



The Popular Folk Dances of Odisha

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Abstract – The majority of Odisha's communities have a folk culture that include folk dance, theater, art & crafts, music, rituals, stories, and ballades, among other things. Our rural lifestyle and agricultural community still retain the Odishan traditional culture. Folk dances preserve tradition and continuity while incorporating fresh inspirations. Folk dances continue to be popular throughout Odisha's many groups. Our rural lifestyle and agricultural community still retain the Odishan traditional culture. Folk dances preserve tradition and continuity while incorporating fresh inspirations. Folk dances are easy and impromptu. They are easier to pick up as there aren't any intricate or ceremonial motions or movements. Folk dances are passed down from one generation to the next, and while performers are allowed a lot of creative freedom, the fundamental structure always stays the same. Folk dances can be done in groups or solo. Group dances are more prevalent and represent communal or group thought. A crucial component of these dances is singing. While the dancers occasionally sing, other times they move to the music of another ensemble. This research paper explores the principle of popular folk dances of Odisha, a state located in the eastern part of India. The paper analyzes the cultural and historical significance of these traditional dances, examining their unique features and identifying the underlying principles that govern their performances. Through a detailed exploration of various folk dance forms such as Ghumura, Sambalpuri, and Dalkhai, the paper delves into the rich heritage of Odisha's folk culture and its influence on contemporary society. By highlighting the intricate nuances of these dances, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the principle of popular folk dances of Odisha and their importance in shaping the cultural identity of the region.

Keywords: Culture, Dance, Folk, Odisha, Traditional Dances, Cultural Heritage, Performing Arts, Artistic Expression, Ritualistic Dance Forms, Folklore, Music and Rhythm, Costumes and Ornaments, Festivals and Occasions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Odisha's culture is a synthesis of many different civilizations and religions. No other state in India possesses the same level of Odisha's cultural fusion. In contrast to other regions, Odisha's culture is diversified due to a multitude of contacts that have shaped many aspects of it, such as its tribal, folk, and religious traditions. Odisha has a long and rich history of artistic creation that dates back to prehistoric times. Odisha boasts a distinct legacy of artistic culture, ranging from intricate and elaborate temple buildings and sculpture to a diverse range of folk handicrafts. Odisha's dazzling traditions, which have been preserved from ancient times in her architectural and sculptural forms, earned her the nickname "Utkal." "The land of excellence in art" is what "Utkal" implies. In general, rock-cut caves and structural buildings are the two categories under which Odishan architecture falls. The term "Odishan culture" refers to the fundamental mental traits and quirks that all Odishans have, regardless of language, religious, or geographical differences. In Odisha as

well as in India, several religions have arisen at various times. Odisha is an old area that has hosted the Dravidiāns, āryans, and tribal people. It has also served as a meeting place for individuals of different religious beliefs. The inhabitants exhibit a blend of several styles of brahminical devotion, including vaishnavite, shaivite, śākta, gāṇapatya, and sourā. Religions have flourished in the past in spite of the rise and fall of empires headed by rulers patronizing and propagating their own faith with tolerance and compassion to the existing religion.¹

Odisha's cultural pattern is significantly different from that of any other state, with a vast and unique perspective derived from its ancient legacy. It is more than just following social conventions and acting professionally; rather, it is a complex, harmonious expression of the many perspectives, methods of thinking, and lifestyles that make up our people. Cultural pluralism is a product of cultural tolerance. The social and political integration of individuals with diverse lifestyles and ideologies within a single community or transnational state is known as cultural pluralism. The folk dance helped to unite society as a single, cohesive cultural group. Folk dances will always be an essential component of communal life, even though they are occasionally connected to particular events or social groupings. The majority of their traditional dances are accessible to the entire community. Odisha's folk dances are amazing and visually captivating. Chaitighoda nacha, also known as the dummy horse dance, is one of the most well-known folk dances in Odisha. Other popular dances include ghoomra, paika, ranapa, danda nacha, bharat lila, dalkhai, kathi nacha (stick dance), medha nacha (mask dance), sakhi kandhei nacha (puppet dance), prahlad nataka, patua, kela ketuni dance, dhap dance, jhoomar, baunsarani dance, naga dance, and ruk mar nacha, among others.²

1. SAMBALPURI FOLK DANCE

Odisha's folk dances are amazing and visually captivating. Even if you don't always comprehend the lyrics, the earthy, rhythmic foot tapping music fills your senses and makes you want to sway a leg or two. Dance joy is created by the combination of the drum rhythm, melodic music, elegant body motions packed with unusual positions, and easy steps. The vivid and exquisite costumes, embellished with vibrant beads and silver accessories including colorful headpieces that jangle and clang with each flowing motion, evoke the essence of the rustic, traditional flavor.³



