

# THE VARIOUS ASPECTS OF DANCE AS AN OCCUPATION AMONG THE KALBELIAS OF JAIPUR AND PALI



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Kalbelia of Rajasthan are dispersed in larger numbers primarily in the western and south-western regions of Rajasthan, consisting of present-day districts of Barmer, Jalore, Jodhpur, Nagaur, Ajmer, Chittorgarh, Pali and parts of Sikar. (The People of India, 1992). They are currently classified as Scheduled Castes by virtue of their status as a Denotified Nomadic Tribe, as per the government of Rajasthan under the advisory of the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes. The Kalbelia are known primarily for handling poisonous animals like monitor lizards and snakes, and more recently, as practitioners of Kalbelia folk dance. Most sources suggest that they have been an occupational caste group, associated with capturing and performing with snakes (*sapera*), trading venom with sedentary communities, and begging for alms (*"mangna"*). This identity has linkages to a mythological past passed down through an oral tradition which legitimizes their belief in the occupational activities they partake in, especially as snake handlers.



Figure 1 Political map of Rajasthan, places with Kalbelia population in Marwar region delineated.

They trace descent from Guru Kanipav Nath, who was a disciple of Machendar Nath. Though there are varying versions of what led to the association between Kanipav and snakes, the most popular seems to be one in which Machendar Nath's 9 students, also Naths, are seated with covered bowls and asked to wish for an edible. Kanipav wishes for a snake to test his teacher's powers and indeed, finds one on his plate when it is uncovered. Since then, Kanipav and his disciples are known to be associated with snakes. Snake charming involves the act of playing a flute-like wind instrument with a bulbous end, called the *been*, to/at a snake. It is believed that the sound of the been hypnotizes the snake, to which it reacts by 'standing' upright and swaying, often striking in the direction of the sapera. Handlers are also summoned to retrieve snakes from places where their habitation is deemed dangerous to people, such as houses, stables and the like. 'Kalbelia' and 'Sapera' are often used interchangeably, as synonyms of each other. Mr. U.G. Sapera, one of our respondents, believes that the word 'Kalbelia' is a compound of two words 'kaal' (darkness, also signifying cobras in alternate versions) and 'beliya' (to play with).

Saperas were employed by tourist resorts and hotels where they would exhibit their snakes and attract tourists for donations. However, with the implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972), possession and entrapment of snakes and other wild animals was made illegal and their traditional occupation of snake charming was banned. They can no longer put on show their snakes in hotels and restaurants or any other public places. They are liable to paying heavy penalty and be taken to court if a snake is seen in their possession. Other than snake charming, another normative occupation of this endogamous caste group has been ritualized begging. The Kalbelia men would go around villages begging for alms, sometimes with snakes wearing ochre coloured clothing, hence adopting the image of an ascetic. They would beg in a worldly manner and refer to it as "*mangna*" in exchange of various services like curing of snake bites, removing snakes from shops and houses, playing the been and charming snakes for entertainment purposes (Higgins, 2010).



Figure: 2 Kailash Nath, one of the snake charmer from the colony. (source: photo by Arushi)



There are other notable miscellaneous jobs that the Kalbelias perform. Men work as construction workers, healers, wage labourers and a few work as plumbers and rickshaw pullers. Women mostly work within the domestic sphere, taking care of their children and husbands. Outside the domestic sphere, they worked as midwives. They sometimes sell shawls and *gudris* (colourful quilt stuffed with old rags) that they make themselves. Women never go around begging with snakes and they are mainly circumscribed to the domestic domain, keeping themselves occupied with daily chores like fetching water from distant wells, rearing and caring of cattle at home, collecting of wood for cooking etc (Robertson, 1997).

On the parallel, the Kalbelia have now also come to be known as practitioners of a dance form called 'Kalbelia', 'Sapera' or 'Gypsy' dance. Women twirl in black skirts, their attire dotted with colourful embroidery and sequins. Popular discourse suggests that they replicate the supple movements of cobras to the tune of the *been*, as men accompany with instruments such as the *pungi* and *daphli*. UNESCO even classified Kalbelia dance form as an Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010 ("Kalbelia folk songs and dances of Rajasthan" n.d. Retrieved from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/kalbelia-folk-songs-and-dances-of-rajasthan-00340>).

Kalbelia dance troupes have gathered favour to perform transnationally at locations such as Brazil, Russia, and Europe where they represent 'gypsy culture'. (Joncheere, 2015).



Figure 3 Pictures taken from former Sarpanch of Bagru Kannath Sapera's photo album

Before dance was turned into a lucrative business, the Kalbelias used to only perform at weddings and festivals like holi and only men would go around the village singing and dancing with *daphlis* and *beens*, begging for flour, wheat and other things. It was only after ages, that girls started dancing during the auspicious time of Phagan (during Holi). They went into the villages, the girls danced and the men played the *cang* and *sang*. They created major uproar and attracted a handsome amount of donation. Now, the Kalbelia dance parties include both women and men, where women dance and men play instruments like *been*, *kanjri*, *dholak*, *tumba*, *cang*, all associated with the *saperas*. Nowadays, some are licensed by the State Government to perform at state hosted events, along with privately hosted programmes at hotels.

In India, a substantial chunk of consumers of the same are tourists . Rajasthan has seen an average increase of 6.47% in tourist inflow between 2010 and 2017. (tourism.rajabasthan.gov.in). Tourism hotspots such as Chokhi Dhani, which project themselves as microcosms of ‘Rajasthani culture’, reveal that performances almost always include at least one act of Kalbelia. The dance form plays a massive role in popularizing and romanticizing Rajasthani performing arts in the West due to its association with “gypsy culture” and in India due to its role as an exhibit of ‘cultural diversity’ (Joncheere, 2017). Ayla Joncheere in “Representing Rajasthani roots: Indian Gypsy identity and origins in documentary films” talks about the close affinity between the Kalbelias and the gypsy culture.<sup>1</sup> Its apparent association with Gypsy culture made them stand out and garner international recognition. Another important aspect is their traditional songs. The Kalbelias sing while going around the villages begging for supper or while charming their snakes. The songs start with a prayer to their guru Kanipav and then to Mataji, the mother goddess. The act of singing is seen as a devotional performance, as a prayer. *Morubai, Jeder, Awluri, Kamli, Chandiyya and Arrarrarrarra* are some of the famous songs among the older and younger generations. They divide their traditional songs into two distinct categories namely: songs of anguish and songs of joy (Wickett, 2013).<sup>2</sup>

One of us had visited Chokhi Dhani in Jaipur, Rajasthan, months before our actual fieldwork and seen the performances there. We have also been exposed to it due to its popularity among numerous folk dance societies of Delhi University, which familiarized us with this graceful dance form, its elaborate costume and the impressive stunts performed. However, we noticed that there is a stark contrast between the kind of Kalbelia performed at Chokhi Dhani, and those at competitions at Delhi University and other stage performances. Performers at the former belong to the Kalbelia community; they embody the history of the development of this dance form. The latter, on the other hand, are students from diverse social backgrounds who learn primarily from professional choreographers and the internet to perform for one cycle of competitions. Yet, the performances seen at competitions seemed to align more with the popular image of Kalbelia dance propagated by the commercial sphere (consisting of both private and government sectors), in terms of routine and costume. Hence, we wanted to look more into the dance form and the Kalbelia community as a whole.

