



Re-Negotiating the Contours of Folk: A Critical Study of Dynamic Alternative Indian Pilgrimage

Anshulika Singh*

Abstract

Folklore has been associated with the oral storytelling, communal and a performative tradition and is passed down to generations. With the rise of digital media, folklore has transitioned from physical performances to networked expressions mediated online. This paper aims to highlight the performative nature of folklore and how it is being transformed by it. Performance theory and Digital Folklore Theory forms the methodological framework for this inquiry. The study applies the concept of “liminality and communitas” by Victor Turner and “restored behaviour” by Richard Schechner to analyse performed folklore. Drawing on the Digital Folklore Theory, the concept of Vernacular Web by Robert G Howard and Internet as a folkloric space by Trevor J Blank. Through *yatras* as the primary manifestations of folklore, this paper examines alternative Indian pilgrimages as an ecosystem shaping the traditional contours of folklore through modern interventions of live performances and digital interaction.

Keywords: Communitas, Digital Folklore, Folklore, Liminal Space, Performed Folklore, Vernacular Web

Introduction

Folklore is usually associated with the oral stories and myths that come from diverse communities. These stories showcase their traditions, rituals, customs and shared expression, and were passed on from generation to generation. “Folklore applies only to that item in culture that had vital currency in previous stages of human evolution and either survived the changes of time and became a lively fossil or remained alive among those segments of society least

* Research Scholar, Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh

exposed to the light of civilization” (Ben-Amos 8). However, in contemporary times, folklore has turned into an evolved phenomenon and has gone beyond the physical enactments adapting to newer modes of creation and dissemination, making its place on the digital front as well. The representation of storytelling and preservation of folklore have transitioned from spoken to social media threads.

This paper analyses the chosen alternative *yatras*, i.e., *Jagriti Yatra* and *India City Walks*TM through their social media accounts and websites, to examine the contours of folklore. The selected *yatras*, namely *Jagriti Yatra* is an entrepreneurial train journey which covers the tier-2, 3 cities of Middle India in fifteen days and another is *India City Walks*TM which is a travel and heritage initiative that explores various cities by guided walks and focuses on storytelling, history, architecture and local heritage of a city. These modern *yatras* act as a site of living folklore as they continuously create stories and traditions through actions, where collective performance reinforces new transformation and identity. It provides a space for new traditions to be formed; a platform for storytelling; formation of new stories; and re-telling and re-interpretation of the old stories as individuals from different cultures come together. However, in the contemporary age digital platforms have become the hub of folklore creation, what the village was to the traditional folklore. As the new traditions and rituals are being performed in the age of the digital platform, there is a dispersion of folklore in the digital age as well, spreading out to a wider audience. It gives an opportunity to the people/users of the platform to reinterpret and recreate folklore in the contemporary context. Thus, the blending of ritual performance and digital dissemination turns oral traditions and folklore into a living ever-evolving folklore.

The objective of the paper is to highlight the performative nature of the folklore that is created by the *yatras* and how it transitions into Digital Folklore. Through an analysis of the songs, slogans and phrases used in *yatras* as performances of the folklore and creation of a community, the paper examines the shift from the physical folklore to Digital Folklore and how the folklore further reshape participation and meaning in the selected *yatras*. The theoretical framework for the study draws on the Performance theory and Digital

Folklore theory, in which the former applies the concept of “Liminality” and “Communitas” by Victor Turner and the concept of “Restored Behaviour” by Richard Schechner. Also, the paper employs the concept of “Vernacular Web” by Robert Glenn Howard. Turner discusses the idea of a liminal phase—a temporary middle space where individuals enter while leaving behind their previous identity and social norms—experiencing transformation with the use of activities, slogans, phrases and songs that function as rituals and tradition during the phase to build up a shared identity and collective participation. These activities further create *communitas* among the people, which stays even after the individuals have returned back from the liminal phase. Rituals can be a part of community or culture, but they also transform and shape the people they are performed by. The concept of “Vernacular Web” by Robert Glenn Howard emphasises the internet as a folkloric site, where individuals and agencies function as nodes of the web in the network and create stories together. On the other hand, Trevor J Blank discusses how oral traditions and storytelling are transformed into names and hashtags, further helping the evolution of folklore by disseminating it to the online users.

