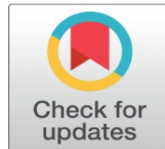


# AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON SAMBALPURI DANCE AND MUSIC

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## ABSTRACT

Dance and music are integral part of the cultural heritage of any community. The objective of the paper is to explore the different types of music and musical instruments used in Sambalpuri folk dance; to describe the different types of Sambalpuri folk dance and to throw light on the changes that are taking place in Sambalpuri music and dance due to several factors.

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. Data for the study was collected from both primary sources and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from the musicians, dancers, and dance teachers of Sambalpur district. Samples for the study were selected through the snowball sampling method.

The findings of the study have been discussed under three sections. The first section describes the musical instruments associated with Sambalpuri folk dance. The second section deals with the different types of Sambalpuri folk dance. The third section deals with changes that are taking place in Sambalpuri music and dance in course of time due to several factors.

**Keywords:** Folk Culture, Dance, Music, Step, Rhythm, Change

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Dance and music are integral part of the intangible cultural heritage of any community. They are often inseparable. They have their own relevance based on spatio-temporal continuum. People perform dances to articulate joy and happiness. Dance and music not only provide relaxation or entertainment but also has a ritualistic precedence. In the beginning, dance was born to appease Gods/Goddess and for satisfying the psychological requirements of human being. Music was also known to people for a long time. From the dawn of civilization, people could make rough musical instruments to dance to the sounds of those instruments. Over the period dance and music have greatly influenced and attracted human being.

Dances can be categorized as two types - classical and folk dance. The western region of Odisha boasts of a variety of mesmerizing folk dances and enthralling music. These dance forms can be classified based on the instruments used in it. Dalkhai, Rasarkeli, Maelajada, Nachnia, Bajnia are the different Sambalpuri dances which are based on the Panchabadya. The different forms of dances are performed during several social and religious functions. The Sambalpuri "Panchbadya" also known as "Lokabadyas", derives its name from 'badya' (i.e., instrument) and 'loka' (i.e, people). "Lokabadyas" refers to the instruments that are being used in both folk music and dance. Dambaroo used by Lord Shiva is the first Lokabadya. The Instruments of Lokbadya are: Dhol, Nishan, Tasha, Timkidi, Muhuri. "Panchbadya" refers to the five Lokabadyas of western Odisha. Some of the popular Lokabadyas are Ganda Baja, Dulduli Baja, Bajnia Baja. The most important qualification for a Panchbadya musician is the ability to listen to what other musicians are playing and to imitate and improvise together. The musicians learn the rhythm and melody through a sophisticated culture of listening. In essence they play improvisations of various rhythms that they have learnt from childhood.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Odisha as a whole and mostly western Odisha is notable for its folk dances.

Nayak (2023) writes that "Folk dance is one of the most important elements of art and culture of mankind. The art of folk dance evolved from the instinct of human being's self-expression".

Mishra (1996: 314) opines that "In many primitive tribal communities of the world dance is regarded as an inevitable part of life. Therefore, like eating, drinking, working, dancing is considered as an instinct of tribal life".

Mohapatra (1964) writes that "The origin of folk dance is inherent in the activities like food collection, cultivation, sexual desire, and religious consciousness of primitive mankind. Accordingly, the folk dances and songs are manifestation of the development of fundamental instinct of our ancestors. Thus, the evolution and development of folk dances and songs are thought of as incidental consequences."

Vidyarthi and Roy (1979) wrote that Folk song, music, and dance of tribal are a composite whole which is one of the dominant characteristics of their culture.

According to Mohapatra (2015) "The different types of folk dances in Odisha are Ghumura Dance, Changu Dance, Baagh Naach or Tiger Dance, GotiPua Dance, Nachni Dance, Odissi Dance, Ruk Mar Nacha (Chhau Dance), Dhaph Dance, Karma Naach, Dasakathia Dance, Jhoomar Dance, Chadya Dandanata Dance, Ghanta Patua Dance, Ghumara Sanchar Dance, Kandhei Dance, Kelakeluni Dance, SakhiNata Dance etc" (media.neliti.com).

The Pala and Dasakathia are the most popular forms of folk performances of Odisha (Das, 2016).

According to Behera (2016) "The famous folk dances of western Odisha are Ghumura, Dhaph, Bajasal, in Kalahandi district, Dalkhai in Sambalpur district, Nachnia and Danda in Bolangir district, Badi in Nuapada district".

