Two Generations in the Fault Lines of India's Musical Modernities

CAROL M. BABIRACKI

Abstract: The musical lives of Mukund Nayak, awarded India's Padma Sri medal for artistic accomplishment in 2017, his eldest son Nandu, and his youngest daughter Chandrakanta lay open the tensions and contradictions in the competing modalities of modernity that are transforming regional music across India today. Rather than a series of successive stages or neat dichotomies, their musical modernities are complex, coexisting, and overlapping, shaped by place, identity, politics, economics, gender, and idiosyncratic, individual experiences. Their conflicting and fragmentary strategies to sustain their inherited knowledge and livelihoods have left the next generation without a clear path to the future.

Résumé : La vie en musique de Mukund Nayak, récipiendiaire en Inde, en 2017, de la médaille Padma Sri pour l'ensemble de son œuvre, de son fils aîné Nandu et de sa plus jeune fille Chandrakanta, laisse entrevoir les tensions et les contradictions qui résident dans les modalités concurrentes de la modernité qui transforment les musiques régionales de l'Inde d'aujourd'hui. Leurs modernités musicales, plutôt que d'être les étapes successives de dichotomies bien nettes, coexistent et s'entremêlent de manière complexe, étant façonnées par le lieu, l'identité, la politique, l'économie, le genre et des expériences individuelles uniques. Leurs stratégies contradictoires et fragmentaires pour entretenir leur savoir hérité et leur mode de vie ont privé la génération qui les suit d'une claire ouverture sur l'avenir.

I first saw Padma Sri Mukund Nayak perform in a large auditorium in Ranchi, Jharkhand in 1981. Initially, his act looked like those that had preceded it: a small group of seated men, two or more drummers playing traditional drums (*dholak*, *mandar*),[1] and the featured soloist centred between them. A few others in the back supported them with cymbals and hand-clapping. As they started singing in Nagpuri, the local Indic *lingua franca*, Mukund Nayak, the soloist, rose up on his haunches and began dancing and twirling his signature handkerchief as he sang. His voice

This article has an accompanying video on our YouTube channel. You can find it on the playlist for MUSICultures *volume 44, issue 1, available here: bit.ly/MUSICultures-44-1. With the ephemerality of web-based media in mind, we warn you that our online content may not always be accessible, and we apologize for any inconvenience.*

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distinguished him immediately from the others – dusky, throaty, edgy, and loud. It is a voice straight out of the collective, village *akhra* (outdoor, circular dancing arena). My mentor, Dr. Ram Dayal Munda, leaned towards me and whispered, "*These* guys are the real thing. They have kept this music for generations."

The intertwined stories of Mukund Nayak and two of his five children, Nandlal (Nandu) and Chandrakanta, together chart the dynamic and now precarious path of vernacular Nagpuri music culture over the past 40-plus years of developing modernity in Jharkhand and across India. All three are beneficiaries of hereditary musical knowledge; they are among the relatively few traditional Ghasi musicians – a *jati* (endogamous social group, conventionally caste or tribe) of hereditary, professional ritual musicians – who have successfully transitioned to modern stage performance. Each has pursued different articulations of that modernity, divided by the contentious issues of patronage, commodification, group identity politics, and gender. My own research story is entwined with theirs; I've been accepted as part of the family for over 30 years now. This paper delves into the fault lines of their strategies: Mukund Nayak's ethnic, essentialist, traditional modernity; Nandlal Nayak's transnational, entrepreneurial globalism; and Chandrakanta Nayak's search for a traditional modernity suitable for an educated woman like her. The fractures and conflicts among them point to the underlying challenge for Jharkhand "locals" to (re)create a vernacular cultural identity rooted in the past but relevant to and sustainable in their now fast-changing, neoliberal future.[2]

Ghasi musicians face the same crisis as do regional, vernacular hereditary professional performers across India.[3] The demise of reliable rural patronage and performance venues, the rise of technology and the culture industry (all in the hands of the bourgeoisie), capital-dependent entrepreneurship, state-sponsored tourism, spreading urbanization, old gender norms and rising patriarchy, and migration (in-migration in the case of Jharkhand) have led to a lack of viable musical employment, torn lines of transmission, and shrinking repertories. More than their livelihood, their very sense of identity, community, and social value are threatened. All are struggling to transform their deeply rooted "embodied cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1984: 70) into meaningful social mobility and economic sustainability. Moreover, Ghasis of Mukund Nayak's generation laboured hard and for no monetary reward to support the movement for Jharkhand statehood in the 1980s and 1990s, only to watch the benefits accrue to the officially designated (Scheduled Tribes) but not to them (Scheduled Castes).[4] Mukund Nayak and his son are among the few success stories (though in

different senses) among Ghasis, but as yet their efforts have not produced sustained benefits for their caste as a whole or nourished their traditional repertories. After Mukund Nayak's generation of singers and drummers has passed, most of their vast body of traditional knowledge (songs, drumming patterns, ritual melodies, and compositional processes) will be lost, and little will be known of most of them.

Between them, Mukund Nayak and his son Nandu have tried just about all the strategies that vernacular musicians across India have embraced, only some of which have proven sustainable: folkloric performance,[5] solo stage performance, recorded cassettes, VCDs, feature films, radio, television, new styles of *adhunik git* (modern pop song), workshops for youth, and college curricula (a nascent effort) (cf. Thompson 1991, 2000; Booth 2000, 2005; Moisala 2013; Fiol 2012, 2013; Manuel 1993; Sherinian 2013, 2015; Greene 2000; Stirr 2015; Morcom 2014; and others). Both men acknowledge that they are now running out of time.

Modernity, Globalization, and Nagpuri Music

Mukund, Nandu, and Chandrakanta, each in different ways, have shaped Nagpuri music's various registers of modernity, registers that have changed dramatically through each of their lives, inflected at all stages by gender, identity politics, local politics, and economics. Together, their musical lives track India's movement through colonial/postcolonial, liberal, urban modernities (in the cases of Mukund and Chandrakanta) and into postmodern, neoliberal, global modernities (in the cases of Nandu and, to a lesser extent, Chandrakanta). As I write, all of these registers of modernity coexist and rub up against each other as these two generations contest leadership roles and strategies for sustainability, each shaped by their own, unique experiences.

Most models of modernity rest on dichotomies of traditional and modern, or modern and global, or liberal and neoliberal (see, for example, Steiner 1999; Lukose 2009; and Graham and Penny 2014).[6] All of these resonate through the case studies that follow, but local particularities of musical repertory and style inflect them in unique ways. For example, in Jharkhand, Mukund Nayak is considered a "traditional" performer, largely on the basis of his canonic, village-based musical repertory and style. His son, Nandu has been dubbed the "King of Nagpuri Folk Music" (see the YouTube video, "Ranchi: Jharkhand folk king Nandlal Nayak performs with foreign bands"), but is regarded as a non-traditional, modern innovator

Fig. 1. Mukund Nayak holding his Padma Sri medal, with Carol Babiracki.

in repertory and style. Mukund's daughter, Chandrakanta, is both a "traditional" performer, like her father, and a "classical" singer of what scholars would call light-classical, Hindi songs. Chandrakanta is also an avid consumer of Nagpuri "modern" pop songs – a style that Nandu once performed on stage – which are newly composed songs in a Bollywood style (for Peter Kvetko 2009, this style codes an older, liberal modernity). Clearly, folding the local into a single model of modernity that can converse with those of other scholars is a tricky proposition.

