

Role of Indian Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Development of Society

Abstract:

This paper examines how music, dance, and fine arts contribute to societal development in India—culturally, socially, economically, and politically. It situates traditional and folk practices within institutional frameworks such as Lalit Kala Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi, reviews scholarly literature and empirical studies, and draws on Indian writers and data to analyze the art forms' roles. Employing a qualitative literature-review approach, the paper identifies key areas of impact—heritage preservation, social cohesion, empowerment of marginalized groups, education, and sustainable development. The findings show that performing and visual arts function as vehicles of identity, resistance, unity, and livelihood. The discussion extends to contemporary challenges and opportunities—digital innovation, institutional support, and globalization—and ends with recommendations and conclusions.

Corresponding Author-

Prof. Ashok Shevantrao Jadhav

Affiliation -

Mahatama Gandhi Vidyamandir's
Mahilaratna Pushpatai Hiray
Arts, Science & Commerce
Mahila Mahavidyalaya,
Malegaon Camp, Dist.Nashik -
423105 (Maharashtra)

Email Address-

ashokjadhav1973@rediffmail.com

Received on 10/07/2026

Accepted on 20/07/2026

Published on 25/07/2026

Keywords:

Music, Dance, Fine Arts, Cultural Heritage, Social Development, India, Folk, Classical, Institutions, Inclusion

Introduction:

Art has been intrinsic to Indian society for millennia. Rooted in ancient texts like the *Natya Shastra* and *Shilpa Shastras*, music, dance, and fine arts historically mediated religious, social, and educational values. This research focuses on how these art forms support societal development—preserving heritage, enhancing social harmony, empowering communities, and contributing to economic and sustainable development—in India from antiquity to the modern era.

Literature Review**1. Ancient foundations:**

Natya Shastra designates performing arts as the “fifth Veda,” asserting their role in communicating moral, aesthetic and spiritual lessons to all citizens, not just elites. *Shilpa Shastras* codify the principles of visual arts, architecture and crafts as part of social and ritual practice, embedding arts in the everyday life of communities.

2. Classical traditions and evolution:

Indian classical music evolves from *Sāmaveda* chanting into structured systems of *rāga* and *tāla*, supported by theory in treatises like *Sangita Ratnakara*. Classical dance forms—Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Sattriya—each reflect regional identity, religious themes and narrative traditions rooted in *Natya Shastra* principles.

3. Folk arts and cultural preservation:

Folk music and dance reflect community life, rituals and stories. Their role in preserving regional heritage is highlighted in studies from institutions such as D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, emphasizing transmission across generations and cultural diversity.

4. Institutional support and modern art movements:

Post-Independence institutions—Lalit Kala Akademi (1954) and Sangeet Natak Akademi (1952)—were established to preserve, promote and patronize Indian visual and performing arts nationwide. Lalit Kala Akademi helped define a national modern art identity bridging folk idioms and modernism, supporting artists like Nandalal Bose, Jamini Roy and Abanindranath Tagore.

5. Art and social change:

Visual and performance arts have been used in environmental activism, caste discourse, gender rights, and community engagement. Projects such as the Aravani Art Project, Delhi street murals, and community muralism illustrate how art raises social awareness, empowers marginalized voices, and supports Sustainable Development Goals.

Methods:

This study adopts a qualitative literature-review methodology. Source materials include classical texts, peer-reviewed research, institutional and cultural analyses, and case studies published by Indian scholars. Through thematic content analysis, we extracted key themes: heritage preservation, social inclusion, identity

formation, economic livelihood, and institutional mechanisms. Emphasis was placed on Indian writers and primary sources, avoiding direct copying to ensure originality.

Results**Cultural Heritage and Continuity:**

Music, dance and fine arts—rooted in sequences of traditional teaching—preserve languages, myths, rituals and visual symbolism. *Shilpa Shastras* and *Natya Shastra* acted as cultural repositories long before print media. Folk and classical forms continue oral-aural transmission through guru-shishya parampara, institutions and youth movements like SPIC MACAY, ensuring intergenerational continuity.

Social Cohesion and Identity Formation:

Group dance forms (e.g. Garba, Bhangra, Sattriya) unify communities during festivals and rituals, reinforcing social bonds across caste and class. Institutional festivals and cross-regional artist exchanges (e.g., Delhi festivals under state encouragement) foster unity in diversity.

Empowerment and Inclusion:

Art has uplifted marginalized groups—tribal folk artists, transgender communities, Dalit artists—by giving them expressive spaces and economic opportunities. Eg., the ICSSR-funded BHU project on tribal folk arts foregrounds inclusion and sustainable livelihoods in Northeast India; visual public murals and community art address caste and gender inequities.

Economic Livelihood and Sustainable Development:

Folk arts and handicrafts support rural artisans through cultural tourism, craft fairs, and festival economies (e.g. Jaipur festival, Madhubani painting) tied to Make-in-India initiatives and SDGs. Institutions such as Lalit Kala Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi provide grants, scholarships and exhibitions, enabling artists to sustain livelihoods.

Adaptation in the Digital Era:

In response to COVID-19 and modern pressures, many artists shifted to digital formats—dance films, online festivals and apps—leveraging technology to continue practice and reach global audiences. Innovative works integrate social-justice themes via new media while preserving classical grammar.

Discussion:

The findings affirm that music, dance and fine arts are not merely aesthetic pursuits but foundational to societal development. They preserve cultural memory, unify diverse populations, promote social inclusion and provide livelihoods. Ancient treatises like *Natya Shastra* and *Shilpa Shastras* laid early foundations embracing social and didactic functions of art. Institutions established post-independence played a transformative role in bridging tradition with modern identity and national unity.

Yet challenges persist: funding constraints, competition with mass entertainment, fading guru-shishya parampara, and limited access in rural or low-income contexts. Without continued public support and digital inclusion strategies, the intergenerational transmission of traditional arts may wane. On the positive side, digital innovation and socially aware artistic programming offer new avenues for relevance and empowerment.

Conclusions

1. Traditional music, dance and fine arts form a continuous thread in India's social fabric—from ancient times to the present—fulfilling roles well beyond entertainment.
2. They promote cultural identity, communal solidarity, and dialogue across differences.
3. These art forms empower marginalized voices and contribute to livelihoods and regional sustainable development.
4. Institutional mechanisms—Academies, NGOs, universities, festivals—are critical to sustaining and promoting arts in modern India.
5. Emerging digital media expand audiences and create opportunities, but also pose questions about authenticity, access, and economic equity.

Recommendations

- Strengthen institutional funding: Increase support to bodies like Lalit Kala Akademi and Sangeet Natak Akademi to reach underserved regions and communities.
- Expand youth outreach: Scale SPIC MACAY and similar programmes to rural schools, fostering early engagement.
- Encourage socially engaged arts: Support art projects addressing caste, gender, environment, and health to amplify inclusion and public education.
- Integrate digital platforms responsibly: Provide training and financial support to artists to create digital works with fair compensation and access.
- Document and archive art traditions: Support INTACH and educational institutions to preserve oral histories, folk repertoires and crafts for posterity.

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