

Folk Traditions of Lullabies: Functional Analysis

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Abstract

Lullabies are known as a genre of music for infants, which are performed at the sleep time of the child by the parent, usually mothers or by the caregivers. The present study is an attempt to understand the functions it fulfils in a cultural context and its evolution to the present day by the lived experiences of forty-seven Pakistani parents. The qualitative research is conducted in Islamabad, Pakistan, to establish the multi-layered meanings embedded in this folk tradition. The purpose of singing lullaby from parent to parent, as folklores is strongly embedded in a geographical context. Yet folklore tradition of the lullaby is a universal phenomenon serving the emotional needs of the child and parents, to the educational and social development of the child. This study is an attempt to understand the latent and manifest meanings of this act in a cultural context.

Key Words: Emotional Expression, Folk Tradition, Lullabies, Music, Parents

Introduction

Lullabies, a Folklore, is a verbal practice transmitted cross-generationally by “word of mouth” and a great source of learning in a specific culture. This study is an attempt to understand the latent and manifest meanings of this act in a cultural context. The sensitive and adaptable mode of lullabies singing evolved as a way to satisfy babies need of comfort at the bedtime, creating childhood memories. It seems that in the current age, this tradition is seen neglected because of a parent’s busy routine. This research is an attempt to fill the gap of this under-researched area and to find the functional attributes of lullabies singing.

Folklore is the combination of two words folk which refers to the common people, and lore means knowledge or tradition. Folklore is thus a traditional or common people knowledge embedded in the cultural context. An expression of a spoken narrative is the result of an impersonal, continuous and slow process of creative activity exercised in each community by consecutive imitation. These lullabies are told habitually by the people and are transmitted to their progeny orally. Folklores serve as a source of entertainment and socialization. Lullabies, as one of the types of folklore, possess the main characteristics of folklore that are change, modification and addition (Priya, 2019).

Lullabies are known as a genre of music for infants, which are performed at the sleep time of the child by the parent, usually mothers or by the caregivers. It has the element of holding the baby in the lap and then singing the song along with the cradle motion to calm and lull the babies to sleep. Lullabies singing is seen as fostering an emotional closeness, and forming an association between music, comfort and security (Baker, 2006), (Mualem & Klein, 2013).

A lullaby also refereed as cradle song in some cultures is a poetic stanza with repetitions a lot to create a rhyming beauty. It is a calming song, usually played or sung to children by adults. The present study is an attempt to understand the functions it fulfils in a cultural context and its evolution to the present day by the lived experiences of forty-seven Pakistani parents. The purpose varies from culture to culture as folklores are strongly embedded in a geographical context. In some societies, they are used to transfer knowledge to the newborn child, and a young mother also learns an oral tradition and ritual of their society. In addition, lullabies are often serving as a means of communication between the mother and child is an indication of emotional bonding of parents and children, maintenance of infant’s undivided attention and nurturing of arousal and sleep behaviour .in the cultural context (Doja, 2014). So, it is quite controversial that it is narrative or not yet have multiple layers of meanings attached to it from its performance as a folk tradition. But the most

significant use of this musical genre is as a sleep aid for the infants; as a result, this music is often simple and replicative.

Literature Review

Research declares lullabies as a universal phenomenon because lullabies existed since ancient times in almost every part of the world (Quddus, 1992). These lullabies have a border context that ranges from culture-specific lullaby readings to medical and psychological studies. Cross-culturally lullabies exhibit different stylistic features that showcase the thought patterns of the culture. (Trehub & Trainor, 1998) ascertain numerous similarities that result from the anticipated listeners and function of the songs. Yet context change, add certain features and take off certain others. The psychological experience of a mother who sings lullabies to a baby can be seen in the poetry of these lullabies. Mothers belonging to different backgrounds felt serenity while singing lullabies to their precious child. It doesn't matter what kind of situation prevails. A mother singing a lullaby living in the war state can share the same intimate experience as a fortunate mother living in a peaceful state.

