobras" or "gypsies" (R. Sapera, Personal interview). When asked if she likes being identified in this manner, she says,

"Of course I like it. Why won't I? After all I belong to the Kalbelia community. This is our identity" (R. Sapera, Personal interview).



Alteration from tradition has become a common aspect that is adopted by the tribe in their performance in order to attract a wider audience, make better profits and hence receive a more secure living condition. These changes are observed in the intricacies of the music, dance and costumes of the Kalbelia performance as discussed above in its entirety. As mentioned earlier, the performers have adapted to the preferences of the tourist population that frequent the state of Rajasthan, in order to fit into a 'gypsy' categorization; the Kalbelia performances have undergone numerous changes. The traditional black costumes are now being replaced by more colourful ones in order to suit the gypsy image of the Kalbelia tribe that is carried in the minds of most tourists from the West.

Further, in order to cater to the deep adoration that the Indian masses have towards Bollywood, the Kalbelia dancers have also adapted their music and dance moves to cater to that popularity. Therefore, in order to maintain the popularity of the dance, the dancers conform in accordance to the needs of the audience. This popularity facilitates greater level of income generation and hence a better standard of living for the community. A significant point of interest however, is the variation in the discourse of acceptance of this identity amongst those within as well as outside the tribe. According to Ayla Joncheere, it was the unique black costume of the Kalbelia dancers that gave the dance form international status in the 1980's. The music of the Kalbelias is not under threat because of its digression from the traditional, but much rather by its being adapted by other folk dance forms leading to its loss in distinctness (Joncheere 84). Joncheere has observed a purist wave amongst the local stakeholders of the Kalbelia artform such as the managers of the folk dance events. The performances stick to 'tradition', through which instruments used, music and dance are kept bound to the community itself without any intermixing with other communities.

We also see that the societal structure of the Kalbelia tribe is clearly defined through the musical traditions. The Kalbelia society is deeply patriarchal and its musical traditions reflect the gender roles at play. What is interesting however, is that the lifestyle of the tribe, with reference to its nomadic lifestyle, is largely absent in the imagery of the lyrics. Instead, many of the lyrics contain references to symbols of modernity. Therefore, even though the age of musical tradition of the tribe cannot be definitively stated, we see that through these symbols, certain facets of the tribe's livelihood have improved.



Banna Nath Sapera also holds a similar view on the transformation of the performance in the contemporary age. He is against the use of Bollywood music and colourful costumes as they go against the traditional culture of the Kalbelia community (B. Sapera, Personal Interview). However another artist who belongs to the same colony has emphasised the importance of altering the performance according to the interest of viewer (M. Sapera, Personal Interview). Further, in the Pushkar community as well, the artists fully embrace the gypsy identity given to them by the tourists and hold no hesitation to conforming their art to what is more popular and something that can reap greater profits. According to Joncheere, there is evident confusion between the disappearance of tradition and change in the art form (Joncheere 81). It is characteristics such as the lack of rules and structures that are the crux of what creates the unique identity of the Kalbelia dance. If the tradition of the dance has always remained to change in accordance to the one who views, then wouldn't removing the possibility of any change be going against that tradition?

Be it any form of art, there is always more than what meets the eye and this holds true to the dance of the snake charmers as well. Each and every aspect of the Kalbelia folk dance form is a creative commentary on the nuances of the performance which is deeply intertwined with the tribe itself. The above section spoke about the various gender roles prevalent in the Kalbelia community through the lense of the performance and also established the relationship between the performance and the lifestyle of the performers.



Chapter 6: Kal Raho Na Raho Ke Khabar - The Place of Kalbelia Dance in the Future

Through the research and attempts to document and understand their current situation along with mapping their evolution, the researchers were curious as to what is next for this art form that has seen struggle and hardship along with fame and recognition in a short span of time since the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. The future of the dance cannot be sustained by the mere passion of its practitioners, it also depends on their ability to sustain themselves, the appreciation they acquire from the crowd, and also, the government. Various stakeholders have contrasting opinions on the likely future of the dance.

Banna Nath Sapera gave the researchers great insight on the current situation and what the future might be, as he has been a Kalbelia group leader for most of his life. He strongly believed that the scope for the dance is reducing over time. He claims that one of the reasons for this decline is their practically non-existent budget supplied by the government to the group leaders; they are given a meagre sum of six hundred rupees to travel with their group to different cities to perform for five days. This budget does not cover their family expenditure as it also is used to cover not only the artists' pay, but other aspects required for managing an event such as



Figure 26 A Young Child in the Kalbelia Costume

the rent. Due to this difficulty, group leaders have to often plead artists to join their group. Through repeated occasions of pleading artists, leaders have noticed the increasing unwillingness to participate, and hence, the overall decline of the passion for the dance as performers are not able to sustain themselves financially. He also claims that Kalbelia is not the only dance form that is on the decline because of the government budget, there are other dances all over Rajasthan that are on the decline because of the same reason (B. Sapera, Personal Interview).

Rajki Puran Nath Sapera had a distinct opinion on the future of the dance. She agreed that changes would be present as this dance is a source of income apart from their own cultural



heritage. She accepted her unwillingness to “modernise” the dance and change it; she prefers the black costume to the colourful. But since it is through the pleasure of the audience that they earn, they must comply with their demands. On the other hand, she does not want the art form to die but if one cannot generate income from traditional performances, it definitely is a possibility in the future. She continued to say that private performances give her a higher income than the government; if the demand for private performances doesn’t increase then it might hinder the future of the dance (R.Sapera, personal interview). It does seem like this relatively young dance form is gaining popularity, as performances are being held in California, Spain, and Egypt. If the global demand increases, hopefully the dance will be able to sustain itself. She positively predicted that this demand for the dance would increase.

Curious about the future of this dance, the researchers further inquired at Kalakar Colony. Here, the elders contrasted and agreed on Rajki’s opinion, they believe that there seems to be a decline in the popularity and of the authenticity of the dance; there seems to be “no future” for the young Kalbelia dancers as the culture is being lost along the path of performance. They have started using Bollywood songs for performances and that is resulting in ignoring their “original” culture (R.P. Sapera, Personal Interview.)

