



MUSIC CULTURE of North East India

Dr. Prabal Sharma

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MUSIC CULTURE OF
NORTH-EAST INDIA

Dr. Prabal Sharma



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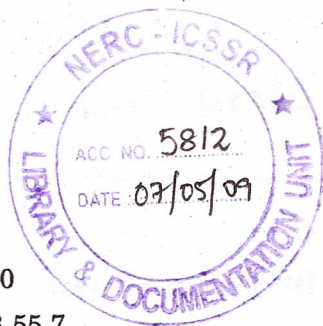
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Acknowledgement

Music is a vast ocean of sound knowledge and research, pertaining to both theoretical and practical aspects. One is unable to grasp its intricacies, unless he is fortunate enough to be blessed by the Almighty since it is He who leads us to the right path and it is also He who is responsible for all the such good tasks undertaken by an author.

I am very indebted to my beloved parents for their consistent help and encouragement, which has always been a great source of inspiration to me.

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Prabal Sharma

Preface

In North-East India, the authorities of these states and the other states of India have already worked exclusively on its social, cultural and historical aspects, but Music has almost been left untouched by them. In spite of the best efforts made by the scholars, the scenario of Music of this region still remains incomplete and ambiguous, owing to paucity of source materials. In this work I have tried to discuss the music of this region in a lucid and compact form.

The North East Indian region comprising the seven states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura have inherited a rich and varied culture. In this study, my attempt is to throw light on the historical background and evolution of different forms of Music of North-East India.

Various political, social, economic and religious factors are responsible for the creation of music which has been discussed along with the geographical and cultural background of this region. My emphasis is on the importance of music in

all spheres of human life, and on various forms of music, viz. primitive or tribal, folk, classical, semi-classical and devotional music. The musical instruments which are in vogue these days have been discussed with illustrations.

I have also dealt with the history, places of historical importance, physiography, religious beliefs and practices, customs, festivals and languages of the people.

It would be a matter of great pleasure for me if this work can create inquisitiveness in the mind of the reader.

Dr. Prabal Sharma

CHAPTER-1

Introduction

The seven states of North East India form part of the east Himalayan region which extends from Sikkim eastwards and embraces Darjeeling hills of West Bengal and is strategically important as it shares international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Tibet. These states are inhabited by a number of native tribes which have their own distinct traditions in art, culture, dance, music and life styles.

Music is an art with endless ramifications and innumerable psychological and cultural affiliation which has always played a vital role in human society. The general musical form of the North East India bears the characteristics of the entire region, and the racial admixture of the different types of people, settled in this region has greatly contributed to the folk music. Each group of the North East along with its sub-groups has its own musical traditions.

History of cultural evolution of all places were remoulded, by the tastes and habits of the people, at different times, under, changing political conditions and social environments. This is a region where tradition had held its sway till very recent times. But unusually heavy influx of people from outside the region has, of late, disturbed the demographic and cultural balance of the region. While there is no denying to the fact, that, there are considerable diversities within the region, yet the fact remains that there is a basic unity characterizing the seven states making up North-East India. This region does have a special character of its own: the socio-cultural milieu of this region holds up in the present day, as it has done in the past, a picture that somehow distinguishes it from the rest of India.

One of the outstanding peculiarities, is the fact that, the process of assimilation and absorption of tribal communities in the Hindu Sect, which had stopped working in other parts of India for quite some time ago, has been operative in this region till comparatively recent times and cannot be said to have completely ceased to work even today.

Music Culture of North East India is a handbook with a kaleidoscopic vision of the music of the North-Eastern states of India, with its intricate tapastry divergent in culture, language and tradition. The book highlights the practical and basic knowledge of music, touching upon some fundamental aspects of this fine art.

This book also mentions the various musical instruments of the North-East India illustrated by photographs.

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Dr. Prabal Sharma, M.A.; M.Phil in Hindustani Music, is better known as a talented vocalist of the younger generation. He was

awarded the Ph.D. Degree from the University of Delhi for his thesis 'Music and Musicians of Assam Medieval Period'. He had his early musical lessons under the guidance of late Birendra Kumar Phookan of Assam and did his advanced training under Pt. L.K. Pandit of Gwalior Gharana. Dr. Sharma is gifted with a melodious voice and has performed in many places in India and abroad. He has also performed in 'Sunday Night Concert' of All India Radio and the 'International Conference on Indian Music' in Mauritius in 2003.

Dr. Sharma, son of Shri Pratul Chandra Sarmah and Mrs. Mandira Sarmah is also blessed with the qualities of a musicologist. He takes great interest in organizing music education programmes, seminars, research workshops, lecture demonstrations at university, regional and national levels. He was awarded the 'National Scholarship to Young Artists' from the Ministry of H.R.D., Govt. of India, and the 'State Scholarship' from the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, Govt. of Assam.

Presently, he is working as a lecturer in the Deptt. of Music in St. Anthony's College, Shillong, which is a premier institute in the North-East, India.



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