The western region of Odisha is the source of the Sambalpuri folk dance. Usually, this dance is done at celebrations like Dusshera. "Dalkhai" is the most captivating and well-liked presentation. Its most outstanding characteristic is its dazzling foot motions, which are interspersed by teaming pauses. Sambalpur, which takes its name from the ruling goddess "Samalai," has a unique cultural character. Women and young girls perform Dalkhai, Rasarkeli, and Jai phula, which, as their names imply, originated in the western region of Odisha. The lyrics "Dalkhai bo, Rasarkeli bo, Jai phula bo" introduce each stanza and allude to the dancer's girlfriend. Typically, communities celebrate holidays like Dusshera, Bhajijuntia, Phagun Puni, Nuakhai, etc. with performances like this. Rangabati is one of the Sambalpuri songs which have become famous worldwide.⁴

2. PAIKA DANCE

Paika dance is a very energizing dancing style that is only performed by young boys or guys. Eastern Odisha is where this dance style began. Its name is derived from the Sanskrit term Padatika, which means infantry. It is full of customary physical activities that are done to the sound of the dhol while holding a sword and shield. Dancers who dress as warriors, or "Paikas," perform battle scenarios. The best part of this traditional art form is how quickly and precisely the steps are performed.⁵



3. CHAITEE GHODA

During the month of "Chaitra" (March–April), the fisherman caste, also known as the Kaibartas, perform this folk dance. It is a celebration of their goddess, Vasuli Devi. To the accompaniment of dhol and mahuri, the dancer mounts a bamboo horse that is exquisitely adorned with colorful frilled fabric pieces, beads, and tiny bells. The locals join the dancer as she travels across the village in a circular fashion.⁶



Dummy horse dance is another name for the Chaiti ghoda dance. It is a well-liked traditional dancing style in Odisha. A folk dance performed by the fishermen's community. Chaiti stands for the chaitra month of the year, which is from March to April. In Odisha, a horse is a horse at the full moon in Vaisak, which occurs from April to May. It is connected to the coastal power sect, and the display team has characters that aren't the same for men and women as music partners. While Rautani portrays Rauta, the female co-singer and dancer, the masculine figure Rauta is the primary singer and commentator, delivering the most of the narrative. Funny anecdotes and impromptu banter bring Dancing to life.⁷

4. DANDA NACHA

Even with the awful heat wave that has been sweeping the state in March and April, people in the state celebrate Danda Nacha, a dance that punishes the body with religious fervor, with great fervor. Exhausting yet completely dedicated are the Pani danda, performed in the water, and the Dhuli danda, conducted on the ground. This dance, which honors Goddess Kali, is performed by men alone and features drums and cymbals. Many regions of south Odisha celebrate the danda nacha, especially in the Ganjam district.⁸



5. KELA KELUNI

A nomadic ethnic tribe known as the Kelas live off of collecting snakes. The humorous and intriguing Kela-Keluni folk dance is a sight to behold. The main theme of the narrative is the predicament of Kela, who is married to two Kelunis, and how he makes ends meet while attempting to satisfy each of them. The ghuduki, a common string instrument, is typically played in this by the Kela. The Kela Keluni dance was written and performed by the late Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, together with Jayanti Ghosh and his wife Laxmipriya Devi.⁹



6. CHHAU NACHA

The Sanskrit word chhaya, which meaning shadow, is the root of the term chhau. The Mayurbhanja Chhau has won people over and won hearts all over the world. Folk and tribal themes, as well as stories from mythology like the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharat, are enacted in this dance genre. The Vira rasa and the Rudra rasa are the two primary rasa that rule the dance. Musical instruments such as the Mouri, Chad-Chadi, Dhol, and Dhumsa are used to accompany songs.¹⁰



7. RANAPA NACHA

In South Odisha, the cowherd people still dance on ranapa (stilt). The crowd is mesmerized by the young guys as they perform symmetrical steps to the tunes of the Mahuri and Dhol, tying their feet to the bamboo stilts. The songs are replete with compliments on Lord Krishna and his thrilling childhood adventures.¹¹



8. GHUMRA NACHA

The Ghumra is an Odisha traditional dance from the Kalahandi area. One of the combat instruments that was gathered to defeat the demon king Mahisasur is said to have been the Ghumura instrument, which was created by fusing the veena of goddess Saraswati with the dambaru of Lord Shiva. A pitcher-shaped drum called a ghumra is fastened around the dancer's neck. They dance to songs that tell tales of hunting adventures as well as the joys and hardships of daily life, all while playing the drum. The dancers do complex leaps, pirouettes, and maneuvers at a rapid pace.¹²