1. She selected 25 documentary films featuring the artist communities of Rajasthan and did a contextualized content analysis supplemented by ethnographic research among the Kalbelias of Rajasthan. These documentaries try to trace the Indian origin of the Roma as it is believed that the Roma migrated from India to various places of Europe. The present-day Rajasthani communities are portrayed as the descendants of Roma ancestors in India. Some of the notable documentaries are: Romany Trail, Latcho Drom, Cobra Gypsies, The Rajasthani Gypsy caravan. The image of the Indian Gypsies is moulded by a various cultural, political and social issues of Europe. With the formation of the International Romani Union in 1971, efforts were made to unite the Romani community across borders and to create a single Romani identity. In the year 1980s, the world music industry was looking to promote gypsy music and it found a suitable partner in the Rajasthani folklorist scene. Around the same time, the Government of Rajasthan was looking for ways to promote its local culture and the Rajasthani culture catered to the transnational imagery of the Indian Gypsy. These three factors according to Joncheere provided the Kalbelia community with the necessary boost.
2. Wickett’s article “Songs of the Jogi Nath Kalbelia” explores the songs sung by the Kalbelias of Jaisalmer and in the process she tries to decipher the meaning behind these traditional songs



**Figure 4 Kalbelia performers at Choki Dhani, Jaipur.**

Where multiple discourses on Rajasthan, including tourism, offers a ‘royal’ experience fit for kings to its patrons, the people and processes involved in creating that experience remain tremendously overlooked. Among those are the Kalbelia, offering a dance form that has become a forerunner in representing ‘Rajasthani culture’ in most commercial spaces. The spread of various modern avenues for entertainment and the restriction of performing with animals by the law are some factors which have influenced the relevance and feasibility of their traditional occupation, forcing them to move into alternative occupations, some of which are lucrative but most are not. Dancing as a source of income is one of them. The aim of this report is to examine the nature and form of Kalbelia dance in terms of its origin, characteristic elements, and societal perception regarding the dance form

## **2.METHODOLOGY**

Our research project is an exploratory study which aims to analyse the changing forms of Kalbelia dance amongst the Kalbelia community of Jaipur and Pali in Rajasthan. The study was conducted under the Krishna Raj Foundation Fellowships Programme 2018 and it took place over a span of 20 days in Jaipur and Sojat, Rajasthan. Our project aims to:

1. Examine the genesis of the Kalbelia dance, to study the different roles of men and women in performances and explore the relationship between them.
2. Analyse the influence of tourism on the Kalbelia dance form and study the kinds of changes with respect to costume, make up, jewellery, instruments, etc.
3. Look into the societal perception and attitude towards Kalbelia dancers and their social positioning with respect to the rest of the community.
4. To understand the dynamics between the Kalbelia dancers and the state.
5. To study the linkages between Kalbelia dance and snake charming.



## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD

### Kalakar Colony, Jaipur

During our 20 days of fieldwork in Rajasthan, we spent most of our time studying Kalakar Colony in Jaipur and interacting with the people there. Kalakar Colony, as the name suggests, is an urban settlement of artists working in the entertainment and tourism sector of Rajasthan. The colony was set up in the 1992 and predominantly comprises of the Kalbelia community who perform Kalbelia dance, and in some cases, snake charming. In addition to them, the colony consists of the Kathputli community which performs puppet shows, Dholak players who sometimes collaborate with Kalbelias in performances and other communities such as Muslims, Bengalis, Biharis, etc. all of which form occupational communities here. Kalakar Colony was earlier known as Baba Ramdev Kalbelia Colony since this land was legally allocated to the Kalbelias who resided in Peetal Factory, Shastri Nagar.

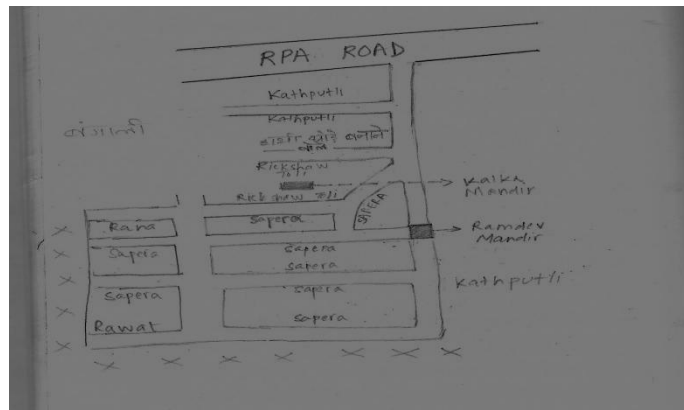


Figure 5 Hand drawn map of Kalakar colony displaying the spatial distribution

It was established in 1992 by the government for residents of Peetal Factory, Subhash Nagar locality who were evicted from their dwellings by Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) and reinstated here. The entrance of the colony is marked by a big black gate and just outside the gate are a few convenience stores and stalls. About 200 meters from the gate, there is a Bhairav temple. In the colony, the JDA has provided each family a plot of dimensions 15x30 feet. They were asked to build concrete (pucca) houses with bricks, given hand pumps and electricity at usual rates. Several, but not all Kalbelia households got an aid of Rs. 50,000 from Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna to build their houses. In addition, each household unit has had to bear the cost of construction of an uncovered drainage system going past the front side of these houses, connecting to the main drain outside colony premises.



Figure 6 Kalakar colony

We visited 10 Kalbelia households during our fieldwork here. A majority of houses had 2 bedroom-cum-living room where we were received. Nearly all houses, except two, had open kitchens which used firewood and traditional stoves (*chulha*) because they were unable to afford a gas connection. Images and idols of gods on shelves, one bed/cot with several mattresses stacked on top of each other, a cupboard were all common items across every household that we went to. Many of the families owned second hand television sets. In addition to this, walls of some houses displayed photos from their dance performances as well as awards.

### **Village Jaisinghpura, Bagru, Jaipur district**

We visited a Kalbelia settlement in village Jaisinghpura, Bagru municipality, 30 kilometres from central Jaipur. They reside together in a premise called '*saperon ki dhani*' which is located in the outermost part of Jaisinghpura. They work mostly as farmhands for rich Rajput landowners. All but former Sarpanch Mr. Kannath Sapera's family lived in dwellings made of tarpaulin and wood or semi pucca houses with courtyards. There were also many half constructed semi pucca houses that residents were unable to complete constructing due to lack of finances. Several of them had goats. Two men also showed us cobras, one of which had been caught in a field and defanged the day before. In comparison, Kannath's house is significantly bigger, consisting of 5 rooms with a large metal gate, cemented compound, and porch. His daughter and sisters have their own concrete houses with shared bathrooms.



**Figure 7 Kannath Sapera showing us his photo album and documents**



**Figure 8 Sapera in Bagru**



**Figure 9 Deras around kannath's house.**

### **Sojat Road and surrounding villages- Raipur, Sabalpura, Chandawal and Dhundhala**

In order to assess the perspective of rural Kalbelia regarding dance as an occupation, we went to Sojat Road, in Pali district. We conducted in-depth interviews with the residents of the villages and deras in Raipur, Sabalpura, Dhundhala and Chandawal on the outskirts of Sojat Road along SH 62. It was observed that they are spatially segregated from the rest of the village in each case. They all live either on the periphery of the villages or completely outside (the Chandawal deras was across the highway from the village). The deras or dwellings in Raipur and Chandawal are completely made out of old pieces of cloth, wood and tarpaulin. They had cots with a few blankets piled on them and a large metal trunk that holds all their possessions. Besides this, each dera had a shrine located a few feet away from the seating/sleeping arrangement, dedicated to worship. One of the deras has a huge water tank, which is replenished by the municipal tanker because there is absence of supply of both water and electricity. Due to the unavailability of sanitary facilities, people of the deras go to open fields.