In this article, I'm choosing to call Mukund Nayak a traditional modernist: traditional because of his musical repertory and vocal style, and a modernist in his presentation of that repertory in conventional, rehearsed, redundant, and commodified staged performances, fully costumed and amplified. They are the epitome of stable tradition in a progressive context for the purpose of community building (see Lukose 2009: 1-4). Mukund's musical life began in his village's public, unrehearsed, communal dancing ground (akhra) and moved to the rural-urban stage, an entirely different kind of "public" performance.[7] As a professional, he has been a good modernist but a poor capitalist, sacrificing his own economic security to promote his jati (Ghasi), his language group (Nagpuri), his state (Jharkhand), and his nation (India) both in India and abroad.

In contrast, I regard Mukund's son Nandu as a postmodern, transnational globalist. His repertory and style are eclectic, putting his hereditary music in improvised, ever-changing conversations with music from around India and the world, even electronic music. Nandlal's performing life began in his father's troupe and then in Nagpuri "modern" popular stage performances. It changed dramatically when he married an American dancer and slipped into a global network of musicians during a residency at Benetton's Fabrica Musica project in Italy. Nandu is a neoliberal entrepreneur, patching together an array of government, private, and international sponsors to support his innovative performance, film, and music business projects.

Nandu's sister Chandrakanta's engagement with modernity runs closer to her father's than to her brother's. She began her performance life as a dancer in her father's stage troupe. Like, Nandu, though, she is a child of late modernity and neoliberal economics. Her access to that marketplace of musical choices, however, is severely constrained by societal gender norms, shaped by a local history of traditional, female entertainers with marginal social status (see Babiracki 2004, 2008). Performing the "modern" popular Nagpuri songs that she consumes is not an option for Chandrakanta, nor is any kind of solo, global, or fusion performance. Young female forms, as Lukose puts it, still "bear the burden of locality" in Jharkhand (2009: 14). Instead, Chandrakanta has gravitated to light-classical Hindi songs, a pan-Indian, modernist style of stability and redundancy. She may be physically rooted to Jharkhand, but she has found musical options outside its borders. She is, then, a neoliberal, traditional modernist.

Padma Sri Mukund Nayak: Traditional Modernist (b. 1947)

Kunjban Dance Troupe performance, Radisson Blu Hotel, Ranchi, Oct. 2012:

> *Mukund Nayak claims the stage first, microphone in hand, dressed in a traditional* dhoti*, modernized with a shiny, sparkling, synthetic green* kurta *and yellow sash, all accented by his long, greying curls. The dholak and* nagara *players sit patiently to one side as he introduces his song with an extended commentary, first in Hindi and then in English. The layered meanings of the song (his own), in Nagpuri, the regional lingua franca, rallies listeners to save India's (and/or Jharkhand's) identity, with references to its hills, rivers, heroes, and music:*

bucu jā jhaṭe dhā gānwẽ	*Brother, run quickly to the village,*
sabke juṭae	*taking everyone with you.*
muluk bāncī kaise, kair le upāe	*Find out how to save the country [Jharkhand].*
āju sapana mẽ re	*Today in a dream*
dombārī buru pare	*on top of Dombari hill,*
kahalãe birisā dādā, moke sunāe	*Birsa dada said, to make me listen,*[8]
muluk bāncī kaise, kair le upāe	*Find out how to save the country.*
gaṅga kinārā toiṛa	*Breaking the banks of the Ganga,*
āwathe bikaṭ bāiṛh	*a dangerous flood is coming.*
sānp gojar mãgar, āwathãe bohā	*Snakes, insects, crocodiles are floating.*
muluk bāncī kaise, kair le upāe	*Find out how to save the country.*
nagera ghiṛakāe	*Beating the nagara [kettle drum],*
de sabke jagāe	*wake up everyone.*
gāal hīrā motī jāe na luṭāe	*Our buried diamonds and jewels must not be looted.*
muluk bāncī kaise, kair le upāe	*Find out how to save the country.*
nīnd jaisane ṭuṭe	*As his sleep was broken,*
Mukund kudī ke juṭe	*Mukund ran and joined,*
koṛī re tā̃gā tīra dhanusa uṭhāe	*holding the hoe, axe, bow, and arrow.*
muluk bāncī kaise, kair le upāe	*Find out how to save the country.*

The businessmen (and a handful of wives) assembled for an awards function affect nonchalant disinterest, taking notice only as he begins to sing in his distinctively strong, "folk" voice. As he repeats the opening refrain, thundering drums join him, and shortly after that a linked line of colourfully costumed, broadly smiling dancers, alternating female and male, follow their male leader stridently onto the stage.[9] *The women shine in full makeup and jewellery with matching* saris. *There is no gentle warm-up here, as there would be in an outdoor, village dancing ground (akhra). These performers are "on" from their first tightly choreographed steps that trace a circle counter-clockwise around the stage. The men's movements are sharply martial, which the women mimic with a slightly softer sway. They immediately, simultaneously begin varying their step pattern as soloist Mukund Nayak winds among them, dancing and*

> *tossing his hair now as he sings. The troupe ends in a photo op tableau of a squatting Nayak surrounded by the frontal-facing half-circle of dancers. It is not lost on the audience, their mobile phones, or my video camera.*

Mukund Nayak and Kunjban are the undisputed masters of this type of folkloric, display presentation of Jharkhand's signature *adivasi* (indigenous, "tribal") group performance.[10] They are the government's first choice to welcome and entertain important guests, such as the Chief Justice of India in 2012. For Mukund, the irony is bittersweet, since not one member of Kunjban is officially Scheduled Tribe by the government's definition. Mukund initially established the troupe as an ad hoc singing group in the 1980s. They performed tirelessly on makeshift stages before hundreds of villagers at a time in support of the growing movement for Jharkhand statehood, usually for little or no payment. Mukund's generation of songwriters – including luminaries like Mahavir Nayak, Manpuran Nayak, Kshitish Kumar Ray, Madhu Mansuri "Hansmukh," Jasoda Devi, and Janki Devi – pioneered traditional Nagpuri solo song performance, specializing in social protest songs as well as love songs in the old template of the Radha-Krishna stories. They considered themselves *kalakars*, artists, and were part of a fertile revival of local vernacular languages and ethnic identities. I joined them in 1981, while researching a dissertation about Mundari adivasi music and collective dance, and that kalakar culture felt old, deep, and timeless to me, as if it would last forever, rather than flash within that generation and disappear, as it has. We began experimenting onstage with collective dance, first by the few of us female solo performers and later, with the men, with the audience as the all-night performances lingered into dawn. These village performances grew into stage spectacles by the 1990s, and Kunjban blossomed into a training school and performance troupe for young men and women.

