

Cadence and Counterpoint: Documenting Santal Musical Traditions

The exhibition, Cadence and Counterpoint: Document Santal Musical Traditions, is a collaboration between National Museum, New Delhi and Museum Rietberg, Zurich and Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal.

The exhibition has been curated by Dr Ruchira Ghose, Dr Marie-Eve Celio-Scheurer and Dr Johannes Beltz. It brings to public view aspects of the intangible and tangible heritage of the Santal community in India, especially Santal musical traditions.

The Santals comprise the single largest tribal community in India. Though spread across the eastern states — Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar and beyond — they form a distinct geography and culture.

The Santals are best known for their rich traditions of dance and music, especially the latter, which has influenced mainstream music in India. Their very distinct culture has attracted researchers, scholars, travellers and explorers into their midst, who have brought back Santal stories and objects. Some of these are now presented in an engaging display in Special Exhibition Hall 2 at the National Museum.



The exhibition presents three types of objects related to the Santal musical tradition. The first are the **musical instruments**, amongst which is the most important *Banam*. A bowed monochord and the only Santal instrument to be categorized as a chordophone, the *Banam* is carved out of a single piece of soft wood.

Banam with motor carriage and human figures
National Museum, New Delhi
NM 65.51

Also displayed are the drums, the *Tamak* and the *Madal*, and different flutes, of the Santal community.



Tamak (single-headed kettle drum)
Iron, leather, wood, 14 x 30 cm
Collection Bhulu Murmu, Navasar Village (Santal Pargana)

The exhibition will feature the lively but languishing art form of the Santal community, the ***Chadar Badar***. This is a unique form of puppetry done on a set with a long pole as base. Rows of beautifully carved wooden puppets dance in formation with the pull of a string and attached mechanism. This performance closely resembles the actual folk dance of the Santal.



Chadar Badar set, Navasar Village (Santal Pargana), 2014, Collection Ravi Kant Dwivedi, New Delhi,
Image Sudhanshu Shandilya © Museum Rietberg

The third set of objects in the exhibition is the *Jadupatua*, or scroll painting. While these paintings are not made by the Santal, they are made for them by another community.

An important part of the exhibitoin is the **documentation** of Santal traditions over time. Photographs, some taken by well known musicologists such as Alain Daniélou and Deben Bhattacharya, document the Santal community from 1950s onwards. Original audio records from 1914 and videos, from the late 1960s up to the present time, are also part of the documentation.



Image Deben Bhattacharya © Jharna Bose Bhattacharya, Paris

The exhibition is an eye into the world of the Santal community, its rich culture and musical traditions.

The Exhibition will be on view at Special Exhibition Hall 2, National Museum, from 15 April till 17 May 2015.