**Figure 10 Dera in Chandawal**



**Figure 11 Dera in Sabalpura**



**Figure 12 A woman making tea in her makeshift camp in Raipur**



**Figure 13 Women of the Chandawal dera**

The villages in Sabalpura and Dhundhala had pucca houses of two rooms where the entire joint family resides. They also share a common toilet. Generally, all the houses consisting of one room has one bed and a small shrine of various deities. In both the villages, the Kalbelias keep goats for their daily use or to sell milk in order to earn some income. Some of them also keep sheep to sell wool and earn an extra buck. They have also domesticated dogs for protection.

The rural Kalbelias faced discrimination in the villages. They were treated as untouchables by the other communities living inside the village and were shunned when they would go around begging. The deras of Raipur and Sabalpura also faced untouchability. We talked to the Devashi community living in Sabalpura. One of the women we talked to said that the Kalbelias are treated as an out caste because they are alcoholics and they eat meat. Another old man who was a Rajput denied to acknowledge their presence in the village and said, “ *hum toh unko Ram! Ram! bhi nahi bolte*” ( we don’t even greet them).

## **SAMPLING FRAMEWORK**

The sampling technique that was adopted was a combination of simple random sampling and purposive sampling. We conducted intensive interviews with our respondents.

We met Mr. D N Sapera, a constable in Rajasthan Police and also a Kalbelia through the DG of Police’s office (Jaipur Zone), who introduced us to the residents of Kalakar colony. Mr. Sapera has relatives at Kalakar Colony, but they know him also because he’s the only one among them to have a permanent job, and a prestigious job with the Police at that. He lives in government allotted quarters with his wife and children. We would travel to Kalakar Colony everyday from one of our parents’ houses, whom we were living with.

During the course of our fieldwork in Kalakar Colony, we had found that one of our respondents, Vimla, was the granddaughter of the former Sarpanch of Bagru, Kannath Sapera. With the help of a local contact from the RPF office who knew the location, and Vimla’s reference, we were able to reach the Sarpanch’s house and spend an afternoon there.

Before leaving for Sojat we visited Ms. Gulabo Sapera at her home and conducted a two hour long interview with her.

Further, to study the attitude towards Kalbelia dance as an occupation amongst both performers and non-performers, D N Sapera recommended that we go to Sojat tehsil in Pali (263 km away from Jaipur) as he knew about some Kalbelia deras there. We were also advised by the local RPF post about the existence of deras around here. After spending two weeks in Kalakar Colony, we arrived at Sojat Road, from where we visited deras and villages in Chandawal, Raipur, Sabalpura and Dhundhala. We stayed at a private guesthouse for three days and visited the deras in Raipur and Sabalpura on the first day. The next day we went to the deras in Chandawal and Dhundhala. Mr. Puran Chand, a resident of Raipur helped us gain access to the deras, who also acted as the interpreter.

### **Sample Size:**

Our sample size in Kalakar Colony in Jaipur was 94 respondents. In the villages, we visited 5 deras and 2 pucca households.

### **Tools For Data Collection:**

Our research methodology involves gathering relevant secondary data from literature including articles, documentaries, theses and government reports. Our primary data comprises of



qualitative and quantitative evaluation by using tools of data collection such as structured and unstructured interviews, questionnaires and participant observations. In addition to this, case studies are used, wherein intensive and in-depth personal interviews have been carried out. Each of us kept a field diary to note the details regarding the experiences they encountered during the course of the study.

### **Timeline/ Sampling Process:**

The entire process of data collection can be summed as below:

1. Data collection started in Jaipur, at a restaurant called Spice Court. The manager put us through to the troupe which had been performing there from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. every evening as per contract. This is where we conducted our pilot study. This first interaction with the Kalbelias dispelled our assumption that Kalbelia community performs only Kalbelia form of dancing. On the day of our visit, the said troupe was performing Ghoomar.
2. Next, we visited Chokhi Dhani, which is an ethnic resort where the arrangement was contrived to resemble a “traditional Rajasthani village”. The premises encompasses a wide variety of activities ranging from elephant rides and magic shows to installments depicting historical wars. Our primary interest was directed towards the multiple gazebos which sheltered various folk dance troupes performing Ghoomar, Kalbelia, potter dance, etc. When a gazebo attracts enough people, the performers stationed there begin their dance for the onlookers. The Kalbelia performers seemed tired and told us to meet them after 9 pm because the crowd dwindles after dinner time. Meanwhile, we spoke to the other artists to gauge information about their living conditions, interactions, life history, and the like. We spoke to two Kalbelia families consisting of three generations out of which one of the families was performing Ghoomar. Both families gave us a lead by directing us to a locality called *Pani Pech* in *Bani Park*, Jaipur, which became our next area of research.
3. After observing Kalbelias in the commercial setups of Spice Court restaurant and Chokhi Dhani, we followed up by visiting an urban settlement housing artists in Pani Pech, Bani Park, known as *Kalakar Colony*. Bani Park is close to Jaipur Junction railway station. Several Police and Railway offices are located in this area. It was 17 kms away from where we were staying in Jagatpura. Here we met Mr D.N. Sapera. Even though he did not reside in the Kalakar Colony, he had some relatives there and he was familiar with the people and the colony itself. He is a highly respected member of the Kalbelia community and in the initial days, he took us around and we were able collect relevant data as people were cooperative. However, in the later days when Mr. D.N. Sapera was unavailable, we would go to the colony on our own.
4. We made frequent visits to the colony during the 20 days of our fieldwork, we collected data from 10 Kalbelia households with an average of 8 members and three generations per household.
5. Then we proceeded to Bagru for a day. There we got to interview Kannath Sapera, who was active during the conception of Kalbelia as a formal dance form in the 1980s. He was one of the first organisers of Kalbelia performances and had his own group called ‘Kalbelia Cultural Group.’ However, after several years of organising performances and travelling to many countries, he had to give up his job as an organiser in order to retain his position as the Sarpanch.

6. Next, we went to Gulabo's residence to conduct our interview. We called her several times to fix an appointment prior to our visit.
7. To further our study of rural Kalbelias, we went to Sojat, in Pali district (265 km from Jaipur). We visited village settlements and deras in Raipur, Sabalpura, Dhundhala and Chandawal. The settlements were either permanent or semi permanent and the reason that they gave for giving up their nomadic lifestyles was because their current occupations, of manual labour did not require them to move frequently.
8. After staying in Sojat for three days we came back to Jaipur and resumed our visits to the colony. Simultaneously, we started compiling our data. On the last day of our fieldwork, we went back to the colony to attend a Kalbelia wedding.