The packaged, choreographed aesthetic of Kunjban dance performances is traditional, specifically adivasi: village drums, women performing as a group in a line that circles the space counter-clockwise, and most importantly to Mukund, a repertory of village seasonal songs in traditional tune-types and drumming patterns. The young Kunjban dancers continually create new variations of the traditional dance steps, but, other than upping the tempos, Mukund has preserved the songs as he learned them in the akhra in his ancestral village of Bokba, in Simdega, long before he moved to the city in 1973. His intent has always been to preserve the now disappearing village, collective ethos of his youth while promoting himself as a modern, solo stage personality. He still believes in Padma Sri Dr. Ram Dayal Munda's now well-worn statement, "*naci se banci*" ("survive by dance") (see Meghnath and

Toppo 2017), that saving the akhra will save Nagpuri music and musicians. He pleads with young people not to abandon "the original" music in their search for something new. Mukund alone sings in Kunjban performances, unlike men and women in village akhras who typically sing with and to each other as they dance, balancing the roles and agencies of both genders. Mukund's highly successful folkloric blend has become the canonic model for most other indigenous display performances of music and dance; even some adivasi groups have dropped singing from the dance line due to the challenges of amplification.[11]

Despite their distilled marks of tradition, Kunjban's choreographed performances are thoroughly modern. Each one is carefully rehearsed; each is reliably, predictably like the others. Song types are no longer tied to seasonal rituals or gender, and repertories have shrunk dramatically. From its inception, stage folkloric dance has been directed and organized by educated, urban men like Mukund Nayak. Women become followers in performance, though their organizational work behind the scenes is crucial. In the course of performance, they lack the social agency and independence that they cultivate in the more domestic village dancing grounds. Folkloric display performance was urban from the beginning, even though some of the best adivasi groups are still based in villages. The new Department of Tribal and Regional Languages of Ranchi University, inaugurated in 1981, heavily promoted collective stage performance in the 1980s under the leadership of Padma Sri Dr. Ram Dayal Munda, though they never made it part of the formal curriculum. At the time, cultural leaders and

Fig. 2. Mukund Nayak singing in a village stage program, 1984.

locals embraced it as a living metaphor of the unified, powerful, tribal foundation of local culture, which became the central argument for Jharkhand statehood. Co-opted by institutions over the next 20 years, collective performance ironically stands now more as static tourist art, the state-sanctioned, modern cultural brand.

While the village akhra made Mukund the musician that he is – and gave him his distinctive voice – only institutional patronage made his career as a professional singer possible. He learned English from missionaries close to his village, entered college, and then in 1979, at the age of 32, he left a job as an industrial chemist to take a position in the Government of Bihar's Song and Drama Division. The salary was hardly enough to sustain his family of seven, but the job gave him time and space to take advantage of opportunities in recording, radio, and television. He is the only Jharkhandi musician to work as the music director (with Mahavir Nayak), singer, composer, and actor for a feature film, *Sona kar Nagpur* (Tewari 1994). The state government supported his troupe's international tours to Hong Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, and the United States. This past March 2017, he received one of India's top cultural awards, the Padma Sri, on the recommendation of the Jharkhand state government.

Fig. 3. Mukund Nayak, receiving the Padma Sri medal, 2017.

Nevertheless, Mukund and his generation of stage singers always hoped for more from the government. The promises of the Jharkhand movement – political agency, upward mobility, and cultural power – never materialized for Ghasis and others of small, artisan Scheduled Caste jatis. All that "embodied cultural capital," in Bourdieu's sense, did not translate to social capital for most. Despite holding day jobs in addition to performing, most of them have continued to live in relative poverty, in small brick houses in overcrowded Ghasi neighbourhoods. For years, Mukund's son Nandu has demanded that his father be "less available" to everyone and charge more for his performances. Mukund, on the other hand, puts greater stock into building community, prestige, and a name for himself and for his son, but Nandu holds the certain wisdom that a profession that can't put "bread and butter" on the table will never attract the young. That, along with the elders' competitive need to perform constantly and the absence of a formal training regime – in the villages, young people learn simply by shadowing older musicians – has severed the transmission of traditional repertory from Mukund's generation to the next. Despite his own considerable talent and fame, Nandu will never know what his father knows, and that breaks his father's heart.

Fig. 4. Mukund Nayak playing the mandar with his grandson, Anshu.

Nandlal ("Nandu") Nayak: Transnational Globalist (b. 1973)

Second Annual "Rhythms of the Forest" Music and Dance Festival, Ranchi, 23 Feb 2007:

> *The large, professionally printed banner at the back of the stage bears a giant photo of Nandu Nayak tossing his long hair as he plays the* dholki *drum. The banner reads: "Anikaya Arts presents Rhythms of the Forest, directed by Nandlal Nayak, a festival of dance and music from around the world and across the nation." Beneath that appears a list of all the places represented on the stage this evening: "France, Japan, Korea, USA; Jharkhand, Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Chattisgarh." It is the grandest and most international music program that Jharkhand has ever seen.*
>
> *The huge stage sits at one end of a large playing field, much larger than the few hundred in the audience require. A tangle of microphones and a drum "kit" of various Assamese drums litter one side, and two enormous nagara (kettle) drums anchor the other. Senior kalakars of Nandu's father's generation are seated in the front row, as honoured guests. The first half of the program plays well to them as do the banners hanging beneath the stage: "Akhra Bacao," "Save the Akhra." Kunjban and dance troupes from all Jharkhand's neighbour-states take their turns presenting colourful, well-rehearsed, often theatrical "adivasi" dance items, though in many of the non-Jharkhandi troupes, the dancers are actually young, middle-class, urban Hindu women.*
>
> *Only after these crowd-pleasers does Nandu bring out his more experimental, musical hybrid. Wearing a long, flowing, orange kurta over jeans, he invites others to join him: Assamese musicians on drums and a cow-horn in colourful shirts and pants, a Japanese djembe drummer in T-shirt and jeans, and a similarly clad French musician sitting behind a Mac laptop, adding ambient electronica. Jharkhand drummers meet the world in a technically brilliant, hyper-masculine, global-pop style, improvisatory drum jam. The drummers face each other, not the audience, and the rhythmic dialogue is loud, dynamic, and intense. The audience sits in puzzled silence through most of it. When Nandu begins to sing a song of his own, set in the vague outlines of a traditional Nagpuri modern song, in his smooth, urban croon, a small, tight group of young men gets up and dances "disco"-style for a bit. They had been waiting for something familiar to grab hold of, or so I think.*
>
> *The senior kalakars simply shake their heads at what they hear as random noise rather than meaningful communication; though most of*

> *Nandu's drumming patterns are traditional, they are strung together in bursts that don't make sense to the senior musicians. After the program wraps up, Nandu tells me, "They are not ready yet for my kind of music." (Six years later, in 2012, he tells me the same thing.)*

Nandu stages a couple of these grand music festivals a year now through his own, private presentation company, Anikaya Arts, named after his two daughters. Lately, they tend to be more local and less international, reflecting Nandu's renewed investment in modeling a Nagpuri music for the future. He has also adopted a new signature look that appeals to his core audience of young men: high, black, buckled boots; either jeans or a traditional, short lungi; a colourful, short, sleeveless vest; and sunglasses perched atop his head, holding back his long hair. Though this performance was the most adventurous of his that I've seen, each one features Nandu's song compositions and a large group of male drummers, and each experiments with some kind of hybridity, all imbedded within the familiar traditional.