Moreover, the children can now decide if they want to pursue the dance. They are getting educated and have the opportunity to pick their profession and how they want to earn their living. According to the elders at Kalakar Colony, if the income from their dance plateaus (keeping in mind future income levels) it is unlikely many from the present and future generations will practice this dance form.

The researchers realised how various dance schools have been established in the state of Rajasthan such as the Colleena Shakti dance school in Pushkar. While such schools promote the recognition of the folk dance, their establishment prove the change in culture. Traditionally, the dance was passed down generation to generation without formal teaching but by means of observation. A presence of a formal teaching institution overrules this tradition.



Moreover, the researchers got the privilege to witness a performance by the Rajki Puran Nath, at a restaurant in Jaipur called the Spice Court. This experience helped the researchers realise the various inspirations the dance has drawn such as the “comedy dance” the men perform that include performances with fire and the circular spinning that has been inspired by Ghoomar(Jod 68). These inspirations are known to make the dance more interactive, however, these incorporations also show how the dance has evolved from its traditional, authentic form.

Rajki has performed internationally, on television as well as in Bollywood films. Further research revealed that Rajki Puran Nath Sapera, had even performed on national television in the show *Dance India Dance*(“DID Super Moms Episode 3”). Despite all of these qualifications however, Nath now performs in low income providing functions across the city. Kalbelia dancers also perform at venues such as marriages. The researchers received the opportunity to attend a wedding in Jaipur, where they heard Kalbelia dancers would be performing. Unfortunately, upon arriving at the wedding, the group leader of another troupe of dancers informed the researchers that the demand for Kalbelia is reducing, and hence they were not a part of the event.

On an average, a Kalbelia group performs only around four performances per month. Apart from performing at weddings, they perform at diverse events: funerals, festivals, melas, jagran, fort festivals, birthdays, *satsungs* and *bhajans*. Such performances highlight the dearth of stages that Kalbelia dancers are offered to perform on.

The lack of dignified spaces to showcase their artform, bodes ill for the credibility afforded to not only Kalbelia dance, but folk dances in general. However in order to combat this, the government has made some commendable efforts. In 2001, the Kalbelia dance was chosen to represent the tableau of Rajasthan at the 54th Republic Day Parade held in New Delhi. An entire troupe of dancers performed around the tableau, while the musicians were seated upon it. To bestow the dancers with a national platform to showcase their art is undoubtedly a huge honour (Joshi, Personal Interview).

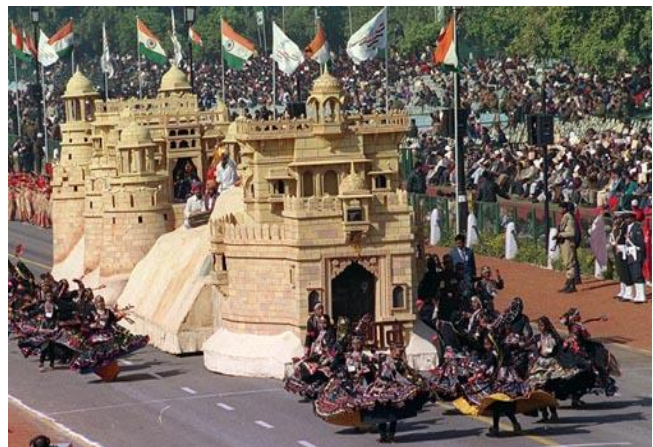


Figure 27 Kalbelias Perform at the Republic Day Parade



Interestingly, we see that these performers all chose to wear the traditional black costume, as opposed to the modern version. We also have to acknowledge the fact that this time period marked the heights in popularity of Kalbelia (Joncheere 71-71). Therefore, considering the current status of the dance form, one discerns that a couple of minutes of the dance on live television has not been fruitful for the dance form. Here, we see the government taking actions to promote the dance form, yet failing in sustaining it.

The researchers also learnt that the dance is also being imbibed in various bollywood songs such as “Khel Wohi Phir Aaj Tu Khela” from the movie Nigahen, the sequel to a movie called Nagin amongst others. This song is popularly known as “Main Nagin Tu Sapera” and is danced by Sridevi (“Dusman Hai Tu Mera Mai Nagin Tu Sapera”).

Though the dance itself seems to have no relation to the Kalbelia dance the researchers visited, the popular name of the dance has direct relations to the Sapera subcaste which is directly connected to the dance; it also references *nagin* or snake, which is another reference to the Kalbelia dance. Moreover, Lokesh Nath Sapera, son of Rajki Puran Nath Sapera, had proudly mentioned to the researchers that his mother was an integral part of a song shot for the movie “Kshatriya” (L. Sapera, Personal Interview). These appropriations derived from the Kalbelia dance make the Bollywood performance more entertaining and attractive, however, they unfortunately do not make the Kalbelia dance more globally renowned as they do not directly address the dance but instead intermingle the inspirations with the rest of the choreography.

However, the government has now started taking initiative to promote not only Kalbelia, but all folk dances in general. The Jawahar Kala Kendra now organises a folk dance festival, which is held for eleven days. Performers from the myriad of folk dance forms that encompass Rajasthani culture are invited to perform at this event, which is open to the public (Joshi, Personal Interview).

Addressing the grievances of the performers regarding delayed payments by the government, an ordinance has been passed that allows all performers to complain about the same. All performers can now have funds directly transferred into their bank accounts via electronic transfers. Performers can now approach the government with their account details, which are recorded; a voucher is signed by the performers and the funds are then deposited. All the performers have to do after this is withdraw the money from their bank accounts. The



government has recognised the fact that many members of the performing community in Rajasthan are illiterate and incapable of raising written complaints. Such endeavours have been introduced in order to cut out the role of corrupt government officials who dispense funds and to improve the welfare of the tribe. Additionally, officials at Jawahar Kala Kendra have started documenting the different Kalbelia performances, in order to build up a database on the dance form (Joshi, Personal Interview). The institute also houses a huge library with hundreds of books, in numerous languages, on various cultural traditions of the world. We see therefore, that the government is attempting to curate troves of information for the use of future generations. Therefore, we see that concerted efforts are being made by the government to not only ensure that the dance form gets its due respect, but to assure its place in the future.