In bridging the traditional and digital folklore, this study is a significant intervention into tracing the altered space of *yatra* with the coming of digital platforms. It shows that *yatras* are more than just an ordinary journey but they are also performances which through repeated actions and rituals such as singing of songs, chanting slogans and storytelling create a sense of shared identity and community. Furthermore, there is a formation of the ecosystem of modern folklore as these *yatras* use social media platforms in addition to the performed folklore that is created during the journey. It helps the participants to stay in touch, even after the journey has ended, and continues to recreate and reinterpret the folklore. Oral traditions evolve in the digital space ensuring that folklore remains dynamic and relevant as it will continuously keep in touch with contemporary culture.

Yatras as Liminal Spaces

Traditionally, folklore was considered to be a belief system, set of customs, songs and practices passed down to the next generation in

the form of oral storytelling in a community. Folklore has helped people celebrate their histories and in forming their identity as well as understanding their shared experiences with other people: “This is evident that storytelling serves a role of uniting communities” (Samwel 34). However, it was carried from one generation to the other, and the stories remained static. So, the study explores how alternative *Yatra* acts as a liminal space—a transitional space where an individual undergoes change and helps to build “communitas”—referring to the deep sense of togetherness and equality that emerges in an individual or a group of people after engaging in the ritualistic traditions. These *Yatras* act as a movement which brings individuals together in a cultural experience through collective chanting, providing them with a sense of belonging.

Performed folklore is not just spoken or sung but intricately conducted through elaborate performances. Rather than being passive consumers, individuals participate actively to form a community. Herbert Reid discusses how folklore contributes to the public sphere presenting a vision of a “performing society” that generates public opinion through diverse means. People join these *Yatras* with the purpose of learning about entrepreneurship or the history and culture of the city, but it is through an active engagement with the performed rituals that they come together to create performed folklore. For instance, *Jagriti Yatra*, which is an entrepreneurial fifteen-day train journey, transforms the train journey into a space where cultures can be exchanged as the participants move forward with a shared vision of change and progress. On the other hand, *India City Walks™*, which is based on storytelling by the guides, narrates the tales of history and heritage to the participants. In both of these *yatras*, folklore is not only discussed but also actively recreated to help shape new traditions.

In the concept of “liminality and communitas” by Victor Turner, liminal spaces refer to the zones that are “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned by law, custom, convention and ceremonial” (359). Therefore, the entities are detached and do not belong to the previous identity, but they have not transitioned into a new form either. However, the entities are in the transformative phase and are moving towards change because they

are characterised by fluidity and ambiguity. The rituals that are performed put the participants in an “in-between” state of transformation, the state of liminality which allows participants to grow and form bonds with one another. While talking about the *yatra*, Soonrita Sahasrabudhe, expressed (*Jagriti Yatri* 2008): “I don’t feel alone anymore - I am connected to a sea of young India that is positive, enterprising and ethical” (*Jagriti Yatra*). This statement exemplifies the concept of “*communitas*” as it shows the spontaneous bonding that occurs in liminal spaces.

