

### **Significance of Research**

Music is an integral part of everyday life of people in South Asia. It has existed for centuries in various forms in different geographies from devotional music such as Bhajan and Qawwali to folk music like those of Manganiyar/Manganhar<sup>1</sup> in the Rajasthan desert region in India and Tharparkar in Sindh, Pakistan. With the advent of modern media, particularly private media after deregulations in the 90s and 2000s, these musical forms have been increasingly commoditized. While some researchers have worked on devotional<sup>2</sup> and folk music and in some cases their relationship with the modern media in India<sup>3</sup> and Bangladesh,<sup>4</sup> folk music in Pakistan has been one of the neglected areas of study. In the realm of folk music, some research has been done on Manganiyars in India<sup>5</sup>; the case of Manganhar music in Pakistan has not gotten much scholarly attention. Manganhar musicians in Pakistan are particularly important for two reasons. Firstly, Manganhar's music in Pakistan like Manganiyars' music in Rajasthan

---

<sup>1</sup> Written and spoken as Manganiyar in India and Manganhar in Pakistan. The vast desert land of Tharparkar region in Pakistan is home to the Manganhar community of hereditary caste of musicians with familial lineages in the Western Rajasthan region of India known as Manganiyar.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Richard Wolf (2013), *Agency and Loss in Muslim Performance Traditions of South and West Asia*.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, Peter Manuel (2014), *The regional North Indian popular music industry in 2014: from cassette culture to cyberculture*.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Mohammad (2014), *Urbanizing folklore, Folkloricizing the urban: cultural communication between the urban poor and popular music in Dhaka*.

<sup>5</sup> See for example, Shalini Ayyagari (2012) *Spaces Betwixt and Between: Musical Borderlands and the Manganiyar Musicians of Rajasthan* and Nazir A. Jairazbhoy (1977), *Music in Western Rajasthan: Stability and Change*.

has survived over the years since partition despite the loss of patronage system<sup>6</sup> that existed before. Secondly, Managanhars in Pakistan have had some affiliation with the national media (radio and television) but recently their music has got considerable attention in the commercial media nationally as well as internationally. For example Mai Dhai is a female Manganhar singer from Umerkot, Pakistan who shot to national fame and subsequently got international limelight once she was incorporated into commercial private media. This research project explored traditional aspects of music making, its relationship with modern media, and its socio-cultural significance through fieldwork with the Manganhar musicians in Umerkot and Tharparkar and archival research in Lok Virsa in Islamabad and state radio station in Tharparkar. This research will help bring some preliminary findings to the attention of scholars interested in ethnomusicology and media/cultural studies, which will hopefully lead to extensive research on folk music and modern media in Pakistan.

---

<sup>6</sup> The Manganiyar musicians historically performed for the Kings and Hindu patrons before partition.