The word "lullaby" in English can be divided into two parts: "lull" and "aby." Etymologically speaking, the word "lulling," means to hush to sleep, presumably gets its name from same Swedish, German, Sanskrit, and Dutch words. The German and Sanskrit words "lulled" and "lolati" means "to rock" and "to move to and fro," whereas the Dutch and Swedish words "lollod" and "lulla" mean to "hum a lullaby" or "to mutter". The singing of Lullabies contains humming, muttering, and rocking often; consequently, the Dutch, Swedish, German, and Sanskrit word definitions properly combine to produce the English word "lull." The second half of "lullaby"—"aby"—may be derived from "goodbye" or "bye-bye," by way of the mother saying "bye-bye" to her children at night before they fell asleep. (Harper, 2013)

Around the globe, research articles of folk music also incorporate sections on lullabies. For instance, Scheherazade Hassan's article "Female traditional singers of Iraq: A survey" reports multiple genres of music customarily sung by females, with a segment showcasing lullabies in reference to laments (Scheherazade Hassan, 2010). Research also shows that several folk song collections from Germany, Canada and France comprise numerous renowned lullabies in their collection. Additionally, different collections of recorded children's folk songs also contain lullabies. Apart from that, there are all-inclusive collections, recorded or scribbled, devoted to lullabies, for instance, Dorothy Commins's book *Lullabies of the World* contains a huge collection of lullabies (Commins, 1967).

Loris is the word used in the Pakistani context for lullabies. Like a universal phenomenon, Lullabies consists of rhymed and symphonic words. They are usually in the form of poetry and prose while maintaining a certain melody usually chanted by mothers. But it is also observed other female relatives like grandma, aunt, elder sister etc. also sang these *lories* soothe crying children or make them sleep.

One of the important roles of women in family and society is taking care of the children. In other words, the mission of training the next generation is the primary responsibility of the mothers. Mothers encourage children to reach perfection (Doja, 2014). In other words, based on the traditional ideology childcare and household chores were the responsibilities of women in general in Pakistani society (Quddus, 1992). The lullabies play a dual role in reflecting the features of the division of labour and relationship in the family.

Lullabies have often taken as "fuzzy baby songs," but they are far more powerful than they seem because they mirror the cultural aspect of the specific of society and also reveal the universal innocence of humanity in a melodious way (S. Trehub., 2001). In Pakistani culture, a mother's singing in a soft and harmonious tone while soothing her baby is a tradition (Scheherazade Hassan, 2010). Lullabies, help the women to get an escape from the biological limitations and worldly situation by giving them a chance to cherish the world of fantasy.

Different researches illustrate the point that infants have tendencies towards music and mostly referred to as musical beings (S. Trehub., 2001). Hearing the soft mother's voice while lying on the chest and feeling the vibration and smelling the scent of the mother's body affects the overall perception of a lullaby by the baby. Young terms this "multi-sensorial and multi-dimensional, involving perception through all body faculties" (Young, 1995). Mothers use to direct their babies with their voices by softening or hardening, rising or slowing while singing lullabies.

Different researches show that singing of live lullabies creates a positive impact on the physiological functioning and development of premature infants. The regulation of sucking behaviour in infants is also observed with the slow, repetitive rhythmic words. There is a natural tendency in infants to entrain to the

surrounding sounds. Infants are born with an innate musical preference because they beat perception beings in fetal development. The live singing of the lullabies enhances parent-child bonding and also decrease parental stress linked with the intensive care of babies. Consequently, we can say that live lullabies sung by mothers induce relaxation and optimal growth and development. [Loewy & Stewart, 2013]. The mothers have the most important relationship with their children and lullabies are used as a major tool in the process of enculturation of children [Aitken & Trevarthen, 2001], [de l'Etoile, 2006b], [Dissanayake, 2000]; [Trevarthen, 2002] [Scheherazade Hassan, 2010]

Lori, as known in a Pakistani culture or lullabies, send the child to a world of dreams. One of the biggest gifts of God is sleep. It gives comfort and refreshment to us and prepares us to face a new day—these performances characterized by “music like. Musical features also provide a vent for emotional expressions like a mother or care giver’s smile towards a child, kissing on their forehead, or wave their hair. Music helps to bring out a deeper, hidden agenda of emotions [Juslin.P.N & Soloboda, 2001] and symbolic expressions from the world around us [Ilari.B & Glushankof.C, 2009].