Drawing on the concept of Victor Turner, alternative *yatras* can be considered as a modern “rite of passage,” a passage in which people undergo an experience of transformation. Here, *Yatra* functions as a liminal space as it becomes a transitional space transcending boundaries where daily lives are usually carried out. *Jagriti Yatra* is called the “journey of awakening” and “journey to inspire” (*Jagriti Yatra*) and the “train” through which the participants travel is taken as the symbol of physical and psychological threshold to undergo the phase of liminality. Deferring their daily activities, the participants enter a liminal space afforded by the *yatras* that enable new, albeit transitional identities to be formed. For example, participants of *Jagriti Yatra* and *India City Walks*[™] postpone their daily lives and jobs for a while to take on the role of a participant in these *yatras*. Walking through various monuments in *India City Walks*[™] produces a sense of liminality as the the past and the present collide via historical storytelling. This experience in producing a state of “in-betweenness” enables the participants to take up new identities while they travel. *Yatra*, hence, becomes a transformative space that alters an individual both, physically and spiritually, producing commensurate effects in both the faculties. The act of walking and sharing stories regarding the particular *walk* are considered to be rituals of the *yatra* itself.

The rituals that are performed during these *yatras* put the participants in a liminal state of transformation and they can experience a sense of “*communitas*” through the shared symbolic acts. “*Communitas*,” a shared sense of belonging, emerges during liminal experiences and contributes to collective transformation (Buechner et al. 6). For example, in the process of chanting and

singing hymns, where the general hierarchy is dissolved, everybody shares the same stage and they feel a sense of unity and togetherness which forms a unique community through a shared purpose. As all the participants come together in unison, these performative acts diminish the differences and there is a spontaneous bond that is formed. These synchronised movements create “communitas” which are formed by the shared rituals that go on at the time of *yatra*. These bonds are formed due to the repetition of the shared rituals. *Jagriti Yatra* has “1 train and 525 *yatris*” (*Jagriti Yatra*) as the snapshot of 2025 *yatra* shows how these 525 participants will come together for a shared idea and live together in a train for fifteen days; undergo the same issues as well as share their personal stories and struggles. The train becomes a safe space for all the participants and allows them to be vulnerable. Another example is that of the creation of new rituals as seen in an Instagram post where participants are sitting under the “300-Year-Old Banyan Tree” in Deoria, mirroring the traditional way of folklore in which there was a relevance of Banyan Tree: “This iconic Banyan tree, standing tall in Deoria, symbolizes wisdom, resilience, and a space for connection and introspection that inspires every Yatri year after year. . . .” (@lyfeinframes). Aneri Seth captions a picture on her Instagram handle saying “I had planned 600 diyas to be lit under the ancient 300 year old Banyan tree followed by ‘Bargad Dhyan’ which is a very important element of the Yatra” (@aneri_1711). These rituals help in creating and re-creating liminal spaces and forming new folk traditions while still being in touch with the old traditions. The essential elements are not replaced; however, new rituals have been added to the same.

Richard Schechner theorises “Restored Behaviour” as those “stripes of behaviour,” similar in nature to the film stripes which “can be rearranged and reconstructed” (35). This means that while a behaviour may have occurred in the past, its reoccurrence is not a simple repetition but a re-enactment or a revised performance of past behaviours. This revision is not a spontaneous activity but a repetition of actions, rituals and traditions that have been re-enacted over time and is a “twice-behaved behaviour” (36). So, folklore is not always newly formed but also re-shaped and re-stored in a different context. As the folklore is restored every time, it increases the longevity of the rituals, traditions and the folklore. As Richard Schechner argues that

restored performance focuses on the actions, words and gestures from the past folklore or narratives that are brought back and are re-enacted in a new and a different context (36). This is how the *yatras* use songs and shared experiences to revive and preserve folkloric traditions in contemporary settings. These performed folklore engages participants in an experience that binds them together. In his view, actions are repeated and continued as they follow traditions but there are also variations and adaptations as those actions have to be given new meanings and recycled to the present contexts.