9. KARMA NAACH

In Sambalpuri, karam, or karma, literally translates to "fate." During devotion of the deity or goddess of fate (Karam Devta or Karamsani Devi), who the locals believe to be the source of both good and ill fortune, this pastoral Sambalpuri traditional dance is performed. It lasts for a few days and starts on Bhadra Shukla Ekadasi, the eleventh day of the bright moon in the month of Bhadrava. The Binjhal, Kharia, Kisan, and Kol tribes, as well as other scheduled class tribes in the districts of Balangir, Kalahandi, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, and Mayurbhanj, are fond of this. This dance is performed in honor of Karamsani, the god who grants fertility and bountiful harvests. Following the puja, there is singing and dancing to the sounds of a cymbal, drum, and other instruments. The youthful charm and vigorous dance performance, paired with vibrant costumes of vibrant red fabric adorned with peacock feathers and expertly crafted ornaments made of tiny conch shells, transport both the performers and the audience into a state of trance and ecstasy. Men and women participate in this dance and stay absorbed in it the entire evening. The young lads' deft movements while holding a mirror reveal the customary routine of making love while



singing and dancing. The dance is occasionally done by a group of boys, occasionally by a group of girls, and occasionally by both sexes together. The subject matter of songs constitutes the description of nature, invocation to Karmasani, desires, aspiration of people, love and humour.¹³

10. BAAGHA NAACHA

The Tiger Dance, or Baagha Naacha In the Subarnapur district's Binka and Sonapur, Sambalpuri folk dance is performed throughout the month of Chaitra. The dancer (who is a man only) covers his bare body with black and yellow tiger stripes and adds a matching tail. When a group of people gathers, one or more dancers travel from home to house, and the dance starts. The music for the dancers is provided by a bell musician and a drummer. All that is involved in the dance is rhythmic acrobatic movement. They dance, hissing all the way. Berhampur also has tiger dance performances at the Thakurani Jatra.¹⁴



11. GOTI PUA

In the Indian state of Odisha, gotipua is a traditional dance genre that predates Odissi classical dance. For ages, young males in Orissa have dressed up as ladies to execute this ritual in celebration of Jagannath and Krishna. A group of lads who perform acrobatic figures based on Radha and Krishna's lives carry out the dance. The guys start learning the dance at a young age and continue until they reach puberty, at which point their androgynous looks alter. Gotipua (goti-pua) is the word for "single boy" in Odia. Famous for its Gotipua dancing troupes, Raghurajpur, Odisha, is a medieval hamlet close to Puri. The Mardala is the main percussion instrument used in the traditional Odissi music that accompanies the Gotipuas dance.¹⁵



The males do not cut their hair; instead, they tie it in a knot and weave flower garlands through it to become elegant feminine dancers. They use a mixture of red and white powder to make up their faces. To create the illusion of longer eyes, kajal, or black eyeliner, is applied liberally all around the eyes. The bindi, which is typically spherical, is put on the forehead and has a sandalwood pattern all around it. The face is decorated with traditional paints that are exclusive to each dancing school. Over time, the outfit has changed. The Kanchula, a vibrantly colored blouse with sparkling embellishments, is the customary outfit. Nibibandha is an embroidered silk fabric that resembles an apron and is worn over the legs and fastened like a ruffle around the waist. A pattasari, a thin piece of cloth of around 4 meters (13 feet 1 inch) in length and worn firmly with equal lengths of material on both sides and a knot on the navel, is still worn by certain dancers as a symbol of tradition. Nevertheless, a more recently created, simpler-to-wear garment frequently takes the place of this traditional attire. Dancers adorn their bodies with intricately beaded necklaces, bracelets, armbands, and earpieces. A painted design has taken the role of nose-piercing jewelry. Wearing ankle bells draws attention to the rhythms that the feet tap out. The soles of the feet and the palms of the hands are painted with alta, a crimson liquid. The bells, jewelry, and costume are revered.¹⁶



2. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the popular folk dances of Odisha are not just a form of artistic expression but an integral part of its cultural heritage. These dances showcase the rich tradition and history of the state and are performed during various occasions and festivals. The music, rhythm, costumes, and ornaments used in these dances have a deep social significance and are reflective of the community's beliefs and values. From ritualistic dances like the Dalkhai dance to the celebratory dances like the Sambalpuri dance, each dance form has a unique style and narrative. The classification of these dance forms can aid in preserving and promoting their uniqueness. Overall, the principle of popular folk dances of Odisha is a testament to the diversity and richness of Indian performing arts and cultural traditions. The principle of popular folk dances of Odisha is a rich and vibrant cultural heritage that is deeply embedded in the state's history and traditions. Through our research, we have explored the various forms of folk dances that are practiced in Odisha and have highlighted the key principles that underpin them. We have seen that these dances are not just a form of entertainment, but also play an important role in the social and cultural life of the communities that perform them. They are a means of expression, celebration, and communication, and serve as a link between the past and the present. Furthermore, we have observed that the principles of these folk dances are deeply rooted in the values and beliefs of the people of Odisha. They reflect their love for nature, their reverence for their gods and goddesses, and their close ties with their communities. In light of this, we believe that the study of popular folk dances of Odisha is not only important for preserving the state's cultural heritage, but also for understanding the social, cultural, and historical context in which these dances have evolved. We hope that this research will inspire further study and appreciation of Odisha's rich and diverse cultural traditions.

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