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FORMULATION OF MORAL & SPIRITUAL VALUE AMONG THE CHILDREN THROUGH CHHAU DANCE

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ABSTRACT

Chhau is one of the most renowned tribal martial dances of India. The dance is known as Purulia Chhau in West Bengal, Seraikella Chhau in Jharkhand, and Mayurbhanj Chhau in Odisha. Since the dance is believed to have originated in the Purulia district of Bengal, it is known by this name in the state. Purulia Chhau differs significantly from its counterparts in other Indian states and has distinctive characteristics of its own. It is internationally renowned for its beauty and perfection. Purulia Chhau is performed on the Sun festival, which falls in the Chaitra month of the Hindu calendar (Bengali month), i.e., March-April as per the Gregorian calendar. However, it is not limited to the festival; the dance can also be performed on other occasions in the state. For instance, in 1995, the Chhau Dance was chosen as the theme for West Bengal's tableau to be displayed on the Rajpath in Delhi. The dance is themed on the epic stories of 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata'.

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INTRODUCTION

Purulia district is one of the twenty-three districts of West Bengal in eastern India. The city of Purulia is the administrative headquarters of the district. The territory of the present-day Purulia district was part of Banga, one of the 16 Mahajanapadas, according to the Jaina Bhagabati Sutra, and was also part of the ancient country known as Vajra-Bhumi. During the medieval period, the territory was considered part of the Jharkhand region. Little is known about Purulia before the British East India Company acquired this territory by obtaining the grant of Diwani of the Subhas of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa in 1765. By Regulation XVIII of 1805, a Jungle Mahals district composed of 23 parganas and mahals, including the present Purulia, was formed. By Regulation XIII of 1833, the Jungle Mahals district was divided, and a new district called Manbhum was constituted, with its headquarters at Manbazar. The district was vast in size and encompassed parts of the Bankura and Bardhaman districts of present-day West Bengal, as well as the Dhanbad, Dhalbhum, and Seraikela-Kharsawan districts of present-day Jharkhand state. In 1838, the district headquarters were transferred from Manbazar to Purulia. Since the formation of the district, it was withdrawn from regular administration and placed under an officer called Principal Assistant to the agent to the Governor-General for the South Western Frontier. The title of the principal officer was later changed to deputy commissioner by Act xx of 1854. Finally, in 1956, the Manbhum district was partitioned between Bihar and West Bengal under the State Reorganization Act and the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act, 1956. The present Purulia district was established on 1 November 1956.

The district is currently a part of the 'Red Corridor'. There was significant movement or struggle to establish Purulia by a local association called 'Lokshabek Singha', and its leaders respected Rishi Nibaran Chandra Dasgupta, Atul Chandra Ghosh, and Labynaprabha Ghosh. For a long time, the establishment of Purulia district, then still Manbhum district, and its language and culture have stirred the minds of the people of Purulia district, in company with Bihar, now Jharkhand, and its surrounding regions. Nowadays, in the districts of Purulia and Perturb, people still take pride in their local areas. After the petition was made to Purulia based on geography, society, and economy, the people of Purulia remembered its name, thus establishing a connection between the oldest Mangham, which was characterized by cultural differences, and the present-day Purulia district, the Bengali language, and the people of Mangham.

The Geographical Background of Purulia



The geographical background of Purulia lies between 22.60° and 23.50° North latitudes and 85.75° and 86.65° East longitudes—compass declination 0 degrees 22 degrees W. The geographical area of the district is 6259 km². This district is bordered on the east by the Bankura and Paschim Medinipur districts, on the North by the Bardhaman district of West Bengal state and the Dhanbad district of Jharkhand state, on the West by the Bokaro and Ranchi districts of Jharkhand state, and on the South by the West Singhbhum and East Singhbhum districts of Jharkhand state. Purulia is the westernmost district of West Bengal, with all-India significance due to its tropical location, its unique shape, and its role as a funnel. It funnels not only the tropical monsoon current from the Bay of Subtropical parts of North-West India but also acts as a gateway between the developed industrial belts of West Bengal and the Hinterlands in Orissa, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh. According to the 2011 census, Purulia comprises 2,687 villages, 21 Police Stations, and more than 10 towns, with a density of 468 (the lowest density in West Bengal). Purulia district is rich in rivers, earning it the nickname "Land of Rivers" among the people of Purulia. The rivers of Purulia are named as follows: Kansai, Kumari, Shilai, Damodar, Subarnarekha, Totko, etc. Purulia district is surrounded by several hills, including Ajodhya, Bagmundi, Joychandi, and numerous smaller hills known locally as 'Dungri'. All the above aspects significantly impact the culture of Purulia. We are proud to be a Purulian.

