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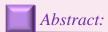
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## Folk Dances of North India: An Overview

## K. Kabatas<sup>1</sup>

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Folk dance demonstrates the nation's temperament, art, culture, simplicity, social status and customs. In simple language folk dances are the nation's mirror. Folk dances are danced by common folks usually of a particular 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. Each state and region offers a unique glimpse and taste into its way of life, rituals and traditions. 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



1. Kastamonu Üniversitesi, TURKEY.





#### Introduction

Dance in India covers a wide range of dance and dance theatre forms, from the ancient classical or temple dance to folk and modern styles. Folk dances are group dances, which are danced by common folks usually of a particular community. When a community or a group of people living together they share a common life style and bonded with emotional and various sociocultural norms. Living together provides its people common occasions to relax, rejoice, celebrate and enjoy. Reflection of this common bonding of people's lives is found in the artistic spirit of all folk danceforms. History shows how each folk dance in India originated in a particular community of such kind.

Indian folk dances are simple dances, and are performed as a part of some community celebration or observance. These dances are performed for every possible occasion: to celebrate the arrival of seasons, the birth of a child, a wedding and festivals, social activities such as hunting and food gathering.

The choreography is in such a way that it can accommodate large number of dancers. Folk dances are supposed to be simple-to-follow dance formations such as dancing in circles, in pairs, in straight lines, and so on. The dance movements condense a free expression to emotions of joy and affection, and dynamism. The entire group of dancers shares these emotions. A strong bonding among all dancers makes a folk dance performance highly vibrant.

It is found that folk dances are danced in their respective villages or communities even today. This is mostly found in rural, less urbanized parts of India. All who belong to that community, who are born and brought up with the same life-style, naturally participate in their community's folk dance.

In other words, folk dances in their original context give no deliberate emphasis on presenting the danceart to any viewers, though they are in themselves artistically presentable. In current times they are performed professionally at national and international theatrical forums before a large number of audiences. In spite of their transition from a community-setting to a professionally set-up stage, their overall artistic spirit that is found in their choreography, performance and quality of dance-movements has remained unaffected. Folk dances can be categorized broadly as

#### 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 (Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan) reflects the union of these two religious culture and the dance reflects the collection of different traditions and customs.

#### Punjab- Bhangra

A dance performed by Sikh men in the farming districts of the Punjab is known as Bhangra. Bhangra is one of the most popular and energetic dances of India. The dance was associated primarily 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. It is among the most energetic and captivating dances of India and includes tricks and athletic feats. During the Bhangra performance the drummer is surrounded by men dressed in lungis and turbans.

By the 1990s, modern Bhangra was being staged in the Punjabi Diaspora, with a fusion of western style dance and a use of prerecorded audio mixes.

Bhangra is not only famous in India but the grace of bhangra can be seen in the whole world. Since the 1990s universities and other organizations have held annual modern Bhangra dance competitions in many



of the main cities of the United States, Canada, and England as well.

#### Jammu and Kashmir - Dhumal

It is believed that Dumhal dance to have been started 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 is a tribute to appeal the Gods and is presented at the time of a pilgrimage to the Ziarat shrine.

This dance is one of the most devotional type folk dances of Jammu and Kashmir. It was performed to fulfill the wishes of the people. The main glimpses of dhumal dance is its vibrant costumes along with a decorative conical cap that dancers wear. A ceremonial process takes place before the dance. Initially men dance with banners in their hands and dig the ground and place the banners. After this the actual dance begins. The men generally revolve around this banner during the dance.

However, during the modern times this dance is slowly becoming extinct, as the youth of the region is taking less interest and hence less involvement in the promotion 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, Khoria, Holi, chatty, sang, Chaupaiya, etc.)

Dhamyal is one of the most 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- Chholiva**

The Culture of Uttarakhand is one of the unique which can be seen prominently in its various form of art. The folk dance of uttarakhand is not as complex as the classical dance forms but is something which is beautiful to witness. It shows the image of deep sited beliefs and traditions of the local people which is performed to express joy & celebrate the arrival of new

season. Bhotiya Dance, Chancheri, Chhapeli, Chholiya Dance, Thali-Jadda and Jhainta are some of the folk dances performed in various occasions in Uttarakhand.

Chholiya Dance is one of the most famous folk dance of Uttrakhand. It has its origins in the warring Khasiya Kingdom of Khasdesh, when marriages were performed at the point of the swords. They were united by the Chand kings who arrived on the scene in the 10th century. In Nepal, the word Khasa is still asynonym for Kashatrya, and in Khasdesh, too, they took on the customs of the Rajputs, who were themselves honorary Kshatryas.

The Rajputs dance chholiya dance at their weddings as a part of the marriage pageant and keeping their old tradition alive. This dance is led by the male dancers who go on dancing till they reach the bride's house. Performances are given by Rajputs with sword and shield in pairs, the instruments used are the drums, Turi and Ransing .The Turi and Ransing are typical Kumaon instruments. Perfectly synchronized, and marked with jumps and turns of the body, the dancers show several sword-fighting feats.

#### Himachal Pradesh- Nati-Folk dance

Himachal Pradesh have a rich culture which is very much apparent in their day to day lives. The colourful dresses of Himachalis will strike you instantly as you make your way 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. This dance is performed on Vijay Dashmi in 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. It was performed by 9892 women on 26th October 2015 and registered as the largest participated dance of the world on 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 originated from different tribes and mainly used at past time to 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 performed on special occasions, such as at weddings, festivals and religious 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 sometimes called Jhumar, can be joyfully performed by women from any age group as it has simple swaying movements. Its specialty is its special kind of footwork. There no time limit for this folk dance as it may continue for hours or the whole night. **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 generic term that includes many dances and dance-dramas throughout the country, all of them based on one theme. This form is believed to have developed in the sixteenth century due to the influence of the bhakti wave. 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" refers to the joy of Krishna's circular dance with the gopis and "Lila" means play: not merely literally, but

also God's playful interaction with humans and other earthly beings.

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 the folk dances are performed in their respective villages or communities. 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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