Theoretical Framework

The functionalist approach focuses on the function of the folklores and to get an understanding of the meaning. The meaning depends on how people relate the specific item of lore in a specific situation. It’s always what is happening in the group and the context. We cannot isolate the meaning of folklore from the folk people. The term function refers to the purpose of something or someone to play in a given setting. Looking at an item from this perspective allow us to explore what the verbal expression or practice communicate within-group in which it is significant. [Dorson, 1972]. It is not the only way to understand its value; it might change within different groups.

Anthropologists incorporated the concept of Functionalism into folklore. William R. Bascom [1912-1981], in his research “Four Functions of Folklore,” instructed folklorists to pay special attention to look into the social and cultural contexts of folklore. Further, he also encouraged the folklorists to analyze the functions of folklore as well.

Functions of the Folklore

1. Escape is the first function of folklore. Folklore helps individuals to escape in fantasy from the imposed restrictions and frustrations.
2. The second function is validation; folklore also helps the individuals to justify the rituals and institutions of the society. For instance, a particular ritual can be justified by a myth or a proverb could be used to confirm why a specific course of action is correct or appropriate for society. Dowling and Harwood in their study also emphasize on the point that singing is an important vehicle through which enculturation took place. Through lullabies, the process of enculturation started in the early stage of life that help the whole transference of culture in an efficient way [Dowling & Harwood, 1986].
3. Folklore might help in inculcating the moral values of the society in the next generation. Folktales commonly demonstrate moral values and pronounce the penalties of failing to strictly follow these set morals. [W.R.Bascom, 1972]

Functionalists believe education, one of the five chief social institutions, the other four being family, religion, politics, and economics as the most important parts of our society. All of the institutions have a different aspect, but still, these institutions are interrelated and often intersect in the course of daily life [Priya, 2019]. Without education, no developmental process is possible in society. Education shapes the interaction patterns of the individuals belonging to a particular society and also guides them about the ways to interact with other societies as well. Diana Kendall states in her textbook, Education being a social institution is liable for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural values in an organized way. [Kendall, 2006].

4. The fourth function of folklore is social control. In order to ensure conformity to the group folklore might be used to reward and punish individuals. If a person violated the group norms, a traditional song, riddle, or proverb could be recited to express disapproval or to ridicule.

Bascom stated that these functions are the most important ones because each function can contribute to the maintenance of a cultural system through time.

Objectives

Research has explored the lullabies act as a folk tradition and how it contributes towards the society's wellbeing. The research is an attempt to through light on the everyday practice of lullabies among Pakistani parents and caregivers in order to make visible the functional utility and significance of this act in society. The evolutionary growth and the role of cultural context for the functional utility of the folk tradition in the society was the research's primary objective. Functional analysis will generate information for the act's developmental contributions, therapeutic implications, regulatory and educational contributions. By researching at this yet simple act of signing as communication between parent and child, this hopefully is going to create a higher level of awareness and understanding for the gestalt of childcare and understanding of this interaction.

Methodology

The method of inquiry used in this study is a qualitative research design. The open and exploratory approach is used to the lullabies singing as a folk tradition in naturalistic settings and stimuli raised settings. The qualitative data is collected with the help of semi-structured in-depth interviews, participant observations and focus group discussions with forty-seven parents, includes 39 mothers, four fathers and four grandmothers from the Islamabad, Pakistan. Meaning in the context is gained when respondents sang the lullabies. Participant observation led to practice-driven inquiry, opening the view and feelings which largely stay hidden. The multi-layered embedded meanings are explored through the lived experiences of parents and how they experience their own and their children behaviours. This inquiry has investigated the music and state of child-parent bonding through this folk tradition in contemporary Pakistani homes. Purposive sampling is used to select the respondents. The few questions addressed were an exploration of the existential nature of the phenomenon, the contribution in learning and development, why they sing for them and what is the focus in their mind. The research aimed to open new possibilities of inquiry in this under-researched area particularly in the Pakistani context.