The district of Purulia is popularly known as the country of Chhau, which is gaining worldwide recognition. Deficiency is a common problem among the people of Purulia district; yet, the community of Purulia practices its culture, which holds a good position among the cultures of India. Purulia has a rich cultural heritage. It has a mixed culture of Bengal, Jharkhand, and Orissa, as it was a part of these states at various times. From archaeological evidence to local festivals, every cultural event in Purulia has a distinct tribal touch. Mainly living in rural areas and preserving many of their socio-cultural values, the rural people of Purulia have deep roots in their traditions. The distinctiveness of these is well demonstrated in the sentiments and feelings of the population, which are marked with a splash of colours and often entwined with pathos, romanticism, velour, and social consciousness. Purulia has a distinct Folk culture, including Jhumur, Tusu, Bhadu songs, Natua, Machari, Jao-pata dance, Sadhu dance, and Nant dance, among others.

Chhau is one of the most renowned tribal martial dances of India. The dance is known as Purulia Chhau in West Bengal, Seraikella Chhau in Jharkhand, and Mayurbhanj Chhau in Odisha. Since the dance is believed to have originated in the Purulia district of Bengal, it is known by this name in the state. Purulia Chhau differs significantly from its counterparts in other Indian states and has distinctive characteristics of its own. It is internationally renowned for its beauty and perfection. Purulia Chhau is performed on the Sun festival, which falls in the Chaitra month of the Hindu calendar (Bengali month), i.e., March-April as per the Gregorian calendar. However, it is not limited to the festival; the dance can also be performed on other occasions in the state. For instance, in 1995, the Chhau Dance was chosen as the theme for West Bengal's tableau to be displayed on the Rajpath in Delhi. The dance is themed on the epic stories of 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharata.' The most popularly used themes (ragas) are Vira and Rudra, symbolizing power and strength. In the countryside performances of Purulia Chhau, there is no levitated stage; instead, the dancer performs on flat ground, with the audience encircling them. When performing in a show or on a broader stage, an elevated platform is used for the performance. Loud beats, trumpets, and instruments like drums and marui accompany the dance. It begins with a drumbeat, followed by an invocation to Lord Ganesh, the Hindu God of wisdom and prosperity. The dancer is supposed to wear heavy, colourful head masks and perform the steps with vigour. Chhau dance, also spelled as 'Cha' or 'Chhau', is a semi-classical Indian dance with martial, tribal, and folk origins, originating in the eastern Indian states of West Bengal, Odisha (formerly Orissa), and Jharkhand. It is found in three styles named after the locations where they are performed, i.e., the Mayurbhanj

Chhau of Orissa, the Seraikella Chhau of Seraikella and Kharswan districts (historically Odia princely states) of Jharkhand, and the Purulia Chhau of West Bengal. The dance ranges from celebrating martial arts, acrobatics, and athletics performed in festive themes reminiscent of folk dance, to a structured dance with religious themes found in Shaivism, Shaktism, and Vaishnavism. The stories enacted by Chhau dancers included the Hindu epics, the 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharata', the Puranas, and other Indian literature. The dance is traditionally created and performed by males, and is regionally celebrated exceptionally during the spring every year. It may be a syncretic dance form that emerged from a fusion of classical Hindu dances and the traditions of ancient regional tribes. The dance is egalitarian, bringing together people from diverse socio-economic backgrounds in a festive and spiritual atmosphere.

Etymology of Chhau: Some modern scholars believe that the word Chhau is derived from the Sanskrit Chaya (shadow in English, the image of marks). Others linked it to the Sanskrit word chadma (disguised), yet, as Sitakant Mahapatra suggests, it is derived from the Odin language word chhauni (military camp, armor, stealth). There is an excellent collaboration between the Chhau dance and its plot. In the drama, we find that the main character takes on a key role and brings much enjoyment to the audience with his diverse acrobatics. Through the character's speech, the central theme of this dance will be focused on the audience. In the whole story of the dance, we find a contrast between good and evil. It creates a debate, a fight to secure their rights. So the plot is essential. After much battle between good and evil, the good will ultimately win. The artistic characters of Chhau, who wear masks for dance, and their acrobatics aim to delight the audience, highlighting the heroism, bravery, emotions, hopelessness, and monstrosity of the characters. However, their head is covered with masks in the expression on their head and the body language, with vomiting surprisingly focused in the dance. Some tribal castes from the Purulia district of Bengal, such as Kurmi-Mahato, Bhumij, Rajwar, Sabar, Dom, Sahis, Santal, Munda, Hou, and Orang, participated in the Chhau dance. According to anthropologists, they are the post-generation of the Woodlander proto-Australoidea. On the western side of the Purulia district, bordering Odisha & Jharkhand, the Zamindars were accompanied by some knights or pikes armed with swords, lathis, and various other weapons to protect themselves and their properties. These people are from the lower caste of our society. In their leisure time, they practice dances such as the Pike dance, Natta dance, Dali dance, and Vuing dance, among others, at their camp. Soon, these camp practice dances evolved into the Chhau dance, which is now renowned worldwide.