Guzy (2013) summarized results of an anthropological and ethnomusicological documentation of hitherto unknown traditions of 8 sacred music performed by marginalized musicians and priest-musicians of the Adivasi (indigenous) Bora Sambar region of western Odisha.

## 2.1. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the paper are to explore the various types of music and musical instruments used in Sambalpuri folk dance; to describe the different types of Sambalpuri folk dance and to throw light on the changes that are being taking place in Sambalpuri music and dance due to various factors.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

Sambalpur district in the State of Odisha is located on the banks of river Mahanadi possessing a distinctive identity. Sambalpur is one among the prehistoric regions of Indian nation. It is otherwise world famous for Sambalpuri handloom saree. Besides unique handloom it occupies a unique position for its Sambalpuri language, special rituals like Nuakhaia and Sitalssasthi and famous Maa Samaleswari temple.

The present study is exploratory and descriptive in nature. Since the study will revolve round Sambalpuri dance and music, it is a purely qualitative study. Data for the study was accumulated from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary data were collected from books, journals, conference proceedings and e-resources. Primary data were gathered from the musicians, dancers, and dance teachers of Sambalpur district through key informant interview (KII) and focus group discussion (FGD) method. Samples for the study were selected through the snowball sampling method. Semi-structured interview schedules were used for the collection of data. Key informant interviews of a few dance teachers of cultural institutions of Sambalpur were taken.

## 4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study have been discussed under three sections. The first section describes the musical instruments associated with Sambalpuri folk dance. The second section deals with the different types of Sambalpuri folk dance.

### 4.1. FIVE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS OF PANCHBADYA

#### 1) Dhol

Dhol is known as the principal instrument among the Panchbadya. There are two types of dhol which are used by the musicians of Sambalpur - Katha dhol (wooden dhol), Maet Dhol (earthen dhol). The wooden dhol comes under Panchbadya which is manufactured from the stem of the tree. In the manufacturing of dhol specific kind of wood are used (e.g., mango wood). The length of the dhol is generally 2-2 1/2 ft. Sometimes it is 90 cm to 1.5 meters in length. It also largely depends upon the convenience of the dhulia (dhol player). In local terminology, the measurement is done in 'haate' (one feet) and 'kande' (10 cm). The trunk is processed to make it hollow while maintaining the required thickness of the dhol. The shape of the frame is concave with narrower ends and a bulge that runs along the middle of the drum, thereby giving that area (i.e., middle) the largest diameter. The left side of the dhol is known as dhayaan and the right side is known as chaayaan. The diameter of the dhayaan side should be 16 aangul (finger) and that of the chaayaan side should be 14 aangul (finger). Animal hide is used to cover both the open ends of the dhol. Calf skin is stretched over the chaayaan side as it requires thin and flexible leather, whereas buffalo or cow skin is used for the dhayaan side.

as it requires thick and stiff leather. On both sides the leather is attached with the help of a bamboo ring known as marlaa. On the periphery of the sides there are 14/16/20 holes known as badi-ghat which helps in covering and attaching the leather over the wooden frame. These two leather pieces are tied with the help of leather stripes known as badi. Several small iron rings known as bala are used between the badis to set the tune of the dhol as per the requirement of the player or the mode of presentation. The chhayaan side is played by hand whereas the dhaayaan side is played with a wooden stick (30 cm in length) known as dhol khadaa. This instrument is hung around the neck of the musician and played. The sound of the **dhol** is clear, bright, and very dynamic. The person who beats **dhol** is called **dhulia**, who typically controls all modulations of rhythm. Apart from the introductory rhythm sequences (**adighat**), all the rhythms are simple and improvised.

## 2) Nisan/Lisan/Luha

Nisan is another leading instrument of panchbadya and is thought as one of the oldest instruments of the village orchestra. It is a kettle drum with a tapered wooden frame covered with iron sheets. It is made from iron but not from a single piece or sheet. It is made by joining many iron plates in "V" shape and by using iron sticks to give it a bowl shape. The wooden body of the Nisan with the iron sheets is strung with cowhide. At the bottom a small iron plate having a hole is attached to make the base. The hole is known as banki, which is closed by a small piece of stick called banki khunti. At the top of the iron frame, a circular strip is attached.