Gulabo, the pioneer of the Kalbelia dance form (Singh), starred in the television show “Big Boss Season 5”, where she represented the Kalbelia dance form. In her interview before entering the house she stated that this endeavor of hers was to ensure a better future for the upcoming generations. She stated that the recognition would pave the path for revealing the tribe’s monetary stress and hence, further encourage their children’s education (“Big Boss Season 5”).

After interviewing Chhavi Joshi, the researchers realized the outlook about Kalbelia juxtaposes the dancers’ and their leaders’ opinions from the outside, and is in more of agreement with Rajki’s opinion. Joshi confidently stated that the Kalbelia dance and hence, the dancers have a bright future; over time, this folk dance is going to become widely reputed globally (due to its inherent excellence and the combined efforts of the performers and the government). The government claims that in the next ten to fifteen years, as all the current national dance, art, and music forms are currently becoming contemporary and developing with the changing times, they only will improve and continue to develop; this eventually will increase their popularity. There also exists a direct relation between the country’s economic growth and the growth of national arts and culture. With the current growth in economy, the future of arts is on the incline (Joshi, Personal Interview).

Joshi also believes that the Kalbelias are currently extremely popular, especially in Rajasthan; he gives all the credit to the Kalbelia artists and their immense dedication and perseverance. Despite being declined a honorary title, they continue to improvise and interact



with the audiences and this has given them the opportunity to perform abroad as well. What Banna Nath Sapera perceived as a loss in culture, Chhavi Joshi perceived as an improvement, that the dance is becoming more contemporary and developing in order to cater to the tastes of the crowd. However, Chhavi Joshi, stated that this change does not result in the dance form losing its originality; he assured the researchers that it was the government's duty to preserve the roots that the dance stems from. He added that if the dance performance lasts two hours, the dancers should introduce the sequence with how the dance began, originally, and then incorporate the modern steps, additions and fusions with other movements. He continued to state that the future of the dance is dependent on coordination and understanding shared between the respective artists and the government. Communication between the two entities is imperative, as it helps the government recognise the qualities of the art that sets them apart from the other dance forms. Only with this understanding of their edge over other dance forms can the government place the artists under a spotlight and provide them with a stage that would lead to recognition and economic viability (Joshi, Personal Interview).

Raphael Treza, the director of "Cobra Gypsies" the documentary, gave his worthy input and provided a different angle to what the future of the Kalbelias can be. According to him there lies a difference in the Kalbelia artists that still are only true to their roots and the others who are "commercialized". He believes that the prior is in constant contact with nature and is not exposed to the world of tourism, making the group more naïve. This is not the same with the latter as they are more exposed to the commercialised world and are constantly adapting. He is however extremely optimistic about their future like the government and believes their culture is immortal (Treza, Email Interview).

With Rajki Puran Nath performing abroad, the establishments of schools such as the Collena Shakti dance school, and the documentary created by Raphael Treza the researchers realised that there is an increased interest on a global scale. One can hence understand how the future also greatly lies in the hands of stakeholders beyond India's national borders and in their continued interest in the Kalbelia dance form.

There are two possible outcomes of the dance according to the various stakeholders: either the dance's popularity will diminish as time passes by or the dance will flourish and continue to sustain itself. However, the evolution and the addition of different aspects to the



dance is a truth that cannot be overlooked. These aspects either enhance the dance or reduce its authenticity, but they attract the audience, and currently that seems to be their priority. This priority however, might evolve just like the dance in the future. The researchers are eager to see what the future holds for the Kalbelia dance, the performers and the tribe. The future of the dance is neither bright nor dark, it simply *is*. As Gulabo Sapera stated,

“Sapera dance has no calculated steps, like Kathak. etc. It is wild and free. It has a beginning but no end. It just goes on and on and on,” (Singh)



Chapter 7: Aakhri Baath - In Conclusion

*In order to survive,
They had to imbibe,
What is not their own,
Borrowed from the unknown.
They travelled the world with passion in their heart,
That is why our country is recognised by their art.
Amidst the eager tourists and fast paced time,
What do the stars hold for the Kalbelia Tribe?*



Figure 28 A Group Meeting at Jawahar Kala Kendra

'Kalbelia' - The one who is unafraid to take who is dark (B.Sapera, Personnel Interview). What resonates most powerfully from the word is courage; courage to survive, to adapt, and to transform in accordance to what supports survival the most. When going through the innumerable art forms for the project, every art form looked like a mystery to be uncovered, a discovery of culture waiting to happen. However what struck strongly in the minds of the researchers when viewing the Kalbelia Dance form was the sheer beauty of how the tribe



employed their dance to facilitate their survival. When there is destruction of the profession that supports livelihood, every community is forced to adapt to a new one. The Kalbelia tribe however seemed to have transformed into something entirely new and has yet retained the life that was taken away from them. The will to survive no matter what the circumstances, is what exuded out most strongly and captivated the attention of the group.

Once the decision was made, the next six months were filled with discoveries at every step. Most of what we had initially conceptualised of the art form was in complete contrast to what we finally inferred post research. We started out with the naive interpretation of the dance being originated only after the Wildlife Protection Act. However, it wasn't long until we realized that no dance form can actually emerge overnight, there is always some past to the art that is perhaps hidden from one's direct view. Hence the search of the precise origin began and what resulted were a few mythological tales narrating the out worldly emergence of the dance from curse and boons. This resulted in the next question, why the difference in opinion? Further, in the view of the tribe, was their situation a curse or a boon? The researchers discovered that the Kalbelia tribe were the original snake charmers; a profession that is now associated almost synonymously with India.

The researchers discovered that the tribe did possess a dance tradition: the women would dance for alms while men would play the instruments. This is what stood out most prominently to the researchers about Kalbelia today, that the old profession of snake charming, as well as gender roles, were retained in the dance. The *been*, the instrument used to hypnotize the snake was now the main instrument in the orchestra. The movements of the dancers which were fluid and graceful demanded the extreme flexibility and agility of a snake. The costume of the dancers was found to be completely black, representative of the cobra snake. Therefore we noticed a strong linkage that existed between the profession that sustained their livelihood and the performance. We were completely unaware of how this linkage would deepen in our minds even further during the coming months of research.