Mukund Nayak's eldest son, Nandu's, musical interests emerged initially as they might have in the village. One day, when his parents were careful not to watch, I saw him pick up a mic at a wedding and begin to sing. Though born in his ancestral village, he grew up in the city, where he never had the need to cultivate his father's signature, forceful akhra vocal timbre. As both a singer and drummer, he is largely self-taught and idiosyncratic, but he has spent many hours sitting with Ghasi drummers in Simdega, the heartland of Nagpuri music, absorbing their styles. He danced for a time in Kunjban, his father's troupe, and in the early 1990s he enjoyed huge popularity as a modern, solo stage singer of Nagpuri "disco" ("modern") songs, performed with dance moves straight out of Bollywood. Nandu's artistic life took a dramatic turn in 1997 when he married Wendy Jehlen, an American dancer (Bharatnatyam, Odissi, modern) and sometime student of mine at Brown University. The move to Boston perfected his English. He had a two-year residency with Benetton's Fabrica Musica project in Italy, where he worked with African, Japanese, Vietnamese, and electronica artists, globalizing his musical language and production values; he has no patience with auto-tune or the echo-chamber effects of studio-produced Nagpuri CDs and videos. He began working on a fusion CD in Italy, but when Benetton claimed the copyright to everything he recorded there, he took his tracks and left. Returning to Ranchi, he produced and directed a feature-length Nagpuri commercial film about human trafficking that draws on conventions of both Hollywood and Bollywood. Due to financial issues, the film was never released.

In some ways, Nandu's story tracks that of his father; both have accepted aspects of modernity, technology, stagecraft, and stardom, all in service of saving Nagpuri music. Nandu shares his father's preference for live performances that are nevertheless consumable and thoroughly transportable. His father has actually recorded far more CDs, VCDs, and appeared in more radio and television spots that Nandu has. Both, too, tend to be uncompromising and competitive, the latter skill honed by Ghasi musicians over hundreds of years. But their differences with respect to tradition and economics have been significant and sometimes heated, pushing Nandu away from his father's folkloric performances to chart new territory for himself and younger generations of Nagpuri musicians. He has also left behind the adhunik, or "modern" pop Nagpuri performance style that dominates the sonic world of his and the younger generations. The modern style, he says, "[hasn't] changed in the last 20 years,"[12] and there is no growth potential in his father's style. If they are to survive, he believes, Nagpuri musicians must engage with the world through a living, creatively changing music culture. In other words, he rejects his father's (and the media's) vision of Nagpuri music as a prepackaged product. "I want to inspire young people, not museumize the tribal," he said in 2006. "The tribal that others have constructed to be observed is dead. Why are they still looking for it?" And in June, 2017, he added, "Maybe *'naci se banci'* was enough in my father's generation, but not in mine or the next one." Not waiting for the government to confer tribal status on his jati, however, he boldly claims to be tribal on his website (www.akhra.org) and in his promotional materials, and if other tribals (like many of Jharkhand's elected officials) can be simultaneously ethnic, national, and global, why not him?

Fundamental to the differences between Mukund and Nandu's generations are issues of patronage and economics. Unlike his father, Nandu is a child of neoliberalism, to borrow Lukose's phrase (2009). He frankly regards music as private property rather than communal property, and he will not give his away for nothing. "Ask for money," he says, "and they will value you." "We have to get bread and butter out of it. The younger generation isn't interested [in the dancing ground]. What are they going to do with musical training?" He is sensitive to branding and marketing and high production quality. He has also seen the stultifying, neo-colonial effects of government patronage and the requisite bribery that comes with it, and prefers to privately fund his endeavours. He dreams of opening an academy to teach drumming to young men, to make and sell drums, and to teach and sell Jharkhandi cuisine, all to help train young people,

especially Ghasis, for profitable, professional careers. Unlike his father, he would charge tuition. He'd also like to start a magazine in Jharkhand on the model of *National Geographic*, *The Smithsonian,* or *The Progressive.*

Nandu is proud of his father, despite their differences, and admires his stage presence and the fact that he is still performing when so many of his generation have stopped. Some years ago, Nandu created the Mukund Nayak Foundation, a family trust that is now the platform for a new, collaborative project shared by them both. The foundation has contracted with the US Consulate and an NGO for a one-year project in Jharkhand to promote water conservation, to save the akhra, and to fight human trafficking. "I think this is a project that can benefit us both," says Nandu. For the first time just a few days ago, I heard Mukund admit to Nandu that maybe indigenous people like Ghasis won't be able to "survive by dance" after all.

Chandrakanta Nayak: Generation Meets Gender (b. 1981)

Kunjban Dance Troupe performance, Radisson Blu Hotel, Ranchi, Oct 2012:

> *After one of Kunjban's big dance items, Mukund Nayak and the young men move off the stage, leaving the women linked in a uniform semi-circle facing the audience. My curiosity rises; this is the first time I've seen this innovation in a Kunjban program. A couple of them, including dancer Chandrakanta Nayak, are carrying wireless mics. The women begin a gentle adhunik (modern) song in Nagpuri as a group, swaying ever so slightly as one body, as they are accompanied by the troupe's drummers:*[13]

Asthai:	*jāto guiya lāne debe*	*Go my love, for me*
	sona kar bālā	*[Get] golden bangles*
	rupa kar bāla	*Beautiful bangles*
	guiya lāne debe	*My love, bring them*
Antara:	*toi to kahis mor janam*	*You say [of] my birthplace*
	nāgpur des mera	*Nagpur land*
	jahān kar pāni māṭi mẽ	*Where there's water and earth,*
	sona milela	*there is gold*
	jaise camke asamane	*Sparkling like the sky,*
	taringan cande	*the stars, and the moon*
	sah lagin mor janam lei anbe	*Like this let me be born again*

Then, to my surprise, Chandrakanta steps forward out of the line, singing a solo verse in a light, distinctive vocal timbre that is from neither the Nagpuri village akhra nor the modern solo stage. It most resembles a pan-Indian "light classical" style that one is more likely to hear on television or in Calcutta concerts than anywhere on Ranchi's streets or stages. She appears careful to respect the now conventional separation of female voice from body, moving very little as she stands and sings, safely backed by an akhra-like line of women. How different her attitude is compared with that of the gyrating female singers of the modern, Nagpuri pop stage. At the end, she joins the line again, and with the rest, closes with a respectful pranam. On the way home, we hear her voice again from the car radio, from a CD of traditional songs that she has recently recorded with her father.