Through the banki (hole) castor oil, egg and dumer (fig) juice is poured either one after another or as a mixture. This paste sticks to the inner side of the leather. During this process of pouring, Nisan is placed invertedly on the Jada leaf (castor leaf). This procedure is known as paagkara. It is done to make the leather flexible and soft. Buffalo hide is used in the making of a Nisan. A round strip of leather is pasted over the main leather which is then strung over the iron frame with the help of badi. In some areas, the cowhide with its narrow border (chipra) is often embellished with deer antlers for which it is otherwise known as singh baja. It is believed that the instrumentalists use this animal horn to give protection to the dancers while performing the dance. Nissan is played by two rubber sticks/pieces known as chimta. It is always tightly stretched over the frame and thus has a deep, penetrating sound, which reminds them of a thunderstorm.

## 3) Tasa

Tasa is another important percussion instrument. It is a small clay (matul) drum tautly covered with cowhide. Its shape is like a bowl or frying pan which tapers down to a flat base and is played with the help of two thin bamboo sticks. The thickness of the earthen frame is  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch. The topmost periphery is known as Manga. The leather used in Tasa is very thin i.e., goat/calf hide. The leather is attached to the earthen frame with the help of leather thread known as badi. On the border (marla/mola) of the hide, stripes (badi) are used for tuning the instrument. The badi is tied to the marla which is made from a specific grass called panasi in local language. The hole on the leather with which the badi is attached is known as badi ghats. The badi ghats (holes) are quite close to each other to raise the sound produced by tasa which is very thin and of high frequency. The sound compliments the chaayaan side of the dhol.

## 4) Muhuri

Muhuri is one of the most important and the only wind instruments of Panchbadya. It is an oboe-like instrument made from a combination of brass, wood and taal leaf. The fer (brass part) is in the shape of a funnel. The second part is the

nali (wooden part) which is shaped like a pipe and has seven holes known as bhed. There is one more hole in the lower part of the nali known as tipsi. The air is blown from the third part (i.e., chukti) which is made from two palm leaves tied together with thread. The sound of Muhuri plays a major role in modifying the musical moods.

### 5) Jhanj

The jhanj are iron cymbals which work as percussion instruments. During any dance performance based on panchbadya only Dhol is beaten in the beginning and later the sound of Nisan, Tasa, Jhanj and Muhuri comes. All the instruments of panchbadya ensemble play both tune and rhythm together. As the sound of the Muhuri is often supposed to resemble the voice of a flirtatious woman, this is played in an extremely enthralling way. The cymbals (Jhanj) interlace into the rhythmic tissue with the same or counter pulsation.

**Figure 1**



**Figure 1** Images of Panchbadya

## 5. TYPES OF SAMBALPURI FOLK DANCE

### 1) Dalkhai

“Dalkhai” is popularly known as the nucleus of the folk culture of western Odisha. Dalkhai song and dance has a social and religious background. It is a ritualistic folk dance that is done on 8th day of Durga Puja. The entire Western region of Odisha celebrates Dalkhai Usha or Bhai Juntia. The young girls and women of Gand, Kandh, Bhuyan, Oram, Kolh, Kissan, Binjhal, Saura, Khadia and Mirdha observe fasting for an entire day to obtain the blessings of Goddess Durga for prosperity and long life of their brothers. On this occasion, the young girls dance near the place of worship to appease the deity Dalkhai who is basically a folk divinity whose dwelling is called Dalkhai Kuthi or Sulha Kuthi (Nath and Mishra, 2023). Hence the dance is called Dalkhai dance.

The Dalkhai reflects the medieval conception of music (sangeet) as a composite art, including in its fold (a) songs (or compositions of musical notes together with words (b) instruments to support the melody and accentuate, the rhythm (or time measure), and (c) dance (‘nritya’ i.e., pure dance without the ‘abhinaya’ or the representational aspect).

The theme of the Dalkhai song mostly deals with the appraisal of the Devi. Songs and instruments go together, and dance starts after the song takes a pause since the singing cannot go on when there is fast body movement, particularly as the upper part of the body must be bent forward from the waist above almost in a horizontal

position (upside down L). The Dalkhai songs along with its dance and music fill the surrounding with thrilling joy (Nath and Mishra, 2023).

The instruments that support and sustain the rhythm as well as keep track of the time are percussions such as Dhol, Nissan and often Timkidi. It is the Dhol that rules the roost. The Nissan carries the rhythm far and wide. But the Muhuri resembles somewhat the famous classical instrument Sehna that provides tonal accompaniment, often with notes of incorrect pitch owing to incorrect make. It also sustains the melodic part when singing takes a temporary halt during the dance. Among the Bajnias (instrumentalists), the Dhol player also takes part in the dance with the Dhol dangling from his neck. He continues to play the instrument even while dancing within the semi-circle of the women singers and dancers. The steps used in this dance are quite simple and repetitive.