Yatras are ritualised journeys which contain various different pre-existing traditions, customs and performative acts. These are considered as the examples of the restored behaviour. In these *yatras*, participants come together and engage in chanting of songs and slogans which are not only spoken or sung but are performed and repeated in shared participation. In *Jagriti Yatra*, each *yatra* starts with certain rituals of lighting lamps and repeated chanting of the *Jagriti Anthem* “*Yaaro Chalo, Badalne ki Rut hai!*” by the new set of *yatris* which becomes a ritual performance fostering a sense of collective identity and continuity of the ideology (Really Vaibhav 00:53-00:56). In this way, a new tradition is formed but it is more than just a song or a chant, it is performed in a structured manner with hand and dance movements which makes it a cultural performance as well as performed folklore. In *India City Walks™*, the guides or the walk-leaders are re-enacting the historical narrative that functions as a repeated and ritualised performance which is carried out for all the groups participating on a daily basis. Hence, this ritualised performance will be done for each group. *India City Walks™* use slogans such as “Exploring the city’s soul!,” “a story to tell, a legacy to share” and *India dekho humare sath, chalo aaj kal ke saath* (*India City Walks™*) repeatedly, which sets the idea for the walk and which can also be seen on its website. It becomes a performance as the repetition takes the participants into the liminal phase. As the history is being enacted, the participants also engage with the story and add their perspective to the performing cultural memory. This makes the activity performative rather than static. In each of the *yatras*, the participants indulge in the narratives and rituals by creating and enacting folklore actively rather than receiving it passively. Rather than just a speech, the act of repetition of performative utterances or

responding strengthens participation and the sense of belonging, which further helps in reconstruction of shared identity and society. The videos made by the participants during the *Yatras* rituals turn performance folklore to Digital Folklore. Additionally, the phrases used at the *yatra* are turned into hashtags, thus, allowing performance folklore to be continuously re-enacted in multiple ways. The production of novel modes of folklore along with new rituals act as inspiration for people to take up such *yatras/walks*, therefore, expanding their network. For instance, a post by *India City Walks*TM says: “Reserve your place in a world of living traditions” (@indiacitywalks). This statement invites participants to be a part of the living traditions of the city.

Various traditional rituals are continued in each *yatra/walk*, but every event introduces a new element to the already existing narratives to ensure novelty while maintaining tradition. Each journey takes the shape of a spiral-like occurrence where despite the similar pattern of the *yatra*, the journey is never the same. This exemplifies Schechner’s “Restored Behaviour,” wherein by transcending the physical space of pilgrimage events, these *yatras* create their online presence and impact. This presence is not a simple occurrence and mutates with time given the dynamic nature of the platform. As folklores mutate online, they are bound to become participatory folklores due to the very nature of social media websites.

***Yatras* As Digital Folklore**

Traditional Folklore relied on oral tradition and face-to-face interaction; however, in contemporary times, the process of folklore creation and distribution has changed: “In the context of the Digital Age, “hybridization” exemplifies the process by which “real world” discursive practices significantly influence, and are reciprocally influenced by, virtualized discursive practice” (Blank 107).

Digital Folklore Theory explores how oral storytelling and communal rituals have now transformed into the digital era. The concept of “Vernacular Web” and networked folklore by Robert Glenn Howard and Trevor J Blank argue that digital spaces function as the new ecosystems of folklore, where new folklore is being

collectively re-created and re-shaped. In the traditional setting, folklore was based on proximity and directly communicated. However, in the contemporary and digital era, the focus has now shifted towards interconnectedness and virality, so folklore is no longer dependent on geographical and temporal factors. Instead, it allows for immediate interaction and reinterpretation for a longer period of time as it can be performed and archived simultaneously. Traditional folklore was fixed and static, but Digital Folklore is fluid and dynamic. It is constantly in the state of recreation, remixing and reinterpretation which is done by the digital tools that allow people to edit, share and mix the cultural materials due to which Digital Folklore has become more interactive: "Traditional art forms has also transformed and modelled itself to suit the diverse needs of the modern society. This shift in technology has led to rising consciousness about the people's cultural ideologies and customs" (Samwel 35).