Musical Instrument



The dance is typically performed at night in an open space to traditional and folk melodies, played on instruments such as the reed pipes, mohuri, and shehnai. The reverberating drumbeats of a variety of drums —Dhol, Nagada, and Charchari —dominate the accompanying music ensemble. Chhau is an integral part of the

culture of these communities. It binds together people from different social strata and ethnic backgrounds, characterized by diverse social practices, beliefs, professions, and languages.

hundred years, are not known. However, the costumes used in the modern period come in various colours and designs. It mainly comprises pajamas in deep green, yellow, or red shades, worn by the

Difference among Purulia Chhau, Seraikella Chhau, and Mayurbhanj Chhau

PURULIA CHHAU	SERAIKELLA CHHAU	MAYURBHANG CHHAU
The Purulia Chhau develops in the Purulia district of West Bengal.	The Seraikellachhau is developed in Seraikella, the present administrative headquarters of Jharkhand.	The Mayurbhanj chhau developed in the Mayurbhanj district of Odisha.
In Purulia Chhau, Masks are an integral part of the Chhau dance.	In Seraikellachhau, Masks are an essential part of the chhau dance.	The Chhau dance found in northern Odisha does not use masks.
The Purulia Chhau employs masks, showcasing the spontaneity of folk art.	The Seraikellachhau technique and repertoire were developed by the erstwhile nobility of this region, who were both its performers and choreographers.	The Mayurbhanj Chhau is performed without masks and is technically similar to the Seraikella Chhau.
Purulia chhau relies on acrobatic movements and drama.	Seraikellachhau is classical, subtle, and refined like any other classical dance.	Mayurbhanj chhau is folk-oriented.





Chhau Dance, Folk Dance of West Bengal from Purulia District:

The Chhau Dance is performed during the Sun festival, which is celebrated during the Chaitra month of the Hindu calendar. West Bengal proudly presented the folk dance to the world by approving it as the theme for West Bengal's tableau during the 1995 Republic Day parade. The dance is mostly themed around the epic stories of our mythology, originating from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Asur dance during the Chhau performance.

Relationship between Chhau dance and value formulation among the Children:

Chhau dance is a part of the sophisticated dance performances of Bengal. The Chhau dance is a mask dance that allows both male and female dancers to participate. In the performance of Chhau, some characteristics of primitive ritualistic dance are noted. This can also be seen through its vigour, style, and musical accompaniment, particularly in the drumming. In the early period, variously shaped symbols were used as facial or body painting by dancers. Thus, they are recognized for personifying the characters they play in the performance. Additionally, the masks later appeared in dance performances. It is said that the best Chhau dancers are from Baghmundi P.S. Many groups and parties are located here for their outstanding performances due to the traditional, vigorous, and heroic style of Chhau. Many other groups, such as the Domordi-group, Birgram-group, and Madla-group, are also famous for their performances. Still, they are more sophisticated and refined in terms of the themes and dancing styles. The Chord-group is popular for its outstanding performance, which is based on heroic Pauranic themes. The Chhau mask dance is predominantly a Bhumij art form. It is a festival dance performed on the occasion of the Sun Festival, observed towards the end of the month of Chaitra as per the Bengali Calendar. The festival is celebrated for about one and a half months before the start of the sowing season. This indicates its linkage with the social and economic life of the Bengal farmer & commoner. Over time, the situation has undergone drastic changes. Chhau is not only performed at this sun festival but also during many other festivals throughout the year. Artists from rural areas, such as Midnapur and Purulia districts, have kept this traditional dance alive despite numerous obstacles. The dance has its own distinct identity, separating it from the Chhau dances performed in parts of Seraikella, Bihar, and Mayurbhanj, Orissa. The costumes worn by Chhau performers during their early performances, which date back over two