Dalkhai songs are mostly based on spiritual and romantic themes. One can not only find the description of nature, seasons, gods and goddesses but even satire and teasing as well. The human passion for mating and procreation is presented in the Dalkhai songs. Eroticism is obvious in some of the compositions, the reason why orthodox people used to take these as a degenerate form. But thanks to the silver screen, some of its more refined songs and dance items have served as eye-openers to the conservatives and the hard-liners who are now compelled by the forces of time to adopt a favorable attitude towards Dalkhai (Nath and Mishra, 2023).

Dalkhai songs are basically divided into two subgroups: Lamti Dalkhai and Putki Dalkhai. The rhythm of Dalkhai is known as the paar in local languages. The rhythm and the style of beating the drums can vary from person to person, but a standardized notation of this Dalkhai Paar can be categorized.

## **2) Rasarkeli**

The dance Rasarkeli is a little bit different from Dalkhai so far as music, lyrics, rhythm and composition are concerned. The term 'Rasarkeli' is also an addressing phrase. This is the combination of the two terms 'Rasa' and 'Keli'. Mostly the male dancer or the rhythmist addresses his counterpart, the lady dancer as 'Rasarkeli Bo' and at the same time the dancers address their counterpart as 'Rasarkeli Re'. Probably from this the lyrical content of this dance form is generated. This form of dance symbolizes a romantic exchange between the couples. Among all the 9 'Rasas' the most vital 'Shringar' rasa can be clearly visualized. Therefore, we can say that the Rasarkeli dance is full of aesthetic essence.

## **3) Maelajada**

Just like the previous dance forms 'Maelajada' dance is also a sensuous dance form which depicts the love and romance between a couple. Being an agrarian economy, the inhabitants of this region either depend on cultivation or are mostly daily wagers. After the day's hectic schedule, they spend some relaxing moments with their partners and during this time they perform these dances with its melodious tune. The female dancer normally address her soul mate with the phrase 'Maelajada' during singing and hence the name of this form came in to existence. The song of Maelajada dance is very soothing, slow in tempo and melodious. It is of 6 matras (beat cycle). The dance also contains very simple and repeated steps.

## **4) Nachnia**

Nachnia is considered as one of the oldest folk-dance forms of western Odisha. Unlike Dalkhai it is performed mainly during social occasions like marriage ceremonies. The name was coined from the term Nachnia which means dancers. Basically, it is a male oriented dance form performed typically by male dancers who are known as the 'Nachnias' in the Sambalpuri language. In early days a group of

boys/male dancers would form a group and people would hire them for 'barati' (marriage processions). These groups of dancers also earn their livelihood from these performances. Earlier women were not allowed to go in marriage processions so only male dancers were hired.

Nachnia dance and music is quite different from other forms like Dalkhai, Rasarkeli, etc. The Nachnia rhythm goes in 8 matras according to classical music patterns, whereas the rest four forms constitute of 6 matras. But the tempo of each form is different. Basically, the songs of Nachnia dance are like a narration, the first step followed by speed up steps and movements with accompaniment of the rhythm. During the song session only the 'Dhol' is being played whereas after completion of the song the entire orchestra goes on beating in full swing.

These 'Nachnias' are being engaged in marriage ceremonies to make the procession melodious. The number of dancers in the group may vary. The lead dancer dresses himself like a king while holding a 'chamar' (a fan made up super soft hair like yak's tail used in India as a mark of royalty or in temples) in his hand. The rest of the dancers are known as the 'palias' who follow him throughout the performance. The 'Nachnias' take chapters from the epics and present them in a lyrical and lucid way during the performance.

### 5) Bajnia

The Bajnia is also another socio-cultural folk dance prevalent in western Odisha. The 'bajnias' are a community residing in this region and they are traditionally the drums players. They earn their livelihood by playing instruments at several religious, social, and cultural events. In Sambalpuri language, they are also termed as 'ganda baja', 'bajnia baja', 'dulduli' etc. During their performances they play a variety of rhythms punched together, and this is called the bajnia dance or song. This is also a male oriented dance form, as all the drummers are male. They also perform many acrobatic movements during this dance. Now a days this dance-song is being combined in various other compositions and even performed by female dancers. The tempo of the dance is very high. The music of this dance consists of 6 matras. During the song small phrases are also being used which are called 'chhata'/chhatka.