This sweet song, before a roomful of businessmen, was a huge step forward for Chandrakanta. After ten years of dancing in Kunjban, her father's troupe, and after eight years of classical vocal training,[14] trying her hand at a song competition in Gaya, Bihar, teaching girls from her home, singing for many dramatic performances, composing a few songs, and recording about a dozen, Chandrakanta had been searching for a way to build an individual musical identity and career. Her options were and are far more limited than those of her older brother. A Nagpuri woman has only "playback" singing in videos and soloing on the modern pop song stage from which to choose, and both would have tarnished her reputation. Nandu had objected strongly to her even dancing with the Kunjban women, fearing that her marriage prospects, and his reputation, would suffer. She eventually left the group when she got a job. Here, with her father's support, in the middle of this frozen-in-time folkloric program, she managed to create a whole new, respectable physical and sonic space for herself that was part social dancing ground and part classicized concert performance.

Chandrakanta and her twin brother Suryakanta are the youngest of Mukund Nayak's five children. She, Nandu, and their brother Praduman, who attended the National School of Drama, are the only siblings who have aspired to be professional performers.[15] I asked her after her recent marriage if she'd like to continue along this music path, and she said,

> I want to, but there is no opportunity. The problem is with my brothers, not with outsiders. Nandu wouldn't let me teach in his academy, whether I was teaching Hindi or Nagpuri songs. This is our society. They keep girls down. Only my father supports me. The problem is household people, not outsiders.

Fig. 5. Chandrakanta Nayak, far right, with other dancers from Mukund Nayak's Kunjban dance troupe.

Like the other young women dancers of Kunjban – and unlike any of her siblings – she is a big fan and avid consumer of Nagpuri modern songs, which have become the sonic background for most group dancing at weddings and other festivities in and around Jharkhand's urban areas. Musicians of her father's generation hear modern Nagpuri pop music as the death knell for traditional village song, singers, and drummers. But it appeals to Chandrakanta's generation and those younger, and has kept them dancing on urban rooftops and in the streets through decades of rapid change. Part of its appeal, I surmise, is that it is local and "outside," both at the same time, and it is not the property of any particular ethnic group or jati. Nagpuri modern pop songs are thoroughly transsocial and transcultural, absorbing individuals, songs, drumming, and dance styles from various groups. In pop culture, jati doesn't matter, and that appeals to most young Ghasis who want to escape the old stigma of their jati. Moreover, popular media is the only outlet for women's singing voices and regular employment. Not dependent on any institutional support, modern popular song is probably the most sustainable kind of live performance in Jharkhand today.

Chandrakanta and her family are celebrating her new marriage as I write this. While searching for a husband, she took a series of part-time jobs, the latest as fieldworker for the Jharkhand Forestry Department, which she

recently quit. She assures me that her new husband is fine with her following her musical ambitions, but in reality, marriage typically signals the end of a woman's professional performance career, not the beginning. And, as she pointed out, there is no opportunity. The exceptions are middle-class singers (most of them Bengalis) who are married to male producers in the Jharkhand music industry. Engaged in the family business, they seem immune to the bad reputations that stick to local women who sing or dance in modern, popular media. The reasons that local women like Chandrakanta have no scope to leverage their own knowledge of singing and dancing into either economic or social capital are complexly local and historical. The gendering of Nagpuri musical modernities is one of several underlying, fractious issues that bear further scrutiny.

Gender

For the last 20 years, I have been offering my unsolicited opinion to anyone who would listen that if there is no safe, public space for women's performance, if women are not included, then Jharkhandi traditional music cultures will not survive (Babiracki 2006, 2009, 2010, 2012a, 2012b). Dr. Munda tried to explain their systematic marginalization from public artistic culture to me in 2007:

> Women are about the inside, men are involved in the outside, and so men look for models from outside [i.e., outside their societies, outside Jharkhand]. Because of this, the energy from the villages [energy embodied by women?] is disappearing. It's important to empower women in this new economic system, which presently disempowers them.

Even in folkloric stage performances, which Dr. Munda and Mukund Nayak pioneered, women signify the strength of the collective, but never their own, individual subjectivities. They have little of the agency to shape or control a performance that they have in the villages, and they lack independence both from the men and from each other. In traditional akhras, young men and women dress as they like, purposefully hoping to stand out. The women leading the line exercise choice (to dance or not, to sing or not, which step variation to use) and responsibility (to choose the correct step for the song and chart the right circular course), and the men dance with individual flair. Directors of folkloric stage performance, beginning with Dr. Munda, take care to discipline that messiness in favour of uniformity and perfection. As a result,

everyone follows the plan, and women, especially, follow the drums rather than accommodate them as they do in villages.[16] When Dr. Munda referred to women as insiders, he might have been referring to the social, dialogic village akhra, in which everyone focuses inward on each other. By contrast, folkloric stage performance is about projecting an identity outwards, to an observer (Babiracki 2000).

Nothing marks the generational, and gender, fractures more than Nagpuri modern, popular stage performance. Many of Mukund Nayak's generation of kalakars consider it simple, empty, and vulgar, though Mukund is often invited to perform his traditional songs in these programs. Pop performance has now developed into a distinct genre and style, fusing selected local, traditional idioms with the national, commercial Bollywood style. Like folkloric performance, it is run by men. Female pop soloists, though wildly popular, suffer a stigma inherited from one of the new genre's antecedents, village *nacni* dance performed outdoors by a professional, female singer/dancer, her male partner(s), and a battery of traditional drummers[17] (Babiracki 2004, 2008). The women themselves, the nacnis, were "kept," or, as some say, "owned" by men of high status who recruited them by various means (money, seduction, force) from small, powerless jatis like Ghasis, Cik Baraik, Mahali, Lohar, and Dom. For disenfranchised women who had been abandoned, raped, or had left their husbands, the nacni profession was a means of livelihood, and some did very well. But from the perspective of Ghasis, it was an exploitive, feudal practice that demeaned their community and its daughters. "It's good that it has ended," said Chandrakanta's mother Draupadi Devi recently, "They took away our beautiful daughters." No wonder Nandu does not want to see his younger sister performing on any stage. Today, young women who might have once become nacnis gravitate to modern, popular solo performance, where they sing and dance with the same coy seduction that nacnis did. In many cases, their relationships with their male partners are much the same as well, marked by temporary, non-societal, and polygamous liaisons.

There is also more than a whiff of patriarchy and class consciousness in Nandu's stance against his sister performing in public along with his consciousness of jati issues. After his "Rhythms of the Forest" drum jam in 2007, I asked him "Where are the women?" He replied, "Let them come if they want to. I won't force them. They don't drum." "Why don't you teach them?" I asked. "It's too difficult for them. Why would good, middle-class girls choose to demean themselves in vulgar performances when they don't have to?"[18] I recently asked Chandrakanta if she thought a women's academy of Nagpuri music would be a space of opportunity for women like her. "*That* would be good," she said. "Everything for girls has to be separate. *Then* they can advance."

Opportunities for women to perform in public, then, are limited to those spaces in which gender – and the semblance of a dialogue between men and women – still matters: folkloric collective performance, though without song; sexualized modern, popular solo singing; and disembodied singing on commercial media, currently dominated by a handful of married, middle-class Bengali women. As Chandrakanta notes, there is very little opportunity for an aspiring middle-class singer like herself. As a result, though, urban, public music culture has squandered the genius of local women for sharing power in collective action, and for organizing themselves musically, politically, and economically, independently of *and* in close consort with men, all at the same time. The village akhra is a socially productive contact zone for men and women. There is no equivalent in the neoliberal, urban environment.