Another aspect that stood out from the plethora of secondary information was the almost complete lack of any documentation of the dance and music. Although a few aspects of the costume and music were talked of, no data concerning pre-performance, performance and post performance rituals were recorded. Hence, the on field research facilitated filling these existing



gaps and transforming the viewpoint of what we understood the Kalbelia dance to be. The tribe welcomed us into their homes with warmth and narrated tales of their ancestors, the problems they face today and the future they see for the coming generation. The way the tribe viewed its present situation had obvious differences in opinion, however what stood common was the pride they held with regard to their shared past. Dissatisfaction varied, with one group speaking of the minimal amount granted by the government towards their dance, while another group spoke of the hardships they faced from being displaced by the government continually. Hence while one spoke of the lack of government interference, the other resisted this very interference.

Further, we also learnt of the satisfaction that existed in their thoughts from their life style. When viewed from an outside perspective, personal biases and opinions often shadow one's judgement. Hence, when one views improper shelter and nomadic life style, one almost expects discontentment with the forced result of their occupation. However what we found was a conscious choice, a choice to live the way their ancestors had for the generations in the outskirts, to the extent that the tribe resented the government interfering with their way of life.

With regard to their performance, we recognized how deeply it connects with their lifestyle and social status. The colourful jewellery and costumes worn by the performers was made and sold by the Kalbelia dancers themselves. Hence an added source of income is found to emerge from their performance. Another strong connection between the lifestyle and performance is seen in the lyrics of the songs. Most songs talk of marriages, festivals, love and nomadic nature of their lifestyle. We see that the musical tradition of the tribe reflects the nuances of its society itself. Despite the prominence of women in income generation, this image of the Kalbelia woman is not reflected in the lyrics, reflecting a fairly patriarchal society. The researchers inferred that many of the songs had been written by women, which is highlighted by the fact that almost all the songs in the musical repertoire are sung from the perspective of a woman. Therefore, the researchers realised that the women of the tribe have managed to find a voice for themselves, in the midst of a highly patriarchal society. The highly energetic music acts as a perfect accompaniment to the alacrity of the dance; every rhythm and beat matches the steps of the performers. Therefore, the researchers understood that the music and the dance can never exist in isolation; they exist in unison as stylistic functions of each other.



In order to understand the connection shared by the performance and social status, it becomes imperative to first understand how the evolution of the two run parallel to one another. From the research, we discovered that the dance was originally performed to beg for alms from door to door. Since no royal patronage was given to the dance in courtrooms and temples, the form lacked the prestige that was afforded to other folk and classical dances. Although today the dance has evolved, has achieved a folk dance status and is internationally viewed as a cultural icon of the state of Rajasthan, at a more local level, a secondary pedestal seems to have awarded to this folk nature of the dance. It is only outside the country that folk performances seem to be given a grander pedestal. Within the country itself, the lack of intense training and fixed tradition seems to reduce the prestige with which the performance is viewed (Ramli Ibrahim, Personal Interview). Hence, the dancers are found to be more attracted to the possibility of performing abroad as compared to the low income generating performances in hotels. The obvious interest taken by the foreign tourists in the dance is reciprocated back by the dancers through the acceptance of the terms the group is recognized with. The dancers today recognize themselves as ‘gypsies’, and conform to that image by replacing their black costumes with more colourful ones. Further, in order to retain the interest of the younger domestic audience, the music and dance has started to incorporate stylistic elements of Bollywood into its performance.

However, the government has recognised the struggles of the performers and has started responding to them positively. Efficient payment mechanisms and reputed stages have been arranged for the performers, providing them with opportunities to alleviate their social status and showcase their performances. The government has also started documenting Kalbelia performances in order to create a database on the folk dance. Therefore, we see that the new generations of Kalbelia performers are being provided with incentives to carry the dance form forward.

In conclusion, there seems to be an obvious shift in the way that the dance has conformed to the changing environment faced by the tribe. Although, there is resistance within the tribe and other stakeholders of the performance concerning the loss of tradition, it becomes imperative to first define what the tradition for the dance is. The Kalbelia dance form is found to almost be defined by change. Hence survival to change in accordance to the audience is the crux of the



Kalbelia performance. Therefore the dance may not have shifted from tradition, as transformation in accordance to the environment can be a tradition by itself.



References

Reports

1. UNESCO,. *INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE, NOMINATION FILE NO. 00340*. Nairobi: UNESCO, 2010. Web. 7 Feb. 2016. CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE.

Research Papers

1. Angelillo, Maria. "Caste In The Making, Dance In The Making". *Cracow Indological Studies* 14 (2012): 195. Web. 4 Feb. 2016.
2. Angelillo, Maria. "Rethinking Resources: Service Nomadism Adjusted". University of Milan, 2013. Web.
3. Joncheere, Ayla. Intangible Inventions: Kalbeliya Gypsy dance from recent creation to UNESCO recognition. Oriental Institute(ASCR): Prague, 2015. PDF.
4. Kumar, Vivek. *Inequality In India: Caste And Hindu Social Order*. 1st ed. Berlin: Humboldt University, 2014. Web. 2 Mar. 2016.
5. Peretz, Miriam. "Dances Of The "Roma" Gypsy Trail From Rajasthan To Spain: "Rajastani Dance"". *DOM Research Center* 2.4 (2006): n. pag. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.
6. Robertson, Miriam. "The Kalbelias of Rajasthan: Jogi Nath Snake Charmers." *Proquest* (n.d.): 4.
7. Singh, Vikram. "Nomadism And Inclusive Citizenship; A Case Study Of Kalbelia/ Jogi Community Of Barmer, Rajasthan". *Academia.edu*. Web. 4 Feb. 2016.
8. Wickett, Elizabeth. *Songs Of The Jogi Nath Kalbelia Of Jaisalmer*. 1st ed. Phillips: Firebird Foundation for Anthropological Research, 2013. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

Theses

1. Higgins, Carter Hawthorne. "Charming images of history: kalbeliya memories of itinerancy, begging and snake services." Thesis. Cornell University, 2010. Cornell University, May 2010. Web. 13 Nov. 2015.

