

## Folk Dances of North India: An Overview

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### Abstract:

*Folk dance demonstrates the nation's temperament, art, culture, simplicity, social status and customs. In simple language folk dances are the nation's mirror. The folk dancers are represented by basic folks commonly of a specific community. These are the dances performed by the whole village community by the young and the old. Traditional folk dances has a role in preserving traditional values and teaching it to next. Folk dance are performed spontaneously with great ease and grace. Every individual region and state suggest a unique glimpse and taste into its system of life, and related traditions and rituals. The number of folk dances of India is very large so here we explore some main folk dances of north India. Most of the north Indian dances are traditional or folk dances, which marks the celebration of festivals, marriages ceremonies, celebration of birth, and the harvesting time. The present paper aims to explore the popular folk dances of North India by studying the present status of the dancing community.*

**Keywords:** Dance, Folk, India, Customs

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## Introduction

In India, dance is considered as widely spread activity which include their different forms and manner. It is not new as covering from the ancient time consisting of dance in temple, modern form and classical one. Folk dances is one of the type of dance which represent the specialty and culture of particular community. It is very well known fact that in any group of people or community the sharing of living style and behaviors i.e. emotional or cultural is very common and important. As they live together they also shares some of the mutual occasions where they equally celebrate, enjoy and happy. With the connection of the mutual bonding and culture they used to reflect in their own manner in the form of dance or folk dance converting their artistic manner as well. From the past time, it can be established that in different manner these folk dance use to represent their own being and community.

If we talk about, dances of Indian folk dances they are simple as well as beautiful. These folk dance are performed for the purpose of showing their celebration and enjoyment. Folk dances are performed in every single occasion as a manner of showing the beauty of their culture. The occasion like any wedding celebration, any kind of activity i.e. get together, hunting or even the birth of the new one.

The management and choreography of this type of dance is done in such a way that it will able to settle even a numerous number of dancers in single dance. It is very important in the folk dances that it should be simple as well as consider the formation of dance in pair, straight line or in circles. The significant things is to be keep the symmetry maintain during the entire dance. The movement of dance summarize a reality in expressing their emotions of happiness, love and enthusiasm. The overall group of the dancers shares the same emotions which made them more equally represented at the time of dance. This also shows the strong connection between all dancers and this resultant deliver the performance extremely lively and energetic.

In the present era of time also these folk dances are encountered in different community and villages in same manner. The probability of this found more in rural areas or parts of India which is less urbanized. The interested individuals in this dance forms are the one whose upbringing are more likely in the same style of life.

Hence in general the folk dance are basically shows no thoughtful emphasis on representing the art of the dance to the audience as they itself present in the artistic manner. Today, these dance forms are performed in both the international and national level on theatre with facing a huge number of audience. As per as their evolution from different communal setting to the typical profession stage never try to hinder the artistic spirit of their choreography and its quality.

## Cultural or Semi-religious Folk Dances:

To pacify the local village Divinities or the evil spirits or ghosts for the betterment of the village society these folk dances are performed. These group dances incorporate holiness and are primarily sacred in nature.

## Social Folk Dances:

On hearing the news, that is good the villagers get into the act of joyous celebration through the art of dancing. Ceremonies like the weddings, naming and cradling of children or sometimes the ceremonies for the dead, social folk dances are performed.

## Warrior Dances:

Warrior dances are performed when the tribes are to leave on a big hunt, it is performed before and after a hunt, to show the sacrificial ceremony with the sacrificial animal in the center the dance are performed, or it is also performed when the war with the other tribe has to be accomplished.

## Seasonal Dances:

To exhibit the joy of the tribe after a good harvest, generally during the spring or the Rainy season's seasonal folk dances are performed. It could also be an offering to the rain Gods to shower blessings on the community for a quiet and prosperous living.