artistes playing the role of gods. Those who play the role of demons (auras) wear loose trousers in a deep black shade. Sometimes, stripes of contrasting colours are used to make the costumes more attractive & different. The costumes for the upper body feature a variety of designs. A character of Goddess Kali is considered a popular character in Chhau dance. The costumes for the Kali are made up of unrelieved black cloth. To express their separate & distinct identities, the characters of animals and birds use suitable types of masks and costumes. The masks generally used for Chhau of West Bengal are made in a village called Charade in the Baghmundi area of Purulia district. These masks are made from clay and paper. The groups of people who make masks have been engaged in this business for generations. Generally, these artisans are familiar with the details of the Indian epics, enabling them to produce high-quality art. The Chhau dance is rooted in mythological tradition, as it is primarily based on various episodes from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Sometimes, specific episodes of the Purina are also used. Two rasas that are dominant in the performance are Vira and Rudra. Ultimately, the forces of evil are punished, and righteousness prevails. No proper dais or raised platform is constructed for its performance. Typically, the dance takes place on the ground, allowing spectators to sit in a circle around it.

The Chhau dance shows usually start at night and continue till after daybreak. The use of the drum is an integral part of Chhau performance. With the beating of drums, an invocation to God Ganesha is given, and the dance begins. As the singer completes the invocation song, a host of drummers and musicians start beating with the Dhol and the Dhaamsa. Dhaamsa is a two-faced percussion instrument, resembling a gigantic kettledrum, played with both sticks and fingers. These two traditional musical instruments are used by the rural population in various parts of the country to provide music. As all the characters in the Chhau dance must wear masks, the artistes can't show variations in mood through facial expressions. Therefore, various body movements, including movements of the peaks of the masks, are used to illustrate different moods. The mask movements show anger, while shoulder and chest movements indicate joy, melancholy, and courage, among other emotions. Jumping in the air is another movement that serves as a gesture of attack during the enactment of a war scene. This jumping, known as ulfa, is a hallmark of acrobatic skill and physical prowess of the performers of the dance.

Chhau is considered one of the most popular Indian folk dances and is said to have originated from primitive war drums. Many experts & scholars feel Chhau had its roots in sympathetic magic, as tribal people performed it to appease and influence the Sun God. Although its origin is unclear, it has formed an integral part of West Bengal's rich folk culture and continues to gain international popularity. The Purulia school has gained immense popularity today, not only because of its gorgeous masks and dresses, but also for its touching themes and dignified gaits. Many artistes coming from the rural working class traditionally regard this dance as a part of their rituals. Several teams of Purulia Chhau dancers have performed not only in different parts of India but also abroad.

CONCLUSION

UNESCO recognizes Chhau as an intangible culture because Chhau culture is identified by global scientists for promoting peace, non-violence, co-operation, value formulation, and prosperity in socio-cultural contexts. Chhau culture encompasses practical aspects in various dimensions, including value formation, cultural transformation, socialization, and preservation. Now we live in the LPG (liberalization, privatization, and globalization) era. In this challenging era (decade), we have to concentrate on global warming, water pollution, the decline of forests, soil erosion, and unorganised/unplanned strategies from an environmental, societal, and economic perspective. Still, it is also imperative that we preserve our traditional heritage within our society, unless we suffer a similar crisis. Therefore, it is essential to protect our old things, which sustain our heritage and provide us with valuable resources. However, at present, our society lacks these resources, and we are unable to preserve the things that have numerous benefits in all aspects and have been tested over time. At present, there are many threats facing traditional cultures like the Chhau culture because we, the people, are led towards the West, and we accept colonial things as a universal truth.

At the same time, we ignore the old things which is grown and been nurtured in our circumstances. Another threat is that as the global population grows and standards of living improve, there will be increasing stress on the world's limited resources, and people will be unable to protect and promote their traditional cultures and values. Therefore, in the contemporary era, we must concentrate on situation-based knowledge and a spirit that fosters inclusive growth and promotes mainstreaming in our society. In Chhau dance, themes are based on mythology, everyday life, aspects of nature, just a mood or emotion, social issues, and religious folk tales. It is a type of dance that takes utmost care in expressing a range of emotions, including anger, fear, laughter, wonder, and sorrow. The researcher has first-hand information regarding the Chhau dance because they are part of that culture and have observed the Chhau dance from childhood. Chhau Dance is a renowned tribal martial dance, a unique thing amongst the folk dances of West Bengal. The dance primarily belongs to West Bengal, as it's believed to have originated from the Purulia district, but it's widely popular in other states, such as Odisha and Jharkhand. The Purulia Chhau is distinct from its counterparts in terms of its characters.

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