Collection of Lullabies Through Focus Group

Suraj jab so jata haie
Chand nikal kar atta haie
shbnam neechay girti haie
dadi aman kehti haie
uss chand pe paryaan rehti haiein
Bachaay jab soo jatee haien
Pariyaan neechee ate haien
Aakar per phailati haia kar par phelatien haien

Translation:

When sun sets down
Moon comes out
Dew drops fall
Grandmother says
On that moon fairies live
When children sleep
These fairies come down
And spread their wings on you

Neel gagan se nindia aye
Anchal bhar kar khushian layee
Chanda mamoon aur sub taree
Neend key doobe saghir sare sooo ja sooo ja anmiee piyaree

Translation

The blue sky sends down the sleep
Bring down happiness along
Moon and all the stars
And everything on sky go to sleep

Sleep o'dear sleep (name of the child)

Results and Discussion

The research has confirmed that most respondents had been practicing this tradition in their home, and they recalled their own experiences of being lulled by their aunts, mothers and grandmothers. The inquiry has incorporated stimulus-response investigation during a focus group to get emotional reflections. Mostly respondents start singing along with the played audios and the grandmothers during the singing during the in-depth interview seems highly emotionally charged, with tears and smiles narrating the memorable experiences of mother-child bonding. Two of the forty-seven participants of the research said that their fathers had lulled them in the bedtime. Culturally childcare is attributed to the females in Pakistani Patriarchal society, yet some exceptions are present where the male parent is also engaged in this folklore tradition of singing lullabies to their children. 72% have told that there wasn't any specific place for this activity while 22 % said that it was only act performed at the bedtime. However, there is a growing tendency of replacing this oral tradition by the music for children at the television, mobile digital apps, iPod and other technological gadgets. While some contemporary mothers said that they didn't found their self-capable of singing and they in the contemporary time make use of digital technology to make their child relaxed by some mobile recorded musical tones. Yet another added to the information that, being a working mother

Analysis of Lullabies

Here Functionalist approach is used for the understanding of lullabies in general, and material of the analysis is collected from a Pakistani context through focus group discussions with mothers and grandmother and semi-structured interviews. In Pakistani context nurturing a child at the infant stage of his /her life is associated with the female gender. Lullabies are usually sung to the babies to relax them and to lull them to the sleep. In Pakistan, the word "Lori" is used for these cradle songs. It also involves singing poetic verses with rock n roll actions to calm the child and to push them in sleep.

All social scientific approaches are functionalist in the sense that they relate these folklores to the wider social arrangement in which they are practiced. The present study of Lullabies has explored for wider possible functions and roles rather than the specific function of this traditional practice. Functions fulfilled are likely to be multiplex rather than single. Content analysis is the popular form of analysis among academicians, who chose several pieces of lullabies for their analysis. The functional analysis enabled to look into the manifested and latent functions of the lullabies. The explanation of phenomena that are embedded and their functionality is context-specific, were revealed through this technique.

Lullabies a form of Popular Culture

Lullabies are elements of popular culture, having specific cultural meanings and significance. These cultural elements have existed for a long period in different nations, cultures and civilization. The lullabies constitute an effective and significant medium for a meaningful desire to calm the child and eventually to take the child into sleep. Determining the exact origins of the primary lullabies as communication with children part of popular culture is a challenging job because of its verbal characteristic. But to be sure, there are lullabies among all nations, and perhaps it can be said that they are considered as the world's first musical works.

Lullabies a Communicative ACT

Lullabies engage both the caregivers and child in a communicative act where the recipient child express feelings of acceptance by the face and body gestures, respondents said: *"my child hides the face in my underarm, seems wanted to be just hearing my sound is what he needs at that moment, if I stop he lifts the neck to check whether I am busy around"*. They were involved in the process of cultural practice, singing and listening to a melody with which, they were familiar with. Communication involves repeating its presentation to evoke a desired response from the baby. Elements of repetition were obvious in this music sharing, which was described as "quite typical" by the mother. It enables the child to utter sounds and learn words. This act of repetition is seen functional in language teaching and thus, a source of enculturation. The child gets that time of sleep, association with the caregivers, mutual love and affection all play a significant role in later childhood development. The utterances of lullabies were selected up in small, simple and fluent words. As a result, it made it easier to learn the vocabulary being sung through these Lullabies. Some expressions like stars, moon, sleeping actions to close the eyes, help them to know and get familiar with the world around them.