Books

1. Abraham, Joshil K., and Judith Misrahi-Barak. *Dalit Literatures In India*. Routledge, 2015. Web. 29 Feb. 2016



2. Jod, Mohanlal. *Kalbelia Geet Aur Nritya*. Rajasthani Granthagar, 2011. 13-76 Print.
3. Napier, John. *They Sing The Wedding Of God: An Ethnomusicological Study Of The Mahadevi Ka Byavala As Performed By The Nath-Jogis Of Alwar*. 1st ed. Jefferson: McFarland, 2013. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.
4. Nath, Aman and Kapoor, Rajan. *Brahma's Pushkar: Ancient Indian Pilgrimage*. India Book House Publishing, 2005. Print.

Newspaper Articles

1. Chaudhuri, Dibyajoti. "Music Is In Our Genes". *The Times of India* 2013. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.
2. Sebastian, Sunny. "Activists Lend Voice to Abandoned Dancing Tribe." *The Hindu*. 12 Aug. 2012: n. pag. Web.
3. Shrikumar, A. "A Treat for the Senses". *The Hindu*. 9 Nov. 2011: n. pag. Web. 4 Feb. 2016.
4. Singh, Mahim Pratap. "Padmashri Recipient Gulabo: Sapera Dance Has A Beginning But No End, It Just Goes On And On". *The Indian Express* 2016. Web. 2 Mar. 2016.

Magazine Articles

1. Pillai, Madhavankutty. "The Gypsy Chronicles". *Open Magazine* 2013. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

Documentaries

1. *Cobra Gypsies*. Dir. Raphael Treza, 2015. Documentary.

Interviews

1. Ibrahim, Ramli. Personal Interview. 2 February 2016.
2. Joshi, Chhavi. Personal Interview. 7 December 2015.
3. Nath, Sadhu. Personal Interview. 5 December 2015.
4. Sapera, Anu Nath; Sapera, Kiran Nath; Sapera, Amar Nath. Personal Interview. 5 December 2015.
5. Sapera, Banna Nath. Personal Interview. 4 December 2015.
6. Sapera, Jagan Nath. Personal Interview. 7 December
7. Sapera, Lokesh Nath. Personal Interview. 8 December 2015.
8. Sapera, Madhu Nath. Personal Interview. 4 December 2015.



9. Sopera, Rajbala. Personal Interview. 4 December 2015.
10. Sopera, Rajki Puran Nath. Personal Interview. 8 December 2015.
11. Treza, Raphael. Email Interview. 19 November 2015.

Websites

1. Kealiinohomoku, Joann W. "Folk dance", *Britannica Encyclopedia*, Web, 7 Feb. 2016.
2. "Marwari". Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2015. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Eighteenth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Web. 4 Feb. 2016.
3. "Performance." *Cambridge Dictionaries Online*. Web. 7 Feb. 2016.
4. Robin, Maria. "Kalbeliya Dance (Gypsy Dance From Rajasthan)". *Mariarobin.com*. N.p., N.d. Web. 4 Feb. 2016.
5. "Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage". UNESCO. 2009. Web.
6. Stoyko, Cathy. "About Kalbelia Sopera Dance And Gulabi Sopera". *Cathy Stoyko Dance*. N.p., 2011. Print.

Images

1. NCERT,. *Rajasthan*. 2010. Web. 8 Feb. 2016.
2. *Poster of Gulabo Sopera*. 2016. The Indian Express, Jaipur. *The Indian Express*. Web. 3 Mar. 2016.
3. *The Tableau of Rajasthan Depicting the Jaisalmer Fort Popularly Known as 'Sonar Kila' and the 'Kalbelia' Dancers, Passing through the Rajpath during the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi on January 26, 2001*. 2001. Press Information Bureau, New Delhi. *Press Information Bureau*. Web. 3 Mar. 2016.
4. Wikimedia Commons,. *Blank Map Rajasthan State And Districts.Png*. 2006. Web. 8 Feb. 2016.

Videos

1. "Dance India Dance Super Moms." *Youtube.com*. Zeetv, 8 June 2013. Web. 1 Mar. 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qjhURW7FW7U>>.
2. "Bigg Boss Season 5." *Youtube.com*. Desitube, 11 May 2012. Web. 1 Mar. 2016.<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCaISuixqi4&index=5&list=PLAUXi8Ie2L9jEJfn_OoCYa4TISEJlrnih>



3. "Dusman Hai Tu Mera Mai Nagin Tu Sapera." *Youtube.com*. GN Films, 5 Feb. 2014. Web. 1 Mar. 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3Ol8YeMqMQ>>.



Appendices

1. The Varied Interpretations of the Title ‘Kalbelia’

Stakeholders	Interpretation of the title ‘Kalbelia’
Members of the Tribe from Pushkar	<p>Three main propositions were put forward:</p> <p>a. In Pushkar, members of the tribe explained the word Kalbelia, by splitting it into three different sections: <i>kal</i>, <i>bel</i> and <i>lia</i>. <i>Kal</i> means to grasp (naturally referring to the grasping of the snake), <i>bel</i> means to catch and <i>lia</i> means to take. Therefore, the word Kalbelia would mean catch a snake (A. Sapera, Personal Interview).</p> <p>b. The word <i>Kal</i> also means border. As mentioned earlier, the tribe has historically always been nomadic, sleeping in settlements in the jungle or in the desert; they were never associated with a sedentary village/town settlement. Therefore, as soon as any village border ended, the domain of the Kalbelias would begin. Therefore, the tribe also believes that Kalbelia means to live beyond the border (A. Sapera, Personal Interview).</p> <p>c. Another theory presented is that <i>Kal</i> means the dark one, or cobra; <i>bel</i> means to take. Therefore, Kalbelia also means those who are unafraid to take the cobra.</p>
Mohanlal Jod, Author of <i>Kalbelia Geet Aur</i>	The author states that the word Kalbelia is derived from <i>kalbali</i> , which means the friends of death.



