



## **TRADITIONAL THEATRE FORMS**

### **SWANG**

The tradition of folk theatre in the form of Swang- literally meaning imitation or disguise, has been a popular form of folk-dance theatre in Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh and Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh since the medieval centuries.



**Swang, Indian Form of Theatre**

It is the amalgamation of music, dance, poetry and speech. The swang or sang is the rural folk drama, which expresses the relationship of love, depicting legendary and modern tales of valor, sacrifice, humour and whatever interests the human mind. With a deep-rooted tradition, the Sang in Haryana is based on the open theatre style and in other parts of India, Ramleela and Rasleela are the more popular dramas, based on mythology and religion. The dramas were created not only for the pleasure and leisure activities but also to impart moral truths and to strengthen the cultural integrity. The two important styles of Swang are from Rohtak and Haathras. In the style belonging to Rohtak, the language used is Haryanvi (Bangru) and in Haathras, it is Brajbhasha.

Swang theatrical performance has been used both as a medium of amusement and a source for collection of funds for public amenities and welfare.

- Folk theatre in Haryana is divided into two categories. Firstly, temple based religious theatre, depicting Indian Epics and Puranas and the source material for characters and secondly community-based secular theatre, of minor forms and lighter variety.

## ORIGIN AND HISTORY...

The origin of Swang theatre can be traced to Kishan Lala Bhat, who is said to have laid the foundation of the contemporary style of folk theatre in Haryana. The most celebrated name is that of Dip Chand Bahman, hailing from village Shiri Khunda in Sonapat. **Dip Chand Bahman was popularly known as Shakespeare or Kalidasa of Haryana.**

The Saang of that time had two categories: (i) Kirtan Style and (ii) Nautanki Style.



FOLK THEATRE TRADITIONS WERE FOLLOWED IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE COUNTRY UNDER DIFFERENT NAMES – RAAS LEELA (BRAJ), BHAVAI (GUJARAT) PANDVANI (MP), TAMASHA (MAHARASHTRA), YAKASHGAAN (MYSORE), PANDAV DANCE (UTTARAKHAND) AND SAANG (SWANG) IN HARYANA.

## FEATURES...

- ✚ The stage of Swang does not require the complicated equipment or arrangements of the modern dramatic performances. Neither curtains nor greenrooms for makeup is needed.
- ✚ Any set stage is not required but any open space can be used like a field, a courtyard or a balcony of a temple.
- ✚ It is interesting to note that Swang folk theatre artist does not use loud speakers.
- ✚ Musical instruments used: ektara, kharta, dholak, sarangi and harmonium to bring about flavours in dialogue.
- ✚ Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century men dressed as women played the female characters. Recently, women have replaced the men, and they have their own Sa-angs in which women play men instead of the other way round.

A variation of the Sang is the nautanki in Uttar Pradesh.

## THEMES

Swang theatre themes include a plethora of varied streams of different range like themes of morality, folk tales, lives of inspiring personalities, stories from Indian mythology and in recent times, more current themes like health and hygiene, literacy, AIDS awareness and women's empowerment. In temple based religious theatre, Indian epics and Puranas are the major source

material for characters, while the community-based secular theatre is of lighter variety. As mentioned many themes are merged together to produce different dramas of mixed genres - mythological love, popular history, and religious themes, all with overtones of secular values. And like any other folk dramas, swang too have ending of victory of good over evil.

### POPULAR PLAYS...

Raja Vikramaditya  
Raja Bhoj  
Kichak Badh  
Draupadi Chir Haran  
Jaani Chor  
Pingla Bharthri  
Gopi Chand

Ranveer- Padmavat  
Prahlad Bhagat  
Harishchander  
Nal-Damyanti  
Heer- Ranjha  
Soni- Mahiwal  
Pooran Bhagat

Raja Rissalu  
Amar Singh Rathor  
Sarwar Neer  
Jaswant Singh  
Ramdevji  
Nihalde  
Sorath Rai Diyach

### POPULAR ARTISTS...

**Pt Deep Chand Bahman**  
**Pt Ramkishan Vyas**  
**Pt Lakhmi Chand**

**Baje Bhagat**  
**Pt Mange Ram**  
**Jat Mehar Singh**

### ACTIVITY TO DO...

1. Can you find out any interesting story associated with the origin of Swang or Sa-ang theatre form? Paint a caricature of the dance form using vibrant colours.

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2. Mention four award winning performers of Swang Theatre.

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3. Can you name the movies which has shown swang performances?

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4. Women began to be a part of the folk theatre only after the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Can you trace the reason in brief why were they prohibited to be a part of the group in the earlier centuries?

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5. The local cultures of folk art are dying and gradually diminishing from the mainstream media. Mention ways to preserve our diverse folk cultures of India.

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#### REFERENCES

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