Escape in Fantasy

Pleasure is the most valuable experience as agreed by all the respondents who participated in the present study, one of the functions of lullabies. Lullabies poetic verses seem to be incorporating the real-world objects and also fantasy and fictional depictions. In Pakistani culture *Pari* (Fairy) is seen as a part of childhood narrations, so is also seen in lullabies verses as sung by a grandmother during the in-depth interview, "*Chand pe Parian rehe hairi*" (fairies live on the moon "*Uran Khatola*" [space shuttle]). The child is lulled into sleep through these musical expressions. Sleep provides the escape from the worldly daily hectic routine to the mother and child. They are wished through words to have a happy dream with the fantasies of fairies and sparkling stars.

Emotional Aspect of Lullabies'

Singing lullabies as an oral tradition is embedded in the emotions of deep love and affection besides calming the stressed child. This pacifying genre of love by the caregivers is backed by tranquillity, tenderness and adoration expressions of true love sewed in the verbal and ritualistic act of body motions. Mostly children were in the lap of the mother and in the cradle as well as some contemporary mothers in the study found it easier to cradle them in their rockers or cradle cots, but familiarity brings a sense of comfort to the exhausted child.

Lullabies have the potential to be beneficial for both mother and children besides calming and slumberous effect. A lullaby is also seen as the mother's expression for the aspirations she holds for her child and a symbolic representation of the cultural context around them. In view of the respondents "A *Lori* seems to take me back to my childhood", "*A lullaby is the earliest communication to my daughter*". A lullaby is a façade for of mother's expression, which she expresses to her child. Lullabies seem to give emotional experience to both the child and mother. As one of the working mothers said: "*When I sing Lori to a son, the inner mood is revealed in new dimensions which stood in contrast to professional anxiety-you know the sense of perfections.*"

Validating Culture

The functions of lullabies have always been tension relieving, granting relaxation and support with a feeling of security for the children as well as parents. The repetition of the pleasant rhythms used in lullabies provides relaxation and sound sleep to the children. Moreover, the lullabies provide a unique opportunity for mothers to get relief from agony, pains and sufferings. Folklores have always confirming culture, as Bascom suggested in functionalist perspective, in justifying its rituals and societies to those who practice and observe them (W.R.Bascom, 1972). This significantly reduced psychological stress and tensions. The lullabies have a useful medium for the child to learn the language in a natural way. In a way, it strengthens the love bond between the mother and child.

Means of Conformity for Social Norms

Functional analysis of the contents also revealed the unacknowledging purpose of lullabies tradition at the sleep is developing conformity to the accepted cultural tradition of sleep timings. The respondent marked that "night symbols like stars, moon and sky are found in most because these are symbols of night, which is rationally time to rest and sleep". The contents of the lullabies are to the conformity of night with sleep as a social norm. All the symbols like the moon, disappearing sun, stars sparkling and wish to have a sleep to relax the child are basically taming the child to conform to this social norm, i.e. to sleep at the assigned time.

Functional analysis of the data helped to generate values and information for these folk traditions held among society. Functionalism focuses on the meaning of folklore to groups of people and suggests how these groups of people use folklore as a form of communication with the infants and young children by the caregivers.

Conclusion

Lullabies are elements of popular culture, having specific cultural meanings and significance. Singing a lullaby is not a new way to be musical in this world. These cultural elements have existed for a long period in different nations, cultures and civilization. From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that lullabies, which the people formulate, pick up, and carry along as part of their cultural storage. The lullabies constitute an effective and significant medium and have a meaningful and purposeful existence. The research has played a significant role in connecting parent's significant efforts and universally established significance of this folklore tradition.

Besides the primary function of lullabies is to lull the child to sleep while some other includes communication, education, and preservation of cultural heritage, escape and validation. The functions of

lullabies have always been tension relieving, granting relaxation and support with the feeling of security for the children as well as parents. The repetition of the pleasant rhythms used in lullabies provides relaxation and a night of sound sleep to the children. Moreover, the lullabies provide a unique opportunity for mothers to get relief from agony, pains, sufferings and wishes. Therefore, the task of this research was to identify, to compile and to collect different Pakistani Lullabies from the preservation perspective and then through functional analysis to identify their functions. This research will encourage and proved a source of cohesive effects in the community to prevent it from being forgotten as it is our cultural heritage.

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