## **RESEARCH DILEMMAS**

Some unanticipated problems that we encountered are as follows:

1. Cultural events are at their peak during tourist season, which falls between the months of October and February. Since our fieldwork lasted only 20 days in June, there was a dearth of performances to observe.
2. Since the duration of fieldwork was limited, we feel that rapport-building was not as intensive as we would have liked it to be. For example, it took three days of interacting with some of our respondents at Kalakar Colony for them to admit and show us the cobras many had kept secretly.
3. Most of our respondents, especially in the villages, tracked time as per the Hindu calendar which is a system we were not aware of. This resulted in an initial hiccup in determining responses accurately.

### 3.FINDINGS OF OUR FIELDWORK

#### Origin of the dance form:

Kalbelia dance form traces its genesis in Gulabo Sapera's (a.k.a. Gulabi in Europe's 'gypsy' dance circuits) conception of the same, developed over a few years of her practicing it. She is credited by all dancers within the community with "inventing" the dance form in the 1980s. They refer to their troupes as "Kalbelia Dance Parties". In our interview with Gulabo, she describes the emergence of Kalbelia dance and its impact on her community. Her house is situated in a colony in Subhash Nagar, around 2 km away from Kalakar Colony, which is relatively more upscale than the latter and houses a diverse range of people. We reached her place on a Wednesday, at the time. Her younger daughter led us through a front room where her husband sat on a cot and into the living room which was decked with awards, mementos and pictures. Gulabo walked in smiling two minutes later, dressed in a loose kurta and salwar, her hair in a half updo and head uncovered. Contrary to what we were expecting after having to make several phone calls to a disinterested sounding Gulabo, the family seemed cordial when we finally met. She seated herself on a sofa adjacent to ours and answered all questions patiently for two hours, pointing and showing us the artefacts in the room simultaneously. Early into the conversation we realised that she was almost reciting her story, considering the practise she has with giving interviews for newspapers and television.

As all four of us sipped tea, Gulabo casually told us the story of how she was buried alive within moments of being born because she was a girl. She was later rescued by her mother and protected by her father throughout her childhood, for fear of being harmed again. Her father was a sapera by occupation, who took Gulabo with him when he wandered for work ("saanpdikhana"). She would dance to the tunes of the *been*, as did the snakes. According to her, dancing and music have been an integral part of Rajasthani "culture", with revelers performing on occasions such as weddings, festivals, satsangs, and other celebrations. Gulabo was participating at one such event in the annual fair at Pushkar in 1980, when she caught the attention of Rajasthan tourism department officials Tripti Pandey and Himmat Singh. After persuasion from the officials, she eventually began performing at stage shows in Rajasthan, and abroad, despite threats of excommunication from her village Panchayat in Ajmer. Pandey had even gifted her a pair of *ghunghroo* to persuade her to dance at programmes. Her performance in Washington D.C. in 1985 was the first abroad, where she already began teaching dancing during lunch break. The performances there garnered her appreciation from erstwhile Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi for representing India's 'cultural diversity', and acceptance in her community for bring them 'respect' and 'honour'. It was when they saw her on a magazine cover that her village community finally gave her credit.

Gulabo had 'created' a routine through trial and error over the span of a few years, utilizing bodily flexibility to employ acrobatic acts and other 'entertaining' manoeuvres along with unit movements common to other Rajasthani folk dance forms until a pattern stuck. She gradually became a sensation among the Kalbelia, and went on to teach the dance to young girls from the community. As a result, the community not only found a fresh means of earning a living, but also, she proudly claims, ceased to commit female infanticide. Her elder daughter is a local

movie actor, whereas the younger is in school. She has an elder son who is also a ‘fusion dance’ performer. Her daughters spoke of carrying forward their mother’s legacy.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 14 Awards won by Gulabo



Figure 15 In conversation with Gulabo

### Costumes, Jewellery and Make up:

The costume is an integral part of Kalbelia dance and the black embroidered two-piece dress, called the *poshak*, gives this dance form a distinct identity. In her interview, Gulabo narrates how when she was 10 years old, a couple of years after she first began dancing, she wanted a black, sparkly dress similar to actor Reena Roy’s in the movie *Aasha* (1980). However it was not easy to acquire the dress. She had to perform all over the village in order to collect some money with which she bought the dress and got it decorated. Coincidentally, she was to perform the very next day and chose to wear the black bejewelled dress which sparkled under the bright lights of the stage. She described how everyone in the audience was in awe of her performance and they were completely mesmerised by her dancing as well as the shining dress, some even referring to her as an ‘angel sent from above’. Owing to the fervent response it got her, Gulabo

3. In its criteria for selection, UNESCO’s list of Intangible Cultural Heritage , provides a set of parameters that monuments, objects and “traditions or living expressions”[1] must meet in order to be qualify the list. It must

*“(1) be recognized by communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals as part of their cultural heritage, (2) be transmitted from generation to generation and be constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history and (3) provide them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity”. [2] (“What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?” n.d. Retrieved from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>).*

The definition of “tradition” implies historicity of practices that have been progressively transmitted through generations. Despite its relatively nascent nature, Kalbelia dance qualifies these requirements to be deemed a “tradition”. According to Ayla Joncheere, it is a constructed tradition, which has made its way to UNESCO’s list and international performance circles through a combination of economic and political factors that enable the creation of a “fictional past (or ‘staged authenticity’)” (ibid.92) to account for its claim to legitimacy. This dance form, in terms of origin, is not necessarily an expression of the “cultural heritage” of the Kalbelia community as much as the product of strategically posited circumstances that utilized, and created, incidental factors to create the aura of cultural heritage.

Thus, the notion of traditional authenticity that programmes, brochures and troupe managers convey about Kalbelia dance is substantially constructed. However, we found that families involved in the business of dance incline towards allocating it the status of their heritage and conceive of themselves as bearers of the same.

started wearing the black shimmery dress to more performances. Over time, the black dress became a staple to Kalbelia dance. Previously, however, when men and women use to dance for alms they use to wear simple hand sewn clothes. Men wore a long cloth and women wore long shirts. Both were ochre in colour (bhagva) and they decorated it with hand embroidery.



**Figure 16** Pooja showing us the jewellery she wears for her performances made with *Julia/ beads*

Several popular discourses propagated by hosts, sponsors, managers and the like propose that the black colour of the dress is symbolic of the Indian cobra, with which the community is closely associated. The modern myth around the same suggests that since the ban on snake charming in 1972, snake charming alternated to men playing instruments to no longer snakes, but women-who represent the reptile. The notion of replication of snake-like movements in their dance is a direct corollary to the symbolic connection between the colour of their attire and cobras. Moreover, another reason this connection seems to have been contrived is apparent in what we found at Chokhi Dhani regarding the same. Since it was the peak of summer in mid-June, the dancers avoided wearing black clothes and instead wore light colours such as yellow, pink, etc to negotiate with the heat. It follows that dancers modify their ‘uniforms’ according to season and convenience.

As for jewellery, we found that several dancers make their own jewellery out of small, variegated beads called *julia*, *rukdi* or *cheera*, many even selling them to earn extra income. One of our respondents at Kalakar Colony, Ms. Rajbala Sapera showed us the process of making the headgear and necklace with the help of threads and a needle. It is completely up to the maker to design the elements of the jewellery as they like, however, a basic shape and size to all items is maintained. Jewellery includes *ghunghroo* , *borla (mang tika)*, *nath (nose ring)*, *teeka* , *baju-band (arm band)*, *kankari (waist tie with bells)* and *churi ( bangles)*. Performers have the right to choose how they want to design their uniform, as long as the standard elements of colour and form are maintained.