The dances of North India represents a prosperous variety. The various culture of region was introduced by ancient kingdom such as Maurya Empire, Gupta Empire, etc. Northern part of the country is influenced by both Hindu and Muslim customs. The states of north India (Punjab, Uttar Pradesh Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Haryana) reflects the union of these two religious culture and the dance reflects the collection of different traditions and customs.

## Punjab- Bhangra

In the farming district of Punjab, the Sikh men performed the dance and hence is known as Bhangra. Bhangra is considered as one of the most widespread and lively dances of India. The dance was associated mainly with the spring harvest festival Baisakhi, and it is from one of the major products of the harvest bhang (hemp) that bhangra drew its name. The Bhangra is most enthusiastic and attractive dance of India which also consist of actions and physical feats. At the time of Bhangra, the drummer (a musical instrument) is encircled by men who are dressed in lungis and turbans.

The modern Bhangra was came under consideration from 1990's and staged in the Punjabi Diaspora with the combination of some western style in the prerecorded audio mixes.

Bhangra is not only famous in India but the grace of bhangra can be seen in the whole world. Later, the numerous organizations and universities around 1990s have started representing as part of held annual modern dance competitions in various cities like England, United States and Canada as well.

#### **Jammu and Kashmir - Dhumal**

It is believed that Dhumal dance initiated by Shah Sukar Saloni. Dhumal dance was performed by Shah Sukar Saloni in the memory of his guru Nasim-U-Din-Gazi, to remember his preaching. This dance form is basically the tribute to the religious belief i.e. towards the God and offered at the time of journey to Ziarat shrine.

This dance is a tribute to appeal the Gods and is presented at the time of a journey to the Ziarat shrine.

This dance is known as devotional type folk dances belonging to Jammu and Kashmir. To fulfil the wishes of the people this dance was also performed. The main glimpses of dhumal dance is that the dancers wore attractive and alive costumes connecting with an embellished cap which is conical in shape. Before the dance start there always a ritual takes place. In the starting of the dance the men dances with the use of holding banners in their hand and later dig the ground and simultaneously place them. During the entire dance, the men revolves around the banner.

On the other hand, in the present time this form of dance is becoming extinct or vanished because of the reason that the youth is not much interested towards

these type of dance form and that's why they show less involvement in the development of this art form.

#### **Haryana-Dhamyal:**

Haryana is a state that lives a life of vibrant and joy. All occasions like child birth, marriage or any religious or social function are celebrated with lots of pomp and show. The enthusiasm for life present in the natives of Haryana is channeled into various dance and music forms. Some of the Haryana dance are (Ras Lela, Phag dance, Loor, Dhamyal, Gugga, Jhumar, Khorla, Holi, chatty, sang, Chaupaiya, etc.)

Dhamyal is considered best and famous popular folk dances of Haryana whose origin is rooted back to the days of the Mahabharata. It is also known as Duph. The spring season is a time of celebration in Haryana when the works in fields has been done. Dhamyal dance is performed either by men alone or with women. A circular drum (Duph) is played lightly by the male dancers. In the course of action, the men participants form a semi-circle and bow down to the ground to pray for the blessings of Lord Ganesh, the Goddess Bhavani and the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

#### **Uttarakhand- Chholiya**

In Uttarakhand, the culture present is a lot more individual and can be represented in numerous art forms. The folk dance here is not very complex as compare with the classical dance but very mesmerizing for the eyes of audience. It basically shows the culture, traditions and the natural beliefs of the people which is helpful in exploring their happiness of arrival of new season. There are different type of dance named as Thali-Jadda and Jhainta, Chholiya Dance, Chancheri and Bhotiya Dance.

One of the famous dance form named as Chholiya Dance has its origination in the warring Khasiya Kingdom of Khadesh at the time when the marriages were performed at the time of weapons.

The chholiya dance performed in Rajputs weddings as a part of the marriage pageant and putting their old tradition as priority. This dance is performed by the male and the dance continues till the time the bride reach the house. Performances are given by Rajputs with sword and shield in pairs, the instruments used are the drums, Turi and Ransing .The typical Kumaon instrument named as Turi and Ransing is used in this dance .The dance is very nicely

synchronized, and contains numerous jumps and turns of body, the dancers also represent some of the stunts of sword-fighting acts.

