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**MAACH OF MALWA: HISTORY, PERFORMANCE, AESTHETICS, AND MUSICAL  
DRAMATURGY**

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DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijrpa.9391>**ABSTRACT**

Madhya Pradesh's Malwa region is home to Maach, a vibrant folk musical theatre culture. Since its establishment in the 18th century, it has evolved into an entertainment form that reflects the majestic heritage of the people of the Malwa region and incorporates elements of music, poetry, dialogue, cotillion, and liar. Traditionally performed during the Holi Festival, Maach entertains people in rural areas and provides a platform for expressing their artistic values. This paper examines a range of scholarly literature that sheds light on the literary roots of this performing art form, performance styles, and musical factors through a paper. This study examines the elaboration of Maach from its origins to the present day, featuring important ritualistic performance forms. It analyses the part of music, the use of language, and the use of dramatic rudiments in erecting the aesthetic identity of Maach. Likewise, it addresses how the form has continued to acclimate to contemporary subject matter while remaining faithful to its traditional culture and customs. The findings indicate that in addition to being a performing art form, Maach provides a sense of artistic memory, serves as a form of social notice/ commentary, and is a means of collaborative cultural expression. Maach has a veritably long history; still, it's floundering to survive within the moment's entertainment geography, because of the rise in both the number of entertainment options available and the added difficulty of training to be an artist. To cover and save Maach, it'll be necessary to validate how it's performed, to give further formal training(academic) for those who wish to share in Maach performances, and to give the coffers necessary to maintain Maach performances as an important part of artistic heritage.

**KEYWORDS:** Maach (theatre), Malwa (theatre), Musical Theatre, Theatre, Indian Theatre, Heritage.

## INTRODUCTION

India's folk theatre traditions express the collaborative imagination and artistic heritage of indigenous communities. These theatre forms fuse music, cotillion, narrative, ritual, and social commentary, serving as depositories of original histories and traditions. Among the colourful theatre forms, Maach is among the best-known folk theatre traditions in Madhya Pradesh's Malwa region.

The name Maach is deduced from the Malwi-deduced form of Manch, which is Hindi for stage. It refers to both the stage setting for the theatrical performance and the factual performance. Maach is a music- grounded play in which players tell stories through music, poetry, and drama.

Historically, Maach has been performed in open settings such as village places or fields, allowing for large quantities of community participation. For further than 200 times, Maach has been an artistic institution in the Malwa region.

At first, when there were no other large- scale entertainment options, the theatre was the way for people in the country to be entertained. The theatre that was called Maach has become a largely advanced musical theatre, with veritably elaborate performance protocols and complex drama.

This paper will bandy Maach through its history, performance, ritual, and musical drama. The pen will review the published literature as well as attestation in order to determine the significance of Maach as a traditional form of folk theatre moment.

(*Maach Lekh*, n.d.; *Malwa Maach*, n.d.; *Om Prakash Sharma*, n.d.)

## LITERAL BACKGROUND OF MAACH

### 1. Origin



Maach's origins can be traced back to the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh during the 18th century, particularly in Ujjain. It's said that Maach began in the 18th century from the oral history of Guru Gopalji of Bhagsipura, who is credited with popularising Maach by performing it himself while working with other forms of art. Maach developed through commerce with other indigenous art forms, similar to the Khyal theatre of Rajasthan, and the lyrical tradition of Turra- Kalangi.

In the 19th century, there were numerous akhadas (the groups that perform Maach) that served as training centres for vocalizers, actors and players. Several notable exponents played significant roles in expanding the Maach force. Two of the most notorious of these are Ustad Kaluram and Ustad Bal Mukund. Numerous scripts were later written in Malwi covering motifs such as tradition, history, love and social issues.

By the turn of the 20th century, Maach had established itself as one of the most important artistic means in the Malwa region. The decline of Maach players has occurred over the last 20- 30 years due to modernization and changing forms of entertainment. (*Maach Lekh*, n.d.; *Malwa Maach*, n.d.; *Om Prakash Sharma*, n.d.)



## 2. Performance Structure and Rituals

Maach's performance is grounded in a set of rituals that are significant and grounded in community artistic traditions. This includes a major pre-performance ritual- the erecting of the Manak Khamb (a rustic post that signals the morning of structure for the Maach), roughly

one month before the actual Maach performance.

Traditionally, Maach performances are held at night on an open-air, raised stage within a vill forecourt or yard, facing North, so the players could perform vocally (no modification) and reach farther distances with their voices. The performances generally begin at night and go until dawn.

Prior to the factual Maach play commencing, ridiculous sketches are performed by characters, similar to the Bhishti (water supplier), the Farrasan (carpet subcaste), which serve to cleanse the stage previous to the Maach play morning, and provide ridiculous relief for the followership. Also, there's an integral element in the Maach performance known as the “Tek” (i.e., the chorus), which duplicates and adds support to the oral musical discourses performed by the players. Traditionally, the Maach's players were generally males; still, with the gradual addition of ladies into the performance, this is changing. (*Maach Lekh*, n.d.; *Malwa Maach*, n.d.; *Om Prakash Sharma*, n.d.)