Dancers use store-bought makeup. They have traditionally held the knowledge of making kohl out of charcoal and snake venom, which they would also sell. Snake venom was also used to make consumable herbal medicine, including eye drops to hamper the onset of myopia and cataract. However, our respondents failed to describe the process, one of them even claiming it to be written in the *shastras*.



### **Role and relationship between men and women:**

A troupe of Kalbelia dancers, in most cases, consists of family members from a single or joint family. Usually, the entire household participates in the performances, undertaking activities of dancing, singing and playing instruments. The women dance, whereas the men accompany with instruments such as *baja*, *dholak*, *nagada*, *dhol*, *daphli*, *chung*, and *been*. Rajbala informs that women change costumes to transition into *Bhavai* or *Charri* dance forms while the men hold the fort by singing and playing music continuously. Men do not participate in dancing even if they know it or are fond of it. A few men, on some occasions, do acrobatics and perform stunts like blowing fire through their mouth (“agni fire”). Men also take on the role of organisers of dance parties and we did not find a single case where women were part of the organising process. Since performers are part of a family, there is a personal and intricate relationship between the dancers and musicians.

We found that during recent times in Kalakar Colony, the dancers have begun collaborating with other communities such as the *Kathputli* and other *dholak* players. Unlike earlier, the Kalbelias have become more accepting of interaction with other communities and actively seek assistance from musicians who would enhance their performance, even if they belong to a different community and are men. This comes across as unconventional, considering the otherwise strict rules of interaction between women and other men not related to the former by blood, let alone men from a different caste. Gulabo’s collaboration with French composer Titi Robin, which has won accolades, has played a role in normalizing collaborative efforts between men and women, albeit under supervision.

Apart from dance, a common occurrence we noticed in every family interaction was that the women would stop talking the moment a man took over to answering our questions. In several instances, especially in villages, the women pretended to not understand questions regarding menstruation and puberty if men were within an earshot. These instances go on to show how notion of “sharm” and “lihaz” governs interaction between men and women. The community practices strict endogamy and is patrilocal in nature. However, we noticed deviations in Kalakar Colony, where several men practised the ‘ghar jawai’ system, living with their wife’s family. In all such cases, the family was a troupe of performers and took in husbands from either other performing families, or those who were engaged in higher paying permanent jobs. When wives are taken in, however, the in-laws decide her role in the family. Apart from caste, class also plays a role in the process of spouse selection.

### **Influence/ Impact of Tourism on Kalbelia dance:**

Our review of secondary literature suggested that the popularisation of Kalbelia dance practice was a product of globalisation, domestic tourism and its deep association with gypsy culture. Through our fieldwork we found that this mass appeal as well as tourism has heavily impacted the Kalbelia dance. In terms of the dance form, the Kalbelias have started incorporating and assimilating various other dance forms into their performances. For instance, they have integrated famous Rajasthani dances such as Ghoomar, Bhawai and Chari. Ghoomar involves

multiple dancers twirling in and out of a circular formation (derived from the act of ‘ghoomna’). In Bhawai the performer dances while balancing on the head up to nine matkas placed vertically on top of each other, and standing on the rim of a steel thali, teasing by shifting balance from one foot to another. The element of suspense is aroused to keep the audience entertained. Chari is performed while balancing an earthenware or brass chari (pot) on the head, the inside of which is lit up on fire by using oil lamps and cotton. Additionally, dancers may do a variety of gimmicks to enhance amusement such as performing on shards of broken glass or swords. Kalbelia employs several acrobatic feats in addition to regular dancing, such as picking up rings or currency notes with eyelids or the mouth in the chakrasana/upward-facing bow pose, and/or several combinations of these. Apart from changes in the dance form, we also found that even though songs sung by Kalbelias in their native language were a crucial part of the Kalbelia dance performances, they have been completely replaced by popular Bollywood songs and well-liked Rajasthani melodies such as *Ararara*.

With widespread recognition and being identified as representative of Rajasthani culture, the Kalbelia dance has successfully gained more public as well as private employment opportunities. Our field visit to Chokhi Dhani, which claims to give tourists the experience of the real “Rajasthani culture”, revealed how Kalbelia dancers are able to create stable jobs for themselves. The dancers at Chokhi Dhani were quite satisfied with their jobs because they provided them with housing, food, basic amenities and even healthcare benefits for their family members. Hence, we found that rise of tourism provided Kalbelias with work at various places such as hotels, restaurants, resorts, cultural programmes, etc.

Along with this, the international fame and enormous appreciation amongst foreigners that the Kalbelia dance garnered, paved the path for opportunities for the Kalbelias to perform and teach their dance to others. Foreigners, especially Europeans were fascinated by the Kalbelia dance and its close association with gypsy culture. We found that most of the Kalbelia dancers had visited abroad at least once in their lifetime and based on their contract they stayed there for 3 to 6 months. Paris is one of the top destinations that most Kalbelias have been to. With respect to reception and audience response, we found that they felt their dance form is better received in countries abroad. This is because their dance was highly appreciated by foreigners due to its uniqueness. Foreigners also showed deeper eagerness to learn the dance and international audience were more responsive and appreciative of their art. Most of the dancers have foreigners as students who pay them monthly to learn the Kalbelia dance form.

### **Status of the Dancers:**

Amongst the Kalbelia dancers of Kalakar Colony, we found that there exists a positive outlook towards their occupation of dancing. Through this dance, they believe, their community has got an identity both nationally and globally. It has created more employment opportunities and led to their economic upliftment. This view persisted in some village areas as well- in Sabalpara village, some families saw dance as a skill they wish their women possessed. They felt that it was smart of the Kalbelia living in the city to turn dance into a lucrative business. They perceived it as “hoshiyaron ka kaam” (work done by skilled people)

However, we also found severe prejudice against the occupation of dancing within the Kalbelia community itself. After visiting Kalakar colony in Jaipur for a couple of times and talking to numerous Kalbelia households, who were predominantly dancers and were part of various dance parties we started to sense a pattern. While talking about social mobility or societal acceptance in general, our respondents succinctly mentioned that within the city or abroad they face no form of discrimination. However, in the villages they face prejudice because of their occupation. The Kalbelias living in the villages have conservative views and tend to question the morale of the parents who send their daughters for dance performances and scrutinize the character of the women with malicious intent. So they are looked down upon by the people of their own community. One of our respondents from one of the deras in Raipur was quick to answer that they contempt such occupation and equated it with lack of honour. He said, ***“itne bhi bure din nahi aye kiaurto ko bahar naachne bheje”*** (we are not so impoverished as to have to send our women to dance for an income). They deny having any family in the city or Kalakar colony who are dancers. Even though they are more well off than the Kalbelias here, they are strictly against sending their women out to dance. This view became evident when we interviewed the Kathputli walas (puppeteers), who live in a street parallel to the Kalbelias, in Kalakar Colony. They are spatially segregated from the latter and it was visible that they are far less economically well off than them. Their floors are made of mud, roofs thatched, and puppet-making straw lying everywhere in their living quarters. Unlike the Kalbelias, the women in the Kathputli community do not go out for performances, and are mainly involved in housework and puppet making. Even though there is a huge divide between the two communities economically, the Kathputli women looked down on dancing as an occupation because in Rajasthani culture, women never went out to work and the Kalbelias were sending their women to work and in turn exposing them to all kinds of men which led to their ‘character’ being questioned. Similarly, this strong opinion against dancing was held by some of the Kalbelias in rural areas. In villages, we found that some Kalbelias were highly disapproving of the dance and they did not want to be associated with the dancers in cities. This stigma against dancing has been prevalent since a long time as Gulabo Saperia in her interview mentioned how she was excommunicated when she first began dancing in the 1980s as it went against the norms of the Kalbelia community.