Commodification and the Consumer

Music commodification, that is, valuing the exchange, transactional, cash value of music over its social value, is arguably a function of the modern economies in which all three Nayaks profiled here do their musical work.[19] Mukund's folkloric performances project a tightly packaged product that was easily embraced by governments at all levels, including at the Republic Day Folk Festival in Delhi, as a state cultural brand (cf. Albo 2010). At the same time, the moment Nagpuri traditional music shifted from the village akhras to the deterritorialized stage, it became a free-floating commodity, though this was certainly not the intention of Mukund's generation of kalakars. Whether traditional or modern pop, solo stage performance was trans-social and trans-jati from the beginning. The young Nandu and others of his generation initially hailed the development of the new genre as a victory over Bollywood film music, which was threatening to obliterate anything local in the 1980s and 90s. Free of its caste-defined village contexts,[20] however, Nagpuri song on stage quickly developed a regional, sonic identity free of any ethnic (i.e., adivasi, tribal) or caste affiliations. Hence, its appeal to urban youth, especially from those disadvantaged castes.

Socio-economic liberalization and intensified industrialization in the wake of Jharkhand statehood in 2000 brought about a new order of commodification and consumerism. A business-oriented, economically liberal government has encouraged the in-migration of middle-class consumers from outside the area, prompting massive building projects, economic expansion, and investment from India and abroad, with devastating effects on the shared regional inter-culture that had been the very justification for statehood. As

Ruchira Ganguly-Scrase notes, modernism and neoliberalism are intersecting forces (2003). These forces now spread rapidly well beyond the old urban boundaries, bringing overcrowded streets and neighbourhoods, pollution, and chaotic, unplanned growth in their wake.

Consumption defines social mobility across Jharkhand: televisions, motorbikes, cars, washing machines, packaged food, CDs, computers, and especially mobile phones. According to Sanjay Basu-Mullick, director of the NGO Jharkhand Jangal Bacao Andolan (Jharkhand Forest Preservation Movement), the desire for money and consumer goods is responsible for much of the ongoing tribal alienation from their lands, whether that land is sold, given as collateral for loans, or grabbed by developers putting up high-rises for the new migrants. Ghasis in Ranchi city, a very small, powerless jati, lost their lands in a similar process several generations ago.

Likewise, Nagpuri music today flows primarily as commodity. Stage programs, which were free to the public in the 1980s, now require neighbourhood or government support or ticketed admissions and, of course, sales drive all music industry commodities (CDs, VCDs). In 2010, the album producer Bulu Ghosh, quite frankly confirmed this, saying that albums are all about money, not social value. "Find a catchy tune, throw in a little local flavour, layer many tracks over it, and you have a song." Musical consumer goods at the point of production are uniform, perfected, well packaged, and stale, but also ephemeral, short-lived, and fragile. They track the aspirations of youth rather than any social messages, and the visuals typically involve a large posse of dancing boys (locals), surrounding a lead who pursues a single female love interest (both non-locals), all against a backdrop of consumer goods: shopping malls, motorcycles, product billboards, and the like. The urban spaces of consumption are their "akhras." In this consumer culture, youth is both commodity and consumer. No wonder its appeal to Chandrakanta and young men and women of younger generations. Weddings, urban festivals, and many other local events feature modernized line dancing to albums – no singing, songwriting, or drumming, just dancing.

Cultural leaders of Mukund's generation reflect soberly on the emptiness of commodified music, especially when compared to the traditional kalakars of the 1980s. Ganesh Ram Sahu explained it to me in 2006:

> Buildings are going up without builders. We [the older generation] have our own feelings, but the youth are connected to this change. It is causing us much grief. What we tried to create is being demolished in our presence, in this [new] flow of culture. What is happening now will flow away. No main

> elements is there. It's a good thing to have an ideal. Today there is no ideal. Without *ras*, nothing, useless. Young fellows of my village organized a program [spending] 40,000 Rs for light and sound alone. I was unable to stay more than 45 minutes.[21] There was no joy. [Jharkhand poets] were making such super composition. That … will never break. But the new Jharkhand music and compositions are breakable.

Multi-talented male musicians like Mukund and Nandu, who are poets as well as singers, dancers, drummers, and producers, are rare in the commodified music industry, where specialists are hired as either singers, drummers, or dancers.

Some scholars have optimistically promoted the potentials of the neoliberal order to experiment, improvise, and liberate otherwise marginalized individuals (cf. Greenhouse 2010, Nathan and Kelkar 2003), but it has not led to significant, lasting empowerment or agency for most musicians of lower castes in Jharkhand. Generations of Ghasi accommodated themselves to performance opportunities with adaptability and accommodation, but neoliberalism has not lifted all Ghasi musicians' boats. The benefits of "authorship" have not accrued to them or, frankly, to most other local musicians, except to unique, globally connected individuals like Nandu. Professional musicians involved in public culture, across the board, often find that they aren't really the authors of anything. More importantly, Ghasi musicians have been sidelined culturally.

Despite her optimism, Greenhouse acknowledges that "the pervasive condition of neoliberalism is powerlessness" (2010: 9). These two generations of Ghasis have arguably defied those poor odds, gaining some cultural power and social recognition, in the cases of Mukund and Nandu, and a glimpse of what opportunity might mean, for Chandrakanta. But their efforts have not extended to the Ghasi community as a whole. A few years ago, Nandu was forced to confront the limits of neoliberal opportunity in a caste-based society when he ran for local political office and lost. "The tribes will never accept me as leader. Christians will never accept me, and I'm not a big enough Hindu. So I do music, where they recognize me."

Identity Politics

Both Mukund and Nandu argue that their Scheduled Caste status has marginalized Ghasis in ways that adivasi status would not have. According to

them, until 1931, Ghasis were officially listed as a tribe, though as a "Hinduized" one. Their Hinduization, especially in rituals and dietary norms, emerged from their working for and culturally accommodating their upper-caste patrons, but that, along with their professional, service occupation were probably also the reasons for their reclassification. To be clear, commodification and program culture have done little for adivasis in the long run. They participate as individuals in Nagpuri modern, pop programs, but not in their own linguistic or musical idioms. Visually, adivasis have become the state cultural brand, but not sonically, and they exercise very little control over the use of their images. Government branding and its folkloric programming has tended to flatten out differences among the adivasis. Arguably folkloric program culture has taken adivasis from a holistic, collective sensibility to more fragmented, competitive, compartmentalized identities, contained on the stage as an "ethnic" component of the larger Jharkhand state. There is a reason that the word "neo-colonialism" pops up in so many local conversations. Adivasi innovations in stage presentation are relatively rare, though I have seen at least one case. Like musical commodities, adivasi identities have to some extent become deterritorialized and free-floating.

