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FINDINGS

The thesis comprehensively examined the relationship between folk music and geographical landscape in general, emphasising how physical environments shape cultural expression and artistic production. Furthermore, it also explores the gender and folk music, as well as the socio-cultural and religious aspects of folk music in Uttarakhand. This interaction is evident in the production of folk music, as studied in the thesis, reflected in the themes of folk music, their deep connection to the natural non-human environment, stylistic variations in music, and the social and symbolic meanings of lyrics. The thesis highlights an ethnomusicological approach that examines the intersections of folk music with ecology and nature, illuminating its role as more than just an artistic form but a living narrative of the region's environmental, spiritual, and social dynamics.

Uttarakhand's folk music is deeply interwoven with its geographical, ecological, and socio-cultural milieu. Uttarakhand's folk music is deeply rooted in its geography, ecology, and socio-cultural fabric. The mountainous terrain and agrarian lifestyle shape musical traditions that express aspirations, struggles, and communal values. Folk songs draw inspiration from nature, mythology, and everyday life, reflecting the complex interactions between humans and their environment. Performed during festivals, rituals, and agricultural cycles, they are integral to community life. A thematic analysis of 100 folk songs reveals the profound influence of mountains, rivers, flora, and fauna on melodies and lyrics. These songs preserve indigenous knowledge, seasonal cycles, and ecological wisdom while embedding spiritual themes of deities, pilgrimages, and sacred landscapes. Folk music fosters social cohesion, strengthening community bonds through shared work, celebrations, and emotions. Women's songs, in particular, convey a sense of longing, resilience, and lived experiences. Ultimately, Uttarakhand's folk songs balance cultural heritage and environmental consciousness, serving as both historical archives and evolving traditions.

Women play a crucial role as bearers of cultural heritage and community identity, preserving and nurturing Uttarakhand's folk musical traditions. As key participants in domestic and communal activities, they document personal and collective experiences—encompassing joys, hardships, love, and the challenges of Himalayan life—through folk songs that serve as oral histories, reflecting socio-economic and cultural conditions. The research collected information and folk songs from 390 women across Uttarakhand using ethnographic methods, in-depth interviews, and participant observations. An in-depth

analysis of the lyrics of these folk songs is considered necessary to understand folk ethnomusicology from a gendered perspective. The study employed Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques, including sentiment and emotion analysis, to analyse the lyrics, sentiments and emotions of these folk songs. The intricate socio-cultural and gendered dimensions in these songs narrate women's everyday geographies, their roles in family, labor, and rituals, and their emotional and psychological landscapes. Folk songs provide insights into patriarchal constraints, migration-induced separation, and the resilience of cultural traditions. Women's voices emerge as powerful agents of cultural preservation, using folk music to express emotions, foster communal ties, and challenge societal norms. Thematic diversity, from personal sorrow to collective celebration, demonstrates folk songs as emotional outlets and tools for social cohesion, reinforcing their significance in shaping gendered identities and sustaining Uttarakhand's rich cultural heritage.

There is a profound connection between folk music in Uttarakhand and the religious and spiritual practices of its communities, including those of lower caste groups, also known as the drummer community. These practices serve not only as expressions of devotion but also as mechanisms for cultural preservation and community cohesion. Among the lower-caste groups, folk music plays a central role in rituals, festivals, and spiritual ceremonies, reflecting their unique socio-religious identities and belief systems and resisting social marginalisation. The religious practices in Uttarakhand often revolve around local deities, spirits, and ancestral worship, particularly in the form of *Jagar*. These practices not only fulfill spiritual needs and promote healing but also serve as an oral repository of myths, legends, and genealogies, often rooted in the history and identity of lower-caste communities. Despite facing caste-based discrimination in everyday life and other social settings, the *Jagariya* holds a revered position during these sacred rituals, which represents a unique inversion of caste hierarchies. Narratives from the drummer community reveal their deep connection to their musical traditions and the sacred nature of their work. However, they face significant challenges in sustaining their livelihoods amidst modernization and changing societal values. The struggle for recognition, economic survival, and the disinterest of younger generations in these activities are recurring themes in their stories. The ASEB-SWOT analysis matrix reveals cultural preservation and community cohesion, caste-based exclusion outside ritual contexts, increased social integration, and threats from modernization and the loss of traditional practices.

The younger generation's perception of folk music strikes a balance between reverence for tradition and the influence of evolving cultural trends. While many acknowledge its cultural significance, modernization, globalization, and digital advancements have altered engagement, often leading to a decline in its popularity. Urban migration and mainstream entertainment further threaten folk music traditions in Uttarakhand. These changes have reshaped socio-economic and cultural practices, enriching folk music while also diluting it. To preserve and revitalize folk music, a multifaceted approach is necessary—combining traditional knowledge with modern technology, fostering community engagement, offering platforms for musicians, and incorporating folk music into educational curricula. Future research should explore digital platforms for promotion and develop strategies to support rural communities in sustaining their musical heritage.