### **Process of Acquiring Shows/Programmes:**

The Kalbelia Dance Parties perform at numerous private and government shows. Acquiring government shows become easier when they are registered with the state government. They are issued a government approved license which provides them with opportunities to participate in governmental programmes and events. They get the chance to represent the state nationally and internationally. However, private shows are economically more favourable to them. The government has a set rate which amounts to about twenty five thousand rupees per troupe, per performance. However, in case of private shows, the rate could increase depending upon the employer’s allocation of funds. They acquire private shows with the help of mediators/contractors. In the process of procuring jobs, the Kalbelias highlighted the exploitative nature of the contractors, who frequently try to benefit off the dance troupes by misappropriating a large amount of their money. In an account narrated by one of the dancers in Kalakar Colony exemplified the deep neglect on part of the government towards the dancers.

In the year 2011, the dancers that were hired for Rajasthan Diwas were not given their full payment. Each dancer was promised an amount of Rs 800 each. After confronting the organisers for their delayed payment, they were paid the usual rate of Rs 200, whereas they were promised Rs 800 each. Seeing the plight of the dancers, Gulabo Sapera took out a rally, barefoot, dancing across the city under the scorching heat to get all the dancers the payment they were promised. The authorities were still indifferent towards their demand and that's when Gulabo, along with all the dancers initiated a hunger strike. In order to control the situation which was visibly getting out of hand, the organisers agreed to pay Rs 600 to each of the dancers, instead of Rs 800 that was promised earlier. In this process, Gulabo was also accused of unethically appropriating money from the dancers by acting as their group leader. But Gulabo refutes all these allegations. The rally taken out by Gulabo had a powerful impact and it in fact got the government involved. At the end of the rally when the authorities agreed to negotiate with the dancers, one of the main demands put forward by Gulabo was the removal of the role of mediators as they were taking away a large chunk of the dancer's hard earned money under the garb of getting them private shows. Another demand that was part of Gulabo's agenda was the increase of the dancer's wages.

As these dance troupes travel abroad, their finances are taken care of by the agencies that hire them. On an average they abroad for a period of 3 months. Their travel and living expenses are already paid for and they receive a salary of around 2-2.5 lakhs. For the domestic shows they receive around Rs 25,000 each. This is only during on season (October- February). During off season (March- September) their salary as well as their working hours are cut short. They work for a mere three hours in the hotels and resorts they employ them and pay an amount of Rs 5000 each. During the off season they survive on the savings done during the peak season. ( See table 3 in Appendix)

### **Role of the State:**

The Kalbelias were of the opinion that even though the state provides them with employment opportunities but there was a lack of effort made by the government for the overall development of the community. Amongst the Kalbelias living in the Kalakar colony, there was a clear divide between those who were dancers and those who were engaged with snake charming or did other miscellaneous jobs like wage labour. This financial disparity was because of the lack of diverse opportunities for the Kalbelias as a whole. There was a lack of investment in the cultural capital of the community from the side of the government who did not fail to use the Kalbelias for their dance form in the portrayal of the state's rich cultural heritage. Listed under the SC category, the Kalbelias find it extremely difficult to compete with the other communities in the same list in order to benefit from the reservations made for them in the job or education sector. They demand to be listed under a separate list of Denotified Tribes (DNTs), also known as Vimukta Jati. In addition, they need separate reservation in school and colleges and in the employment sector under this list. One common feature across the community, whether the village or the colony we visited was that all the respondents were in possession of all the government identity cards which occasionally facilitated them with certain facilities. They had their work permit, BPL card, SC certificate, the women head of the families had their Bhamashah card (state-sponsored initiative), and the dancers who went abroad to perform also had passport. While in the colony, we met Mr. U.G Sapera, formerly a snake charmer and now an instrument player in one of the Kalbelia dance troupe. He is an active member of the voluntarily formed DNT

committee which was formed to give the Kalbelias proper political representation and conflict resolution. One of their agenda was to be listed separately under SC-DNT category in order to have more chances of reservation in terms of education and employment opportunities. Despite years of effort, U.G Sapera laments that the state government has been unresponsive to their needs. Mr. D.N Sapera is another active member of the same committee.

### **Aspirations:**

In terms of aspirations, the Kalbelia community in Kalakar Colony held two different views. On one hand, the Kalbelias acknowledged that education is indispensable in today's world and viewed it as something that needs to be sought after. Most of the parents felt deep remorse as they were unable to go to school at all or had to quit school midway in order to help sustain their families. This is why some parents were determined to send their children to schools. In an instance, one of the men from Kalakar Colony stated *“aaj kal padhai ke bina kuch nahi ho sakta”* (nowadays there is nothing without an education) and he looked at us and said *“hum bhi toh chahte hai ki humari ladhkiya aap jaise padhe likhe aur kuch kare”* (we also want our daughters to study and become something in life like you girls) These parents were also found to be open minded with respect to the career options that their children wanted to undertake. We noted that the younger generation were more inclined towards education and schooling. The number of school dropout are relatively low and we came across respondents who were in high school or recent graduates, one even held a Masters degree. However, another strong view that prevailed amongst the Kalbelias was that the parents wanted their children to continue the dance form. This came from a deep seated sense of pride towards their culture and community and they considered dance as ‘pushteni kaam’ (traditional work) that needed to be maintained. This effort to preserve and make Kalbelia dance flourish in the near future is also something that Gulabo mentioned in her interview with us. Gulabo aspires to establish a school in Ajmer where she plans to teach the dance as well as handicraft. Through this school, she hopes to take the Kalbelia dance forward and spread the art form extensively and also provide more women with avenues of employment. Kannath Sapera's effort to establish the ‘Rajasthan Sapera Mahasabha’ also holds significance for its attempt to mobilise resources for self-interest of the community. The main aim of this organisation, which will encompass all the Kalbelias in the state of Rajasthan, is to provide health and education benefits to the community which they have been devoid of for the longest time. (See table 5 in Appendix)