<p><i>Nratya</i></p>	<p>However, when put into context, this would translate into friends of snakes. The author treats snakes here in a positive light, relating them to speed and <i>shakti</i> (power); therefore, this would describe the spiritual relationship between the tribe and the snake (Jod 13).</p>
<p>Cathy Stoyko, A Professional Dancer and Owner of the Website ‘Cathy Stoyko Dance’</p>	<p>Stoyko states that the tribe derives its name the word <i>Kal</i> which means black. The name could also be derived from the Hindu goddess Kali, often associated with rebirth.</p>
<p>Members of the Tribe from Jaipur and Pushkar; Maria Angelillo, Author of “Rethinking Resources: Service Nomadism Adjusted”</p>	<p>It has now become popular to call the tribe a ‘gypsy’ tribe.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The members of the tribe believe that this is an age-old nomenclature, bestowed upon their community by great elders. Therefore, the Kalbelia tribe and gypsy can be used interchangeably. The members of the tribe are aware of the English origins of the word, yet firmly believe in this legend. (A. Saper and K. Saper, Personal Interview) b. Academia states that the tribe when introducing themselves to foreign tourists has employed this nomenclature. Scholars believe that the tribe associates its nomadic lifestyle to that of the gypsies. (Angelillo 81).
<p>Gulabi Saper, world renowned Kalbelia dancer.</p>	<p>Kal is associated with death as the tribe was involved in catching snakes. Hence, she believes in not calling the dance ‘Kalbelia’ as it has a negative connotation</p>



	and instead names it as <i>Sapera</i> dance (“Padmashri Recipient Gulabo: Sapera Dance Has A Beginning But No End, It Just Goes On And On”).
--	--

Table 4: The Varied Interpretations of the Title Kalbelia

2. Meanings of Kalbelia Songs

1. **Banda Geet:** this song describes a young girl requesting her lover not to leave her, even though her relatives are against their union (Jod 57).
2. **Banna (a song for the lover):** this song describes a young girl who is waiting for her lover. She has opened up her hair for his arrival and requests him to buy her bangles from a shop near his house (Jod 42).
3. **Banna Geet (a song for the husband):** this song describes an argument between a married couple. The couple are driving home and the wife asks the husband how much further they have to drive as she is extremely tired. She tells him how there is too much *gulal* (coloured powder) flying about the house and how she is tired of cleaning it all. She always feels thirsty in his house, yet he never installs a tap. She feels extremely hot as the sun always infiltrates the house, she requests him to put a tent for shelter (Jod 53).
4. **Banna Geet (a song for the son-in-law):** this song describes extreme praise of the son-in-law. The bride’s family describes his soft hands and beautiful face, stating that they are at his service. They admire his pearl earrings and turban of silk. The bride also notices these features through her veil; she notices how his tears are as delicate as saffron and how his hands are as big as a *devalgarh*. She too admires his beauty (Jod 46).
5. **Bhomiye Ji Ka Geet:** this song translates to ‘a song for Bhomiya’; Bhomiya is a Jain deity that is also recognised as a God by the Kalbelias. The lyrics initially describe how during a battle in the forest, a thud of someone’s head falling to the ground was heard. The lyrics then describe how Bhomiya never troubles peaceful, solitary cows as if he did, his heart would start thumping and he would start



shivering, as if swords were cutting his insides up. The lyrics then describe how brave men are sitting on a carpet, of 'soorma' colour (Jod 56).

6. **Bichudiya (Anklets):** this song describes a young girl requesting her lover to remove her anklets. Should her brother-in-law remove them, she would feel mortified and knowing this, he would tease her mercilessly (Jod 64).
7. **Cham Cham Chamke Chudiyān (Glittering Bangles):** this song describes a young girl telling her lover of her shining bangles. She requests her lover to buy her a *chunni* (veil) that shines as much. She also requests him to buy her a pair of *ghungroo* (anklets that make noise). She subtly tells him that if he also danced with her, it would be a wonderful experience (Jod 64).
8. **Deewana (Crazy Love):** the song describes a young girl who has received gifts of English wine and black clothes from her lover. She requests him to never leave *Marwar* and go abroad, for her heart will break should he leave her (Page 40).
9. **Devi ki Aarti ki Geet:** this song is sung during an *aarti* in praise of *Devi*. The song describes how *Devi* swings the crib of the newborn child for the first time. In praise of *Devi* food has been arranged on a beautiful plate and all members of society have been invited to worship her. The song praises the beautiful bangles that *Devi* wears. The worshippers fall at her feet and children adore playing within her shrine (Jod 48).
10. **Dhoram:** this song describes irritation with a lover. A young girl tells her lover that her horses, as well as her car, are tired after walking across the desert. She reprimands her lover: she had called only him to her, yet he had come with alcohol. When attending a wedding, he had passed around *amrit*, *jalebi* and *supari* to the guests (Jod 62).
11. **Dinga Geet:** the song describes a relationship between a young couple. The girl praises the young man for his appearance and imagines of how he whistles while driving his Indica (car) in Jodhpur. She is sure that now that he has gone abroad, he is interacting with other young women. She informs him that once he arrives at the fair, she will unleash her anger with him. However, she softens and beseeches



him to come home as soon as possible. She promises to wait in Jaisalmer for him; all she wants is to be with him (Jod 41).