The concept "Vernacular Web" by Robert Glenn Howard, describes how folklore is created and the way cultural traditions are reshaped in the digital space. Here, digital spaces act as a platform where new folklore can be created. Howard discusses the idea of the Internet being interconnected as a "web," where individuals and institutions function as nodes of the web that create rituals together by adding their perspectives and ideas to it. None of which has the primary agency to make the decision on the traditions. Howard argues that folklore exists between institutions and the user-generated content. It refers to the social media interactions, meme sharing, hashtags and *YouTube* videos which are user-driven and are informal and participatory in nature. Online folklore allows for active participation in its creation or recreation. Users can engage, change and reshape traditions. Therefore, it does not solely depend on the stories and rituals introduced by the institutions, but both the sources play their role in shaping the folklore.

Trevor J Blank expands on the concept of "Vernacular web" by focusing on the internet that reshapes and recreates folklore but does not entirely replace it as a folkloric site. Memes, hashtags and online storytelling function as the modern way of reshaping folklore. Blank highlights that even Digital Folklore is performative in nature, as the

user keeps interacting with the shared posts/reels. With the help of the hashtags and captions, the users constantly keep adding their thoughts and views through comments or hashtags. Users engage in the creation of stories and their dissemination via the digital front in this way. These ideas create a framework for how folklore is moving from oral traditions in real-world settings to digital and interactive ones. Individuals engage on the digital front actively, and modify and reshare the folk traditions. As oral storytelling is disseminated by retelling, in the same way it happens through reinterpretation on the digital front. Melnikova discusses how the internet provides a unique communicative environment that fosters innovative cultural and linguistic phenomena, stimulating users' creativity through text, graphics, sound, and animation (4).

Traditionally, *Yatras* were undertaken by being physically present, but alternative *Yatras* have changed the scenario into a more inclusive environment which makes folklore more sustainable and adaptable. Beyond the physical enactments, they have also begun to use social media as digital folk platforms, such as *Instagram*, *YouTube*, blogs and vlogs to function as the modern storytelling platforms. The Internet plays the role of a folkloric site, where there is a never-ending creation of the previous stories and development of new ones. *Yatras* and the folklore created exists beyond the journey through the digital platforms, as the stories or the impact through the posts and videos stay with the online participants/users. The most important difference between the two kinds of folklore is that Digital Folklore does not require the participants to be present physically—anyone can contribute or circulate a piece of folklore. For instance, participants in *Jagriti Yatra* and *India City Walks™* initiate conversations through hashtags and captions used on their websites and on their social media handle, thus, allowing previous and the upcoming *yatris*/participants to engage in Digital Folklore creation. In addition, the Instagram reels perform as channels for a networked folklore due to the ease of their distribution and dissemination. So, the production of posts/reels on these platforms are considered to be a digital living folklore as they mutate by being a remix of the old lore, allowing the online users to comment and discuss their own personal stories regarding the story being posted and embody a feeling of personally having been there. For example, *India City*

Walks[™] offers capacity building programs powered by incubation, certificate courses that are designed to build expertise in storytelling and offer culture literacy, fostering entrepreneurship” (*India City Walks*[™]). As a result, the *yatras*’ websites and social media accounts offer and promote storytelling culture and legacy so that people can engage with the folklore and participate.

In the digital era, the non-participants are able to become involved and engage with the ongoing and established folklore as social media has reshaped and recreated folklore. Thus, making folklore a lot more visible and adaptable. The slogans, stories and performances become memes, reels and hashtags that continue to evolve. *India City Walks*[™] use the slogans that are re-used on its website, becoming the motto of the *yatra* for the leaders as well as participants, who aspire to go on this *yatra* and the individuals also take back the feeling of solidarity and togetherness of those who participated in these walks. Even *YouTube* vlogs are uploaded by the participants and the organisers, which showcase their personal reflections, speeches from mentors, allowing future participants and non-participants to be familiar with the concept.