### **Linkages between snake charming and dance:**

Traditionally, the community has a close affinity with snakes. Their guru Kanipav was blessed, which made him invincible to poison and the community follows the path laid down by their guru and lives the life of an ascetic. They are traditionally nomadic and they lived in the forest. Snakes became an important part of their identity and associated way of life. It is believed that their guru Kanipav accorded them with the duty of curing snake bites among other social responsibilities because of which Snake charming became their traditional occupation. The former Sarpanch of Bagru, Kannath Sapera was himself a registered snake charmer and he had a license to show mongoose and snakes at resorts and hotels. Before him, his father did snake charming and cured people of snake bite as he was well versed with vedic knowledge. People preferred going to the Kalbelia when bitten by a snake rather than going to the hospital because in rural areas hospitals were far away and the anti-venom injections were expensive. But with the implementation of the Wildlife Protection Act, snake charming was made illegal. This



robbed the community off their traditional and only source of income. Kannath made multiple efforts to prevent the ban but he all his efforts proved to be futile as it was eventually banned completely. He talked to various media outlets and even went to the court after his brother was arrested multiple times because he did not have a license. After the Act was implemented, the issue of new licenses was stopped and the government also stopped the renewal of old license. Kannath argues that the camels and the elephants which are kept in the resorts for amusement purposes are being mistreated and kept captive but they have not been made illegal. Moreover, the snake charmers take absolute care of the snakes as killing of a snake in their community is considered as a sin, “maha paap.” It is a common belief amongst the community that snake charming is their traditional occupation, and if they accidentally harm or kill a snake they must earn penance. Kannath asserts how the government took away their traditional occupation but they did not provide them with an alternative option to earn a living. Charles Higgins in his study drew a direct correlation between snake charming and Kalbelia. He argued that after the Wildlife Protection Act was implemented, the people from the community started taking up dance as an occupation. However we don't have the necessary data to indicate any causal relationship between the simultaneous drop in snake charming and rise in Kalbelia dance form.

## 4.CONCLUSION

Through our research findings, Kalbelia dance as an occupation appears to have two distinct sides to it. On the one hand, it seems to be transforming the lives of the dancers for the better. It has endowed the Kalbelias with an identity, both nationally and transnationally, and it has put them on the world map. Coming from the marginalised sections of the society, the dance has facilitated upward mobility, economically and socially, albeit only for the dancers. Kalbelia dance with its visual appeal and uniqueness has garnered appreciation and respect everywhere, especially by a European audience, which is keen to learn this dance form. Hence through dance, performers are able to gradually raise their standard of living. In her interview with us, Gulabo mentioned that now with the widespread recognition of the dance and its practitioners, other communities in some villages are more accepting of the Kalbelia community as a whole. However, the caste system is still entrenched in their society and even though dance has given them some acceptance in the community, it has not abolished discrimination or untouchability against the Kalbelias entirely, especially in rural areas.

Kalbelia dance has also promoted a sense of freedom amongst female dancers. They appeared to be quite pleased with their position in the community and they look forward to their foreign visits. They were visibly elated with their exposure to the Western culture as they identified it with freedom and individuality, which is lacking to a certain extent back home. Dance as an occupation has given them an opportunity to act as a “breadwinner.” Hence, they are now perceived as an important part of the community, rather than just dependents.

However, apart from the undeniable positive impact that dance has caused on the lives of the Kalbelias, we also found negative implications of dancing as an occupation. Traditionally, Rajasthani culture condemns public dancing, rendering dancing as vulgar and morally corrupt. Kalbelia women who undertake dancing as an occupation are put under heavy speculation of being prostitutes and considered disreputable. We observed this view to be shared amongst Kalbelias- especially those in villages- and other communities. One of the men in Raipur village mentioned that despite living in abject poverty, he would never “send” their women to dance, insinuating the link between dancing and prostitution. Besides this, even though the government takes pride in broadcasting the Kalbelia dance as representative of Rajasthani culture and uses them to promote and advertise cultural diversity of the nation, we found a deep discontentment of the Kalbelias with the State. More often than not, the government benefits financially and fulfils its own national interests through the Kalbelia dance but fails to acknowledge their abysmal living standards and disregards their demands for better facilities and provisions.

After interacting with the Kalbelias and understanding their conditions, we can indicate that Kalbelia dance and its massive popularity has been beneficial to the Kalbelia dancers alone and not permeated into the rest of the community. Overall, our research tries to trace the various elements that went into the making of the Kalbelia dance form as it is known today.

Eric Hobsbawm gave the term “invented tradition” which he defines as “a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.” (Hobsbawm, 1983, p.1). He argues that by

definition, 'traditions' may appear to be old on the surface but in fact, more often than not, they have a recent inception and which sometimes turns out to be invented. Taking cue from Hobsbawm's definition of 'invented tradition', we can argue that Kalbelia dance with its fairly new genesis and its dynamic nature is in fact, an invented tradition. This is because the conception of Kalbelia dance can be traced back to the 1980s as it was single-handedly curated by Gulabo Sapera, which was later picked up by the rest of the community and transformed into a lucrative business.

Similarly, Ayla Joncheere in her article on 'Kalbelia Dance from Rajasthan: Invented gypsy form or traditional Snake Charmers' Folk Dance'(2017) argues that even though Kalbelias are related to 'snake charming' and are seen as traditional gypsies, the link between the Kalbelia dance and snake charming is completely artificial. She argues that Kalbelia dance practices do not have deep historical roots and it is only a 'constructed tradition' used to cater to global markets and fit into the Indian state's attempt to enhance and project cultural diversity at that time. This is how the dance was given the legitimation of a folk dance and the Kalbelia dancers went from being mere entertainers to folk artists representing Rajasthani and gypsy culture. Moreover, the dance with its close association to gypsy culture gave the Kalbelia dancers a massive international market, especially among Europeans. (Joncheere, 2017) Despite the fact that Kalbelia dance can be classified as a substantially constructed tradition, most of the families that we interacted with during the course of our fieldwork indicated a strong sense of pride towards their dance form, which they saw as a cultural heritage that they wanted to carry it forward as legacy.

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## 6.APPENDIX

**Table 1:**

These tables display the distribution of respondents at Kalakar Colony in terms of age and sex.

Age	frequency
0-15	29
15-30	37
30-45	16
45-60	12
<b>Tota l</b>	<b>94</b>

Most respondents fall in the age category of 15-30, while those in 45-60 are least in number.

sex	frequency
F	49
M	45
<b>Tota l</b>	<b>94</b>

The number of women (49) is higher than the number of men (45).

**Table 2**

This table displays the distribution of respondents according to their occupations.



KEY	OCCUPATION	Frequency
D	Dancer	18
L	Labour	10
U	Unemployed	4
S	Student	15
M	Musician	12
NA	Too young	15
H	House Wife	18
R	Sapera	1
G	Manager	1
Total		94

Here, the practitioners in categories “Dancer” and “Housewife” are all women.

“Too young” encompasses all children and teens under the age of 14 years, i.e, minors, who are legally prohibited to be employed as per child labour laws.