### Himachal Pradesh- Nati-Folk dance

Himachal Pradesh consist of rich culture which is very much deceptive in their routine lives. The colourful dresses of people of Himachal looks really attracting and very can be easily visible as one go through the state.

Nati dance form is one of the most famous folk dances of India. Nati is kullu's centuries old dance which is performed mostly at various festivals and fairs. It creates a beautiful environment when traditional kulluvi colour dresses merges with musical instrument. Nati dance is executed on Vijay Dashmi in the month of October, which starts and ends with the rest of the country. Much like the slowly influential trees, soft hilly breeze and smoothly flowing rivers, this dance too reflects the relaxed elegance of Himachal Pradesh.

Nati has a relaxed yet abstract sequence. Nati folk dance entered Guinness book of world records in 2016 as the largest folk dance in the world. This dance was performed on 26<sup>th</sup> October by approximately 9892 women and later it was listed as the highest participated dance of the second week of 2016.

### Rajasthan- Ghoomar

The folk dances of Rajasthan are attractive, skillful and somewhat enjoyable by any age group. The folk dance of Rajasthan was initiated from different tribes and usually done entertain Kings. Rajasthani folk dances are popular all around the globe.

Ghoomar is a traditional as well as an enthusiastic folk dance of Rajasthan. This spectacular folk dance derived its name from 'ghoomna'. This dance is performed by groups of women where Fascination starts when colors of the flowing long skirt (Ghaghra) of the women flows during pirouetting. Ghoomar is often executed on unusual occasions, such as at festivals, religious and wedding occasions. There is an amazing grace as the skirt flair slowly while the women twirl in circles and the faces of the dancers covered with the help of the veil.

Ghoomar also called as Jhumar can be performed very joyfully. This dance is mainly performed by women of any age factor in simple swaying movements. The attractive part of the dance is the footwork which was done very gracefully by the

dancers. This dance is not restricted to any time limit and it continues with the flow of enjoyment.

### Uttar Pradesh- Raslila

Uttar Pradesh is a state with a rich and diverse cultural heritage. According to the Indian mythology some of the major folk dances of Uttar Pradesh are Charkula, khyal, Ramlila, Raslila, Nautankis, etc. which reflect the lifestyle and beliefs of the people.

Raslila is a common term that consist of dance-dramas throughout the entire country. It is all dependent on single theme. The Raslila is originated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century with the influence of religious beliefs. It has been introduced to us through mythological stories in Bhagwad Gita. This dance form portrays the life tales of Krishna from his childhood to adolescence. In Raslila the term "Ras" defined as joy of Krishna's circular dance with the gopis and "Lila" which means play: not just literally, but also God's amazing interaction in playful manner with the human being and the other organisms.

The art form is colorful and glossy with graceful dance movements and facial expressions. This dance captures the divine love of Gopi's for Krishna. It also explores the relation of Krishna and Radha. The folk dance is performed by mandalas (group of people) who roam from one place to another playing instruments like dholak, flute and singing the legends of Lord Krishna.

**Conclusion:** Folk Dances are reflections of the Indian culture. Folk dances are meant to express joy as they usually performed on the occasion of festivals, marriage, birth and many other occasion. Even today these dances are performed in their individual communities and villages. In India, folk dances have their own grace and importance which directly show the culture and heritage of the place. Different places has different types of folk dances but they show the culture of their own community and place. Some folk dances make their name not in a country but in the whole world. Some folk dances show less involvement and becoming extinct. But the folk dance like Nati make Guinness world record and the dance like Ghoomar, Raslila, and dhamyal have their own importance. On other side, Bhangra shows its culture worldwide. Overall, dance is a powerful reflection of the cultural that are taking place in our world.



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