The hashtags which are employed on the social media accounts of the chosen *yatras* regarded as digital proverbs, fall under the formation of Repetition-Variation-Participatory. These hashtags are frequently used and are accessible to all users with a single click. The “Repetition” of the phrases turns into a variation by remixing the words or phrases where various users can use the same hashtag on a variety of posts which do not necessarily have to be similar or even directly related to *yatras*. This helps folk to be adapted to new contexts. The perpetual networked sharing and dissemination on a global scale enables a form of “Participation” of the users to create and produce modern lore and keeps the old folklore alive. Hashtags are used as digital-cultural tools which also form a digital community. For instance, a scroll through the official Instagram handle of *Jagriti Yatra* reveals repetition of certain hashtags such as: “#JagritiYatra, #TransformativeJourney, #Community Empowerment, #UnityinDiversity, #YatraDiaries, #OnceAYatriAlwaysAYatri, #BuildingIndiaThroughEnterprise, #JourneyofChange, #YaaroChalo” (@jagritiyatra), a song sung in the

beginning of *Jagriti Yatra*, can be performed in the ongoing *yatra* events. These hashtags support the idea of diversity among the people of the *yatra* but also the non-participants online. The *Instagram* posts are created into memes for online users to relate to them. For instance, the posts give reference to the titles of Bollywood movies such as “Zindagi... Na Milegi Dobra” (@jagritiyatra). All these hashtags support and spread the idea of change through the *yatra*. The taglines used on the website of *Jagriti Yatra*, such as “Journey of Awakening” spreads out the idea that whoever participates in this *yatra* will be awakened. So, the use of websites and social media is essential in the formation of Digital Folklore. In digital spaces, it can be made into a written *Instagram* caption or can be recorded to be published on a *YouTube* channel, so that it can be preserved and can be recreated in the future.

India City Walks[™] uses the hashtags “#Walkthestory, #CulturalRevival, #StorytellingforChange, #PreserveourPast, #HeritageConservation, #EchoesofthePast, #Storycation, #Gullygyan, #IncredibleIndiaStories” (@indiacitywalks) which are used as the digital proverbs to primarily understand the idea of the *walks*. These hashtags create the feeling of going back to the old traditions of folklore, celebrating the idea of the past but also add to the essence of the contemporary times. Social media and the algorithm of the platforms keep changing in accordance to the trends, so that the creation and dissemination of folklore also keeps changing. There is also a recreation of viral *Instagram* trends that are re-enacted by the participants and are uploaded on social media, to get more attention and followers. All of this is performed to spread the stories, culture and folklore of these *yatras*. Also, the use of certain songs induces a feeling of togetherness and unity that attracts non participating users towards the *yatra* narrative through strategically produced, publicly shared striking music and memorable tunes. Digital Folklore can be preserved through archiving stories and posts and vlogs. By combining these theories and applying on the *yatras*, it is evident that folklore is not static but participatory in nature. It acts as a networked folklore which is interactive, and the institution does not take the centre stage, allowing users to give their feedback and contribute to the stories and rituals. Folklore is being sustained through digital media, and *Yatra* and its

folklore exists beyond the journey through digital platforms: “This real communal lore can be expressed by the group at large in collective actions of the multitude, as Frazer defines it’s including public festivities, rituals, and ceremonies in which every member of the group partakes” (Ben-Amos 6).

Transformation of Folklore: Physical to Digital

This section of the paper deals with the transition of folklore from the physical to digital performance and also the differentiation between the physical presentation of folklore and the digital representation. In the physical spaces, modern folklore is created by chanting slogans, singing of songs and oral storytelling. Modern Folklore is “the whole body of people’s traditional beliefs and customs,” differing from the traditional folklore in its scope, range, and diversity (Frazer vii). This includes live performances, slogan chanting, and various other activities that enhance social cohesion and spiritual expansion. The live performance of the slogans and songs in the *yatras* disseminated through online channels, creates a sense of solidarity and togetherness among the participants. While the response in the audience that accesses this material digitally is not equivalent to that of those present physically, due to the distance created by online modes; nonetheless, those viewing the *yatras* online are able to access these journeys and participate in them, an avenue that traditional *yatras* do not afford. Singing songs during train journeys, in unison, provides participants with a sense of community, power, and hope of unity, community and purpose. This still does not discount the possibility provided by the digital sphere for participation, interaction, reinterpretation, and agency that an individual can now exercise.