**Table 3**

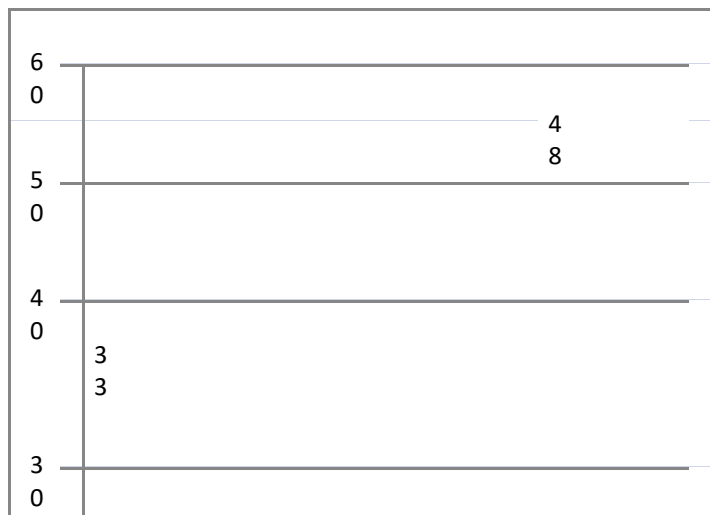
Key	Nature of employment	Frequency	Percentage
S	Seasonal	33	35.1%
T	Temporary	11	11.7%
C	Contract	2	2.1%
NA	NA	48	51.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

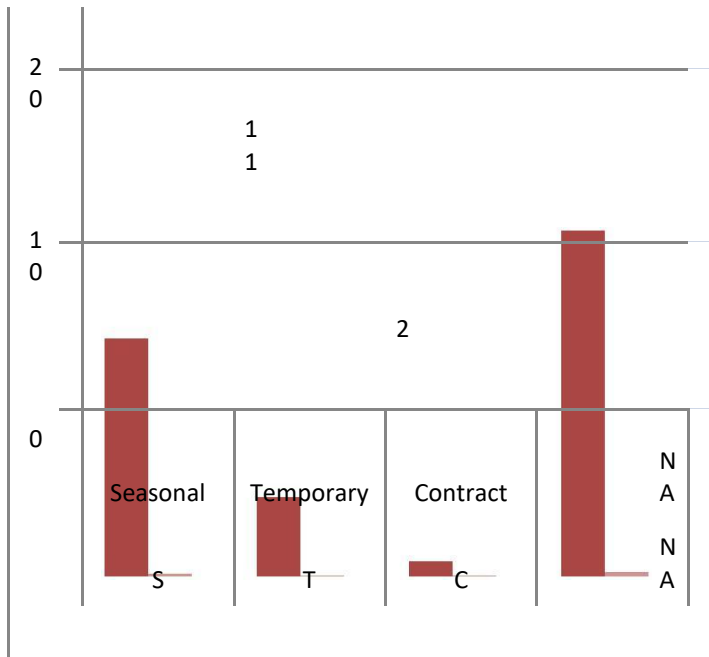
**Seasonal-** Kalbelia dancers and music performers (men and women)

**Temporary-** irregular jobs as vendors, construction work, etc

**Contract-** contract based construction work

**NA-** children below 14, unemployed, housewives





Among the employed, the highest frequency is of men and women who work in dance troupes as dancers and musicians, respectively.

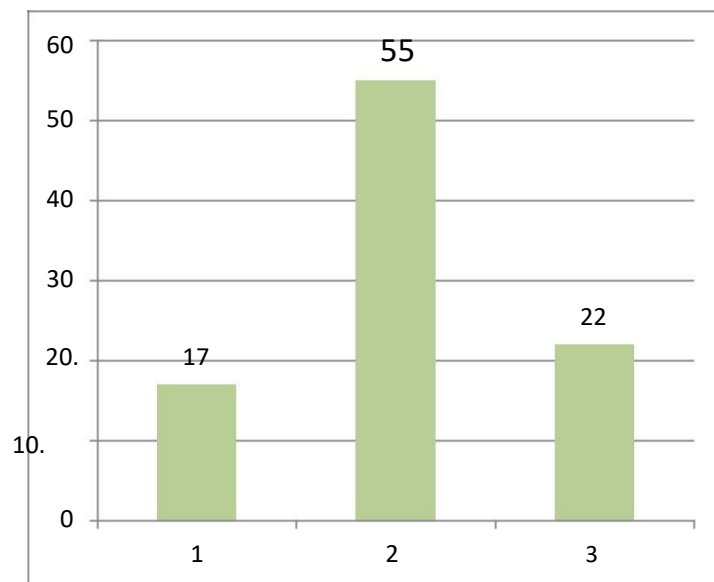
**Table 4**

Generation	Frequency
1	17
2	55
3	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>

**Generation 1-** 45 years and above approx.

**Generation 2-** 20-45 years approx.

**Generation 3-** 0 to 20 years approx.



To understand the pattern of shift in occupation, we divided our data set into the number of generations it encompasses. Generation 2 of primarily middle-aged respondents is the highest occurring frequency.

occupation	generation
snake charmers+begging	0
performers1	1
performers2	2
students	3

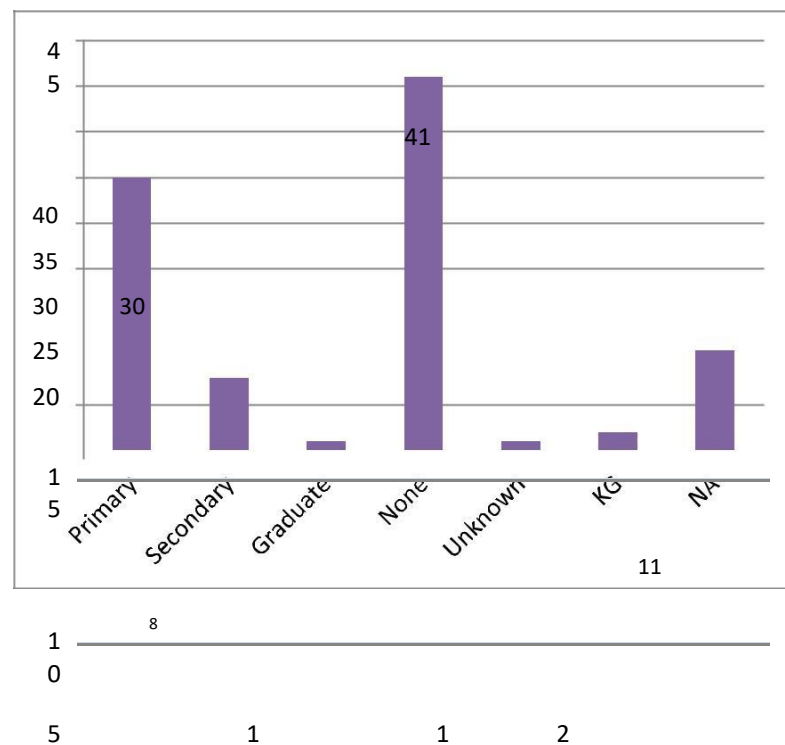
Generation 0 represents the parents of people from generation 1, now deceased, who were primarily snake charmers and lived on alms. It is seen that Generations 2 and 3 have been primarily performers, the other source of income being manual labour. The most recent Generation 4 focuses mandatorily on attaining formal education before choosing a future occupation.

**Table 5**

Qualification	Frequency
Primary	30
Secondary	8
Graduate	1
None	41
Unknown	1
KG	2
NA	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>94</b>

**None-** formal education not pursued

**NA-** children below 5



0

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## PHOTO GALLERY



Women in Kalakar Colony cooking on a *chulha* outside the house. The smoke from burning firewood has stained the walls



Entrance to Mr. D.N. Sapera's government quarter



Mr. U.G. Sapera making a map to show us the spatial organisation of Kalakar Colony



Nitin from the Kathputli community shows us  
his skills at Kalakar Colony



Mr. Kannath Sapera after our interview at Bagru





Picture of gathering during Phagun taken from  
Mr.Kannath's album



Chatting with Mr. Kannath's family, Bagru



Firewood accumulated in piles at a dera in Chandawal. This will be burnt to make charcoal and sold. Charcoal pigments colour the sand black.



Dera in Chandawal, Sojat, Pali district



Talking to the bride on the evening of her wedding,  
Kalakar Colony

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