As a result of their positioning in the identity bureaucracy, however, adivasis still enjoy advantages that Ghasis do not. As Scheduled Tribes, they are entitled to reserved positions in government jobs and education. Since adivasis are relatively immobile populations, preferring to stay on ancestral land when possible, they are a stable group demographically. The small, often landless, but numerous Scheduled Caste populations, however, are far more mobile, and the economic boom in Jharkhand after statehood has attracted a flood of them from outside the state. This means that Ghasis must compete for their few reserved positions with an ever-expanding pool of candidates. There are no special reservations for indigenous (*mūl-bāsī*, "rooted inhabitant") Scheduled Castes. Consequently, in an unfortunate turn of history, modernity has dealt them a low blow. Ghasis have no ethnic identity of their own in a state that is defined by ethnicity, and now they have no musical identity of their own, either, in a culture defined by commodified, pan-ethnic Nagpuri music. Most Ghasis I have met, including Mukund's family, regularly cross ethno-religious boundaries, sometimes appearing Hindu and other times adivasi, depending on the circumstances. Chandrakanta's recent wedding included a very old, private invocation of their ancestral spirits (an adivasi practice), but the public rituals were officiated by a Brahmin priest. Thus, their own talent for adaptability in the contact zones of Jharkhandi culture have undermined their community identity and alienated most of them from their history.[22]

Mukund and Nandu both argue that the indigenous identity they once possessed lies hidden in their distinctive drumming patterns and rituals, particularly in the Simdega area to which their ancestors migrated and settled over 600 years ago. Nandu has begun extensive research to try to establish the fact that the Ghasis who arrived in Jharkhand were, as colonial records suggest, small, semi-nomadic, landless hunter-gatherers. His father and I have uncovered scattered remnants of a unique Ghasi language, called Makhiyari, though as yet we don't have enough words to establish its familial identity. Mukund does not consider his folkloric programs of Nagpuri dance to be appropriations of adivasi identity, as some adivasis might. Instead, he is quite deliberately recovering and reviving the collective dance practices of his ancestors. The Ghasi men may have made a living serving as ceremonial musicians for patrons, but their village musical life in the akhra, with women, was no different than that of the adivasis around them. He hopes his revival of collective performance will confer visibility and cultural power to his community.

In a long conversation in May of 2016, I asked Nandu, "Who is a Ghasi?" He responded, "It shouldn't be an issue of being professional musicians or not. Ghasis were not originally professionals, and now [official] Tribes like the Cik Baraik *are* professionals." He added that among Ghasis' original occupations was elaborate tattooing, a practice that ended with Mukund's generation, and others have suggested fishing and grass-cutting (hence the name, Ghasi, for grass). For Nandu, reclaiming Ghasis' old adivasi identity is a pragmatic issue of jobs, advantages, and justice. He seeks the rehabilitation of their past musical leadership, when, at least in Simdega, they were called "The Lions of Nagpuri Music." His embrace of male, professional drumming in live performance as his musical signature is a means of sonically reclaiming the public space, the outdoors, of his ancestors, now repackaged to make money and appeal to an outwardly focused audience of young men and global professionals.

Only a relatively small number of young Ghasis support Nandu's calls for reclassification. Many more Ghasis are committed to assimilating into the larger Hindu culture, some even learning Sanskrit and wearing the accoutrements of high castes, such as the sacred thread. Nandu's efforts call into question the very definition of adivasi in Jharkhand. Rather than a behavioural label or a bureaucratic label, tribal to him is a permanent, inalienable identity, autobiographical and ancestral, and he claims it boldly on his website (www.akhra.org) and in his promotional materials. After all, many adivasis, including Dr. Ram Dayal Munda and others now in the government, changed their lifestyles dramatically in the last half century without losing their adivasi identities.

Both Mukund and Nandu visually, sonically, and consciously connect to a global indigenous ethnic identity. Mukund's folkloric presentation style was strongly influenced by Dr. Ram Dayal Munda's experiments in the 1970s and 1980s, inspired, he told me, by Minnesota's Festival of Nations. Such presentations are standard fare at meetings of the UN's Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, to which Dr. Munda was a delegate for many years. Nandu's sonic focus on drumming was reinforced through his collaborations with African and African-diaspora drummers both in Italy and in the US.

I have left Chandrakanta out of this discussion. While she readily acknowledges Ghasis' adivasi roots, she has no particular interest in these issues of identity politics, perhaps because there is no advantage for her in one identity or the other. Modern commodification, national music idioms, and institutional support still offer her the slim glimmer of hope for a future in music.

Sustainability and the Third Generation

I recently had the opportunity to chat with Mukund's grand-nephew Banphul Nayak, an enterprising and technologically connected young man interested in all types of Nagpuri music and all things internet. Our conversation followed an insipid government-sponsored program featuring a cheesy children's rendition of Nagpuri dance to a modern song. Mukund took the performance as an opportunity to lecture the audience on the importance of "original" knowledge, in the process showing them and Banphul how much they didn't know.

Banphul spoke bluntly to me about the tension between Mukund and Nandu's visions for Nagpuri music. His generation, he said, has been left without any clear direction:[23]

> Grandfather [Mukund] has an idea, and uncle [Nandu] doesn't like it, and vice versa. I respect each of them. Which do I choose? Backstage and in the family, there are arguments. If that would stop, if they would talk and agree, it would be good. Nandu's followers don't follow Mukund, and Mukund's don't follow Nandu.
>
> Our people need to be educated in the stage [stagecraft] and performing. This requires workshops, and there are no workshops. This is the work of the big kalakars [artists] like Nandu and Mukund. Please tell them so. *You* can mind-wash

> [brain-wash] them. What we're discussing here, I can't say at home. Those people [Mukund and Nandu] don't understand. Kalakars are lost.

When I later shared Banphul's sentiments with Mukund, he replied, "Actually, I don't understand what they are saying, neither Nandu nor Banphul. I am a simple fellow. I perform."

Nivedita Menon (2004) has suggested that multiple, simultaneous strategies, such as those reflected in these case studies, are necessary to effect real change and justice. Nevertheless, Mukund, Nandu, and Chandrakanta all tell me that they do not see much sustained progress from their years of efforts, and the generation after them sees no direction. Mukund nostalgically recalls the power of the inter-ethnic unity, forged around new musical idioms on stage, that drove the Jharkhand movement in the 1980s and early 1990s. But like the modern pop that dominates the airwaves today, that unity was fleeting, undermined by neoliberal commodification and long-standing gender and caste prejudices. So what could Ghasi musicians do to ensure their future? Kunjban's future sustainability is doubtful without a star like Mukund Nayak to lead its performances; Nandu certainly has no interest. Nandu may successfully reclaim Ghasis' identity as Jharkhand's drummers, but what of the poetic and melodic traditions that Ghasis created and spread through Jharkhand's cultural contact zones? And what of women like Chandrakanta?