Social media not only focuses on preserving but also recreating folklore. It allows for the folklore to go beyond the local region and to a global platform to reach wider audiences. Slogans take the shape of hashtags and digital proverbs. Hashtags act in a similar manner as the oral traditions. Traditional folklore was dependent on the repetition of the same song or slogan, and in a similar manner hashtags also function by resharing a particular hashtag or retelling a story, it acts as digital artefact which are repeated and users can go back to the restored and archived videos and post of the same story:

“The folk realm is not located in a socioeconomic sector or particular nationality but instead represents a participatory process that some posters refer to as the democratic or open web” (Browner 23). The recordings made of the performances and songs are uploaded on *YouTube* and function as an archived folklore. For instance, *Yaaro Chalo* song can be viewed and recreated on *YouTube* and some of its snippets can be seen on the *Instagram* reels as well. In the same way, as *India City Walks*TM uses oral storytelling as its main performance, it is turned into *Instagram* reels and blog-posts. These uploads have a wider audience than the ones who were physically present there. Also, it allows the newer audience to recreate the story as well as re-interpret it in a different manner. Memes and reels are used to reinterpret the slogans and songs, which makes them relevant to the newer audience and people and allows them to influence and to maintain its cultural core.

The performance in a physical space is different from the interactions in a digital sphere as it transforms the meaning of folklore and participation. In a physical performance, the folklore is involved with high energies of the songs and slogans and the participation is one-on-one among all the participants. However, Digital Folklore allows wider participation in the form of reels and posts but does not have the similar impact as of the live performance, even then it puts the online user watching the video or posts in the state of liminality for a shorter span of time. For example, to be able to have a look at the heritage sites along with its historical narrative or the song or chants during the *Jagriti Yatra* will have a different impact in-person and on a digital platform. Digital Folklore is fragmented as the online users can only engage with different and selected pieces of the complete folklore. Even though the reach is wider, the authenticity of the folk can be questioned in the digital space.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the digital platform creates a space for disseminating folklore and turning it into a model of technology and tradition which forms a hybrid ecosystem. It has multiple components where each entity contributes to the system and it continuously keeps evolving in the contemporary context. Hence, the alternative *yatras* functions as

a hybrid folklore ecosystem, where rituals and traditions are performed both physically as well as digitally. *Yatras* provide an inclusive and democratised form of folklore as the digital framework ensures that now folklore transcends the geographical, social and financial factors. It allows users, participants and non-participants to actively indulge in creating modern folklore. The elements also have a relationship with one another in a way that they are dependent on each other and influence each other's perspectives. *YouTube* vlogs, *X* and *Instagram* updates help individuals experience folklore through the digital medium which was not present previously. The rituals that take place during *Yatras* are recreated, never in the same manner but in a spiral-like formation which means that the events, rituals and ideas are constantly changing whenever practiced. Therefore, producing an endless loop of self reflection through *yatras*.

Social media engagement expands the cumulative effect of folklore by producing a mutated version that is diverse, networked, and resists static expression of physical folklore through the vastly hybrid and dynamic digital space. The oral chants and songs disappear after the journey ends but the digital documentation of the same ensures that folklore is a living digital archive and available for future reinterpretations and recreation. So, *yatra* is not just an event but is also an interconnected cultural system that is performed, reshaped and archived. However, due to this the authenticity of folklore can be questioned as a larger platform enables a number of users to create or add to the already existing material. So, the source of the knowledge thus produced remains uncertain. Various historical anecdotes now exist as searchable folklore texts and digital guides that enable a meticulous preservation of folklore. Therefore, folklore is not just preserved but keeps evolving in the digital space.

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