- 12. Dulha Aarti:** this song describes an *aarti* being performed by the women of the house for the groom. The women say that sandalwood, turmeric and rose should be used for his *aarti*. The bride requests her mother to finish her *aarti* as soon as possible, for she wants to see her groom (Jod 47).
- 13. Halriyo:** this song describes the birth of a child. The song tells the parents to place the newborn baby in a crib and feed him/her milk. The baby is later passed around and cuddled by his numerous relatives, all of whom adore him/her (Jod 45).
- 14. Holi ri Gulab (the colours of Holi):** this song describes the festival of *Holi* being narrated by a young girl. The young girl states that during the festival, *gulal* colours the air and everyone is tinged different colours. She throws colour at her lover while stating that she sells bangles while her lover sells watches. Her lover who has a large moustache and wears a crisp white *dhoti*, replies stating that she has a nose piercing (Jod 65).
- 15. Kaliyo:** this song describes a young girl who is about to be taken away (in marriage) by a young man. She cries out in disgust upon seeing the man, stating that he looks too dried up, to handle her vivacity. She is sure that she will break his heart. The girl then realises that her stomach is starting to pain and she requests the man to call a nurse for her. Spurned, the young man tells her to go and eat a red tomato (Jod 38).
- 16. Kangsiye Ray Karne:** this song describes a Kalbelia woman who has left her lover's comb in a car. She has searched frantically for it for nine full days yet still has not found it. She is willing to give earrings of silver and gold to whoever returns the earrings to her. Because she lost this comb, her skin has become dark, her relatives are angry with her and she had left her children. The woman cries at how so important an object has been taken from her so irreverently (Jod 54).
- 17. Laal Peeli Ankhiyan (Red-Yellow Eyes):** This song describes the tumultuous relationship between a married couple. The wife states that when she sees her



husband's eyes colour red and yellow with anger, she never gets scared. Even if he looks at her normally, she won't get scared. He regularly buys her bangles from Jodhpur market, however she will refuse to wear these no matter how angry he gets. Whatever jewellery he buys her, she will not wear no matter how high his temper stretches (Jod 60).

18. Lulu ki Yaad Main Gaana: this song is sung by Kalbelia women in a humorous setting; its title means 'a song in remembrance of Lulu'. The song describes how Lulu has managed to establish his authority in the area. He has told everyone that he will protect them; however, while waiting for his protection, everyone has become black. The song smirks at his tailor-made curtains, his bullocks and his motorbike; Lulu surely is a man of good taste! The song describes a particular vegetable grown near a river that might suit his discerning palate. The song urges Lulu to maintain his style, keeping his *dhoti* crisp and white at all times. However, the song acknowledges his power; without anyone noticing, he has managed to subtly wield his authority around the area (Jod 55).

19. Lavriyo: this song describes the longing of a young girl for her lover. He has taken her heart far away with him. She hates living without him and is always sad and listless. She believes that their love is eternal and that they will always be together (Jod 65).

20. Malankeero Geet: this song describes the longing of the daughter-in-law to go home, when in her husband's house. The song describes a woman singing. While she is singing, a poor lady comes to the entrance of her *haveli*. She tells her grandfather to give her a diamond necklace. However, upon receiving the necklace, the young girl tells the grandfather that she had seen him smoking *hookah*. The grandfather gives her the necklace and tells her to go to the woman's father. The woman tells the father that she has seen him play the *pungi*. The father gives her a diamond necklace and tells her to visit his brother. The poor lady tells the brother that she saw him drive a car. The brother gives her a diamond necklace and sends her to his uncle. The poor lady tells the uncle that she has seen him riding a camel. The poor lady can be interpreted as the daughter-in-law; her



visiting various relatives could be indicative of all her memories with her own relatives (Jod 50).

- 21. Mehandi Geet:** this song describes the *mehandi* (henna) that is applied by most Indian women for decorative purposes. The song describes a Kalbelia woman who has sent her husband (who lives in Gujarat) a message, stating that henna is growing in the fields. He is to come back soon, in anticipation of his arrival, the woman has applied *mehandi*. The lady also knows that his sister's marriage has been fixed; she knows that her husband's only prerequisite regarding his sister's marriages is that she should be married off with a large dowry. She sends a servant to deliver the news to her husband, as she cannot move until the *mehandi* on her hands has dried (Jod 57).
- 22. Naag Lapeta Khave:** this is a love song, where love is visualised by observing the night sky (Jod 39).
- 23. Panghat ka Geet:** In this song, a wife is worried about going to the river to collect water. She tells her husband of the same, informing him that the boy who lives opposite them has been following her. She is worried that *huri nazar* (the evil eye) could be cast on her. She is at a loss as to how to collect water from the river under such conditions (Jod 51).
- 24. Panihari (the messenger):** In this song, a young girl tells her mother that a storm is brewing in the North; clouds are gathering, lightning is flashing and torrential rain is falling. A big raindrop asks the girl who creates the lakes; the raindrop has heard that the small lakes are made by the girl's mother-in-law and the large ones by the girl's father-in-law. She is then approached by a young man who inquires as to why she hasn't applied any makeup, considering that all her friends have. The girl replies, stating that all her friend's husbands are at home, however hers is abroad; there is simply no reason for her to apply make-up. The young man is impressed by her answer and requests her to run away with him; she is outraged by the idea. She curses him stating that she would burn his tongue and that a snake would bite him. The girl returns to her house in a foul mood and informs



her mother-in-law of the incident; the mother-in-law then informs her that the young man who had approached her was in fact her husband (Jod 43).

- 25. Pati Yaad Main Geet (a song in remembrance of the husband):** this song describes a woman who misses her husband. The woman wants to cook delicious food for him, especially his favourite dishes, *bajre ki khichdi* and *halwa*. She requests him to find a job near her, so that she can be with as much as possible (Jod 53).
- 26. Pheron ka Geet:** this song is sung while walking around the fire in a marriage; this occasion marks the most sacred ritual in the Hindu marriage (Jod 52).
- 27. Poongalgad Parnai:** this song describes a daughter-in-law's unhappiness with her marriage. The young girl is married to Poongalgad, who lives far away from Jaisalmer. She asks her mother why she got her married away so far away from home, where there is little greenery. During the *Teej* festival, the girl misses her brother dearly, such that she loses her appetite. Whenever she misses her brother, she goes to the rooftop and remembers their fond memories together. She curses her father, who has married her off, away from home, just for money (Jod 61).
- 28. Praat Kaal Geet:** this song is by women while waking up their husbands. They salute the Sun God for his beautiful sunrise in the West; they request Him to wake their husbands up. They request the Sun God to shower them with blessings, in the form of horses and elephants (Jod 49).
- 29. Prem Geet (A song about love):** this song describes intense desire. A young woman informs her husband (at night), of a poor lady who has a beautifully fragrant garland. The poor lady will give the woman this garland in exchange only if she is provided with a horse and green clothes. The husband goes to the poor lady to retrieve the garland and while he is away, the woman's heart beats fast in anticipation (Jod 51).
- 30. Punle ri Aaveni:** in this song, a young girl is pining for her lover who has travelled abroad (Jod 44).
- 31. Punsiyu:** This song describes romantic betrayal. A young girl asks her lover to whom has he given her bangle. The tune of his *been* still plays in the corners of



her mind. She asks him to whom he has given the ring he usually wears and the handkerchief that he usually ties around his neck. The young girl is betrayed; had she never known his true character, she would have never fallen in love with him (Jod 59).