**Figure 2**



## 6. CHANGES IN SAMBALPURI MUSIC AND DANCE

All cultures are dynamic and constantly changing. No matter what culture a people are a part of one thing is for certain, it will change. In process of diffusion, cultural traits/elements move from one culture to another. When cultures change, it exerts its impact on the life of people and a chain of transformation has taken place in various aspects of culture of almost all societies. Sambalpuri dance and music are undergoing changes in its rhythm, costumes, steps, instruments.

The kind of musical instruments in use have also undergone changes. The instruments' manufacturing materials have likewise evolved. They were previously made up of clay, iron, leather, and ropes derived from various creepers. Clay and leather instruments are replaced with plastic and tin instruments called Tasa and Timkidi. Due to the challenging method of creating the instruments, the scarcity of natural materials, the instruments' low durability, the need for constant maintenance, and the overall decline in demand for handcrafted instruments, indigenous people have also given up on creating traditional instruments. This has forced them to change their age-old occupation.

A large number of traditional costumes are no longer in use. The dancers are currently dressed in a few new outfits that are less costly and readily available in the market. Sambalpuri dancers often wear handloom sarees along with the traditional Sambalpuri Saptapar, which is an enduring emblem of Sambalpuri handloom. The majority of sarees combine the colors red, black, and white. However, these days, dancers wear any kind of Sambalpuri saree when performing on stage. They are also seen to be dressed in cotton sarees with Sambalpuri designs on them. The respondents cited the high cost of typical Sambalpuri handloom sarees as one of the causes. During performances, the dancers adorn various body parts such as the hair, ear, nose, neck, arm, hand, waist, finger, ankle, and toes, with various types of jewellery. However, these decorations these days have undergone significant modifications. Not all of the customary decorations are being worn by them. Both contemporary and traditional ornamentation are being used. Many types of dance ornaments are now easily found on the market for extremely low prices. So, the use of those jewelleries has increased now a day.

There have also been observed changes in dance steps over time. The Sambalpuri dance's traditional steps are straight forward and repetitive. The current generation of choreographers is changing dance and music rhythms to make them more popular and stage-oriented. Facial expression is highly valued in classical dance and not in folk dance. To make Sambalpuri folk dance more striking, modern gestures and facial expressions have been incorporated.

Numerous internal and external factors are causing changes in the Sambalpuri dance and music. The various social transformation processes, such as modernization and westernization, are the external factors. The distinctiveness of Sambalpuri music and dance should not be lost in the blending with modernity. Documenting the traditional elements of Sambalpuri music and dance is therefore crucial.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Sambalpuri music and dance are no more restricted in Sambalpur or Odisha only. It has occupied a special place at national and international level as one of the most popular folk music and dances. The five types of dances described above are based on Panchbadya. Besides the dances based on Panchbadya there are many

other forms of Sambalpuri dances in western Odisha. However, these are the most popular form of Sambalpuri folk dance. Dalkhai, Rasarkeli and Maelajada are the three types of dances where both male and females participate. But only males participate in Nachnia and Bajnia. Now a day female dancers are also going with the Nachnia troop in some places. Besides this, changes in dance step, costume and musical instruments are being noticed now a day. The major reasons of these changes are the different processes of social change like modernisation, westernisation, globalisation, digitalisation etc. Change is unavoidable. But the original elements of Sambalpuri dance and music should not be diluted in and under the name of change. Certain benchmarks should be fixed in both Sambalpuri dance and music which would be the basics and unique features of Sambalpuri dance and music which should not change irrespective of time and space.

### **CONFLICT OF INTERESTS**

None.

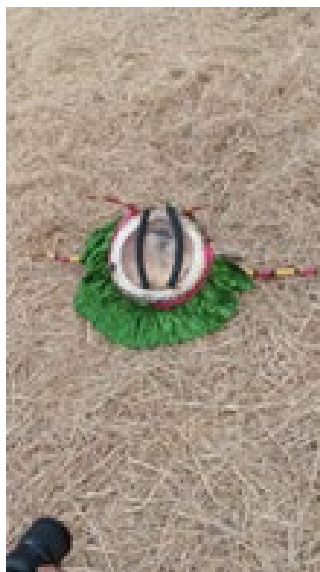
### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

None.

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## PICTURES OF PANCHBADYA





### PICTURES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF DANCES





