

Grantee : Himanshu Verma, New Delhi

Grant amount : Rs 5,00,000

Grant period : One year from February 1, 2012

Précis

This grant supports background research and the making of a film on the journey of a Genda Phool song, with its origins in Chhattisgarhi folk music, across varying musical, cultural and social contexts. The project will trace the various transformations and appropriations of the song and the different meanings it has acquired as a result. Grant funds will pay for honorarium, professional fees, travel and living costs, equipment hire, sets and tapes, replication and production of DVDs and an accountant's fee.

Grant Description

In 2009, the song *Sasural Genda Phool* from the film *Delhi 6*, directed by Rakesh Omprakash Mehra, hit the market and became a national chart-buster. The film's music composer A R Rahman had added a hip-hop/electronic twist to the Chhattisgarhi folk song but the film's promotions did not credit any Chhattisgarhi musicians. After some controversy over the credits, they just added a blurb 'Courtesy to Raghuvir Yadav', a Chhattisgarhi himself, who was said to have introduced the song to the *Delhi 6* team. This, and other such songs that in the past have travelled from their folk origins through various musical, cultural and social contexts to reach Bollywood, intrigued Himanshu Verma, an arts curator and freelance researcher from Delhi. His project seeks to research and document the journey and transformations of the song *Sasural Genda Phool* and other songs about the marigold flower which are part of the repertoire of Chhattisgarhi folk music, in order to problematise the idea of folk and study the 'politics and poetics of (re)-appropriation' of folk by popular music.

The journey of the song *Sasural Genda Phool* is quite interesting. In the 1970s, the song *Saas Gari Deve, Nanad Muhaan Leve, Devar Babu Mor* with the refrain *Karaar Gonda Phool*, was said to be written by the late Chhattisgarhi poet Gangaram Shivarey and set to music by the late Bhulwaram Yadav. The song speaks of the happenings in a bride's new home and about the marigold flower, which is frequently used in weddings, becoming a motif for marriage, family and community life in general. Bhulwaram Yadav taught it to the Joshi sisters (Rekha, Ramadatt, and Prabhadatt Joshi) who sang it in public concerts and captured the imagination of the Chhattisgarhi audience. HMV released it commercially and it became a popular song, frequently requested on the radio and performed at weddings. It also found its way to the Naya Theatre of late Habib Tanvir in Bhopal, who often incorporated elements of Chhattisgarhi folk music and culture into his theatrical productions. Then in 2009, adapted and appropriated, it found its way into the soundtrack of *Delhi 6*, which did not acknowledge the Chhattisgarhi artists who created the song. And now the song used in the film continues to be re-interpreted via re-mixes executed by DJs and sound artists.

According to Himanshu, the transformation and multiple appropriations of this song raises many issues and concerns that he seeks to research. To begin with, the *Karaar Genda Phool* song is regarded as a contemporary folk song. While its lyrics, structure and musical form bear the unmistakably stamp of a folk music sensibility, it is ascribed to a poet and composer and created only 40 years' ago, unlike other traditional folk songs. "We are keen to study the schism and synthesis," Himanshu says. "Is our understanding of *folk* inclusive? What do folk music purists think about the song's traditional antecedents? How do individual practitioners, after having studied and internalized folk traditions, add to it? How does this contemporary version align with and transform the older already existing body of folk culture?"—are some of the questions Himanshu will ask to understand what is the 'traditional' and 'modern' in Chhattisgarhi folk music with respect to their musical form, text, motifs and emotive content. As an aside he also mentions that while the marigold is seen as the most popular and available Indian flower, it was brought to India by the Portuguese in the 16th century. "The story of the flower itself provides an interesting parallel to our study of borrowing, synthesis, transformation and finally appropriation connected with the Genda Phool song," he says.

Himanshu expects to uncover how the changing contexts of the song, including how it is presented, transforms what it means and how it is understood. He will enquire into the different ways in which the Chhattisgarhi performers themselves presented the song in weddings, live performances and radio programmes, the new meanings and contexts that were created for the song in Habib Tanvir's theatre, and the meanings the song acquired when it arrived in Bollywood. He will also try to understand why the Chhattisgarhi artists were not given credit for the song in the film *Delhi 6*.

The research will rely heavily on interviews with folk musicians, folk music experts, and others involved with the music industry in Chattisgarh, Bhopal and Mumbai. Archival recordings from the AIR collection, archival film footage, books, press articles will provide other sources of information. The project outputs will include a research paper and a documentary film made in collaboration with filmmaker Anand Bhaskar Rao.

Budget

Professional fees	Rs 1,85,000
Honorarium	1,20,000
Travel and living costs	90,000
Equipment hire	47,000
Research materials	30,000
Sets and tapes	18,000
Replication and production of DVDs	7,000
Accountant's fee	<u>3,000</u>
Total	<u>Rs 5,00,000</u>