32. Setardli (to Promise): the song describes a young girl awaiting her lover's return. She requests him to visit the *mela* (fair) and to come home in time to celebrate *chauhano ki hodi* (a festival). She requests him to sell manure and buy her an expensive necklace; she naively requests him to sell his expensive watch and buy a big bungalow in Mumbai. She promises to be waiting at home for him when she returns (Jod 58).

33. Shadi ka Geet (a Marriage Song): this song describes a young man teasing his lover. The girl proudly displays the bangles that her lover has brought for her, however he teases her by saying that she knows nothing of bangles or how to appreciate them. She displays the new shoes that he has bought her; again, he teases her, stating that she does not know how to wear them and cannot appreciate their beauty. He complains that he gets her many beautiful things, but she simply does not know how to wear them (Jod 63).

34. Vivah Geet (a song for marriage): this song describes the demands of a newly married couple. The bride asks her husband to bring her a scarf and then take her to his house. She also requests him to buy her anklets; this is so that whenever she visits places, or goes to fill water, her anklets chime cheerfully (Jod 48).



Glossary

A

Aakhri Baath - “The Final Word” in Marwadi

Ainae Nach - “Let’s Dance” in Marwadi

Aarti - Devotional rituals

Agni - Fire

Amrit - A divine nectar

B

Bajre ki Khichdi - A dish of boiled millets

Bel - to catch (verb)

Been - Musical instrument used to charm snakes

Bhavai - a Rajasthani folk dance

Bindi - Accessory worn on the forehead

Bhajan- Hymn

Buri Nazar - Evil eye

C

Chan - Small toy instrument

Changa - Musical instrument

Chapalki - An ornament worn on the neck

Charpai- Cot

Choli - The upper garment (blouse) of the *Ghagra Choli*, an Indian garment worn by women

Chunni - Veil

D

Dafla - Small handheld drum

Darbar - Royal court

Dera - A humble settlement

Devalgarh - a complex of temples

Devi - The divine mother Goddess in Hinduism

Dhol - Large sized drum



Dholak - Medium sized drum

Dhoti - Traditional lower garment worn by Indian men

E

Ektara - A violin with a single string

G

Ganesha - Hindu God of prosperity, also known as the remover of obstacles

Ganesha Vandana - A ritual that invokes the blessings of the Hindu God Ganesha

Gatha Geet - Sonnet songs

Ganesh Vandana - Lord Ganesha's prayer

Ghagra - The lower garment (skirt) of the *Ghagra Choli*, an Indian garment worn by women

Ghoomar - a Rajasthani folk dance

Ghumakkad Samaj - The Ghumakkad Society

Gotra - Different clans that are used to describe the lineage of a person

Guru - Teacher

H

Halwa - A popular Indian sweet dish

Hatha Yoga - A form of Yoga

Haveli - Mansion

Holi - An Indian festival

Hookah - A popular mechanism used to smoke tobacco

I

Inro Shurwat - "Their Beginning" in Marwadi

J

Jagaran - Musical tradition of the Kalbelia tribe

Jalebi - An Indian sweet

Jeebe - Ornament worn on the blouse of the Kalbelia dancer's costume

Jisnaji - A Kalbelia deity

K

Kal - Geographical border; to grasp (verb); the dark one (referring to the cobra)

Kalbali - Friends of Death



Kali - A Hindu Goddess whose name is derived from her black, or *kal*, skin

Kal Raho Na Raho Ke Khabar - “Does a Future Exist” in Marwadi

Kamar ka patta - Belt worn around the stomach

Kajal - Eye kohl

Khanjari - Small, circular hand held drum

Kurta - Traditional Indian wear

P

Padhaaro Mhare Desh - “Welcome to my country” in Marwadi

Pandavas - The five Pandava brothers: Yudhishtira, Arjuna, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadeva

Panihari - A messenger

L

Laukhi - Bottle gourd

Lia - To take (verb)

M

Marwar - A region in Rajasthan from which the Kalbelias hail

Mathe ka choga- An ornament worn on the forehead

Mehandi - a brown paste applied in different designs on the body; when dried is scraped off leaving dark brown designs.

Mer - Sea organ

Moti - Pearl

Mela- Fair

O

Odhani - Veil

P

Parva Geet - Festival songs

Pasha Geet - Career songs

Phatia - Ornamental necklace

Puja - Devotional rituals

Pungi - A musical instrument used to charm snakes (synonym of *been*)

Punshi - Bracelet



R

Rehen Sehen Aur Samajo Sthithiyo - “Lifestyle and Social Status” in Marwadi

Rin Geet - Climate songs

S

Saivite - A devotee of the Hindu God Shiva

Sanskaar Geet - Sacrament songs

Saraasvati - The Hindu Goddess of knowledge

Satsung - Group prayer

Shakti - The Female Divine Energy

Shankriya - Dance form

Shiva - The Hindu God of Destruction

Shoomar - Type of earrings worn by Kalbelia dancers

Supari - A popular Indian mouth freshener

T

Thua - Musical instrument

W

Wans - A rare desert plant



Against the reflection of a golden ocean,
Infinite is a land of colour and vibrance;
A sudden storm of radiance in motion,
Is black and yet a vivid brilliance;
Alone they wander under a spotlight sun,
Dancing and pleasing someone, anyone;
A king, a peasant and sometimes none,
A beauty ignored a livelihood to shun.
A home as stable as the riding wind,
What day is today? What year is tomorrow?
Unknown they live, with pride they sing,
In a pacing change too hard to follow;
An identity so blurred, a stranger almost,
A human, a snake, a gypsy behold;
What binds those, would define most,
But doesn't a snake shed what's old?