### 3. Music, Language and Dramaturgy

Music plays the most important part in Maach theatre, where the story of the performance is portrayed basically through songs, lyrical dialogue and metrical poetry, creating an aesthetic unique to the style of theatre (i.e. musical drama). Indian Classical Music forms the base of Maach Theatre with ragas such as Jaijaiivanti, Pilu, Bhairavi, Asavari and Sorath as exemplifications of the music used throughout. Maach has a strong foundation in Raga Khamaj, and its meter is provided by taals similar to Roopchandi, Keharwa, Rupak and

Dadra.

The musicians who accompany the vocalizers in the performance of Maach theatre are generally proficient with the use of the following instruments: dholak, sarangi and harmonium. The language spoken in Maach is Malwi, but numerous Hindi and Urdu words can be used. Also, the language used in Maach Theatre can be defined as follows: Dramatic dialogue = BOL, lyrical minstrelsy = VANAG, Melody = RANGAT.

By using musical theater and drama productions, Maach Theatre portrays a variety of stories, ranging from traditional tales, historical accounts, and mythical stories, in order to pass good messages to its followers. (*Maach Lekh*, n.d.; *Malwa Maach*, n.d.; *Om Prakash Sharma*, n.d.)

#### THEMES AND ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Maach serves as a primary vehicle for expressing artistic values and collective identity in the Malwa-Nimad (Madhya Pradesh) region. In particular, many themes within Maach speak to justice, morality, love, bravery, and the importance of togetherness.

Several traditional Maach performances use characters from Indian grand literature, Puranic tradition, and indigenous myth as the base for their stories, with characters similar to Nal-Damayanti, Prahlad, Raja Rasalu, and Tejaji. Therefore, ethical values and moral tutoring are conveyed to the followership through the liar in Maach performances.

In addition, Maach serves to convey the experience of village life. Historically, the primary (*Maach Lekh*, n.d.; *Malwa Maach*, n.d.; *Om Prakash Sharma*, n.d.) followership of Maach consists of growers and townies. Thus, Maach performances have been naturally related to the social and profitable realities of pastoral areas.

The objectification of contemporary social issues, similar to education, severance, social difference, and labour issues, has become an added trend in recent times. Therefore, reflecting its remaining value.

Despite its significance in an artistic position, Maach faces multitudinous challenges at the moment. The impact of ultramodern audio-visual media, urbanization, and the declining interest of youngish generations has led to smaller players and performances of Maach.

#### RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Research confirms that Maach (pronounced 'mock') refers to an entire multi-disciplinary folk art tradition incorporating music, poetry, cotillion & theatrical performance all into a single work of art and isn't just a theatrical style. Maach was innovated in the 1700s in the Malwa area and has developed thanks largely to ongoing relations with other area performance styles that have shaped it stylistically and created its depth. Maach's relationship to ritual

performance practice creates a performance structure that relies on significant community engagement through its late performances, and therefore creates an experience for actors beyond a singular event in time & space. In addition to being one of the crucial factors of Maach, all Maach performances use traditional Indian classical music as a structure for developing the work which continues to elevate the aesthetic and emotional experience of each Maach product; still, due to the complexity of the music used in Maach, significant training and skill on behalf of players is generally needed (and eventually used) in all Maach product. As a result of the previously mentioned factors, Maach has shown an inconceivable capability to be adaptive by incorporating current social issues and themes into its plots and, thus, has continued to remain applicable via changing social and artistic surroundings. As Maach continues to produce this balance between tradition and imagination, it's undoubtedly a living, evolving, artistic style that continues to reflect its elaboration throughout history, from within the same community and society it has begun from.

## CONCLUSION

The Maach tradition is an important folk theatre tradition that demonstrates both cultural creativity and artistic heritage in the Malwa Region. Maach uniquely fuses music, poetry, and dramatized liar to produce a specific form of Indian musical folk theatre.

Historically, Maach has served as a source of both entertainment and artistic education for pastoral communities, as well as developing an expansive body of work (including plays, warbles, and performance conventions) that reflects the area's artistic and societal values.

Despite its literal value, Maach is facing numerous challenges to its actuality in the current age due to the declining number of interpreters, dwindling interest by communities, and the ascendance of new media in entertainment. Due to the position of training and commitment needed to perform Maach, smaller, youthful people are considering it as their career path.

To help save this important artistic tradition, there will need to be an increase in attestation, scholarly exploration, artistic carnivals, and institutional support for Maach. Involvement with theatre education through an intertwined approach and the establishment of hookups between Maach players and contemporary theatre artists will also help in resuscitating interest in the form.

In sum, conserving Maach means not only conserving a theatrical form, but also conserving the artistic memory, language, and cultural identity of the Malwa Region.

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