Like Banphul, I feel allegiance to both Mukund and Nandu, though in the midst of their fragmented efforts, I, too, see no clear path. My own "dream" initiatives, such as opening a girls' academy of Nagpuri music and offering workshops on stagecraft and marketing to village musicians, will simply add more fractures to the efforts. In a quick analysis of Ghasi musical genres, I correlated each one (both traditional and modern) with gender participation and with a set of values that these three Ghasis, over two generations, value most. Though genres and repertory occupy Mukund's concerns, they all share a desire to see Ghasis assert musical leadership again, to earn a living as professional musicians, to find space for creativity, and to renew lines of transmission to younger generations. The genre that sustains most of these values, for both men and women, is solo stage song presentation, but only when it includes a diversity of traditional and modern styles and only with private institutional support for livelihood and branding (cf. Titon 2009). In this respect, I believe that Nandu may be on the right track. However, the involvement of women, who for generations have been the stewards of the village dancing grounds, is crucial, regardless in what category Ghasis officially

find themselves.

Could Ghasis leverage their talent for intercultural, musical accommodation to forge a new mūl-bāsī music for Jharkhand, built on their storehouses of knowledge? Such a project would require new paths of transmission, such as after-school workshops and camps that give kids the opportunity to "play" with Nagpuri music specialists, to make songs and play instruments in a safe environment without the social constraints of gender. For young people like Banphul, who are skating across the slick surface of neoliberal modernity, these would offer at least temporary grounding. Unlike Mukund and even Nandu, Banphul sees the future of Nagpuri music in individual, rather than ethnic terms. "The coming generations," he told me, "don't want to be in the Ghasi line, but they want to be in the Mukund Nayak *gharana*, his style. There's only one. He's great. The Mukund Nayak gharana is coming."[24] Perhaps his generation can find a way to creatively, productively channel the energy that inspires Ghasi youth, boys and girls alike, to keep dancing in the city streets and rooftops? Even as I write this, obstacles like caste and gender prejudices loom large. Still, Ghasis have been successfully crafting a regional music culture from their disadvantaged social and cultural positions for generations. I wouldn't bet against them.

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Notes

1. The *dholak* is a wooden barrel-drum, one head of which is played with the hand while the other, stronger head is played with a stick. The *mandar* is a longer, usually barrel-shaped two-headed drum made of clay, with one semi-tuned head. In village Nagpuri music, the deeper-timbre dholak is associated with male genres, while the brighter, ringing mandar is associated with female genres. That association is generally no longer honoured in stage programs, though it was in this 1981 performance.

2. Jharkhand officially emerged as a separate state in 2001, largely on the argument that it had a cultural identity distinct from its parent state, Bihar. Prior to that, the area was known as Chotanagpur, a reference to influences that flowed to the area from the

area of Nagpur in Maharashtra to the west. Since statehood, Ranchi city, now the capital has seen a dramatic influx of opportunists from outside the area. The locals, those with roots going back at least a couple hundred years, have become the new minorities.

3. By "regional" and "vernacular" I mean the regional languages that unite various castes, tribes, and linguistic groups. Across India, they are associated with regional performance styles linked with signature, state cultural identities. In Jharkhand, the dominant lingua franca is Nagpuri, but the state cultural brand is a generalized "tribal" one, articulated predominantly through performance.

4. Article 338 of the Indian Constitution officially designates ("schedules") certain groups of people (formerly called the Depressed Classes) to receive affirmative action benefits in the form of political representation and reserved positions in educational institutions and government service. The Scheduled Castes (once considered socially "untouchable") are the larger of the two groups. There is no uniform set of criteria for designation, and there is always political jostling for movement in and out of the categories. All Scheduled Tribes are also known as *adivasi* (indigenous, tribe), a self-ascribed designation based on generations of residence in a region. Many Ghasis, including this family, consider themselves to be adivasi, though they are officially designated as Scheduled Castes. Jharkhand's adivasi population is fairly stable, but its Scheduled Caste population has grown dramatically since statehood, increasing competition for a limited number of reserved positions. A designation as Scheduled Tribe is a definite advantage in Jharkhand.

5. By folkloric, I mean display performances designed to signify a particular ethnicity, also referred to as "tourist art." They are rehearsed and audience- and production-oriented.

6. By liberal and neoliberal, I mean economic systems of regulation (the former) and deregulation (the latter). Neoliberalism is often aligned with the conditions of globalization, individualism, and free global trade.

7. Note that Lukose's parsing of private (traditional) and public (modern) does not map well onto Nagpuri music culture.

8. Birsa Munda is a millenarian figure who fought both the British and the upper-caste landlords on behalf of the area's adivasi around the turn of the 20th century. He was captured by the British on Dombari hill and later died in jail. Today he is hailed as a cultural hero for all Jharkhand. According to Mukund Nayak, the snakes, insects, and crocodiles represent outsiders coming to loot the area's vast mineral wealth. The hoe, axe, and bow and arrow were all icons of the Jharkhand autonomy movement that resulted in statehood in 2000.

9. In its traditional village setting, this *mardana jhumar* song would be danced by a line of men and a single female professional singer, a *nacni*, inside their half-circle. Both men and women seek to match one another's style, producing a dance far less hyper-masculine than that of Kunjban at the Radisson Blu.

10. The other signature performance styles are Chau and paika dance, both typically accompanied by Ghasi drummers. Collective, group performance remains the only state-patronized brand that includes women.

11. Wireless lapel mics have yet to make it to the Jharkhand stage.

12. The simple, repetitive texts carry the same messages ("I love you, I want you") over the same simple 4-beat synthesized drum patterns. The only difference today is that most studios can lay down more tracks than they could 20 years ago. As I write this, Nandlal's hit tune of 1993 is still circulating, varied slightly and with different words, having become something like a traditional, variable tune type but for the modern stage rather than for the akhra.

13. English translation by the author. Note Chandrakanta's use of the classical terms *asthai* and *antara* to label refrain and verse as she dictated this song to me (2017).

14. Chandrakanta studied with two gurus over that time, Ganesh Mishra and Vikash Ranjan, both trained at the Allahabad Institute. Her guru for Nagpuri songs was her father.

15. Praduman now lives in New York City with his American wife and rarely performs.

16. I have written elsewhere about the kaleidoscopic intersections of the simultaneous drumming, dancing, and singing patterns, all of different lengths, in village akhra performance. Most folkloric teams try to neatly coordinate drumming and dance patterns (Babiracki 2000).

17. Nacni performance, even at weddings, has nearly disappeared, even in the Nagpuri heartland of Simdega.

18. Nacnis and some tribal women have always drummed.

19. Until the late 20th century, the transactional exchange for Ghasi ceremonial musical services was in the form of goods, services, and protection, not cash.

20. Traditionally, only Nagpuri lower castes, especially Ghasi, Mahali, Cik-Baraik, Lohar, and Dom, culturally affiliated with adivasis, performed collective music and dance, unsegregated by gender, in a village akhra.

21. This, from a man who listened all night to traditional singers through the 1980s.

22.To date, I have found no Ghasis who know their history (even a mythological one) prior to the 15th century, when they began to serve the Hinduized Nagbansi rajas as militia, musicians, and ritual specialists.

23. The translation from Hindi is the author's.

24. He is referring here to the pedagogical lineages of Hindustani classical music, which gained importance in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as professional musicians became unmoored from their territorial grounding in courts (Neuman 1990). *Gharana* (lit, "of the house") is a performative institution, not a territorial one.

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