
Rhythms of Tradition Explores the Rich Heritage of Folk Music and Dance in Western Odisha

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Abstract: *This study explores the rich heritage of folk music and dance in Western Odisha, delving into its cultural, spiritual, and social significance. Western Odisha is home to folk traditions such as Ghumura, Danda, Leela, Dhap, Sankirtan, and Daskathia, all of which reflect the region's deep historical and religious roots. These performances are not merely artistic expressions but serve as vehicles for transmitting cultural knowledge, reinforcing community bonds, and maintaining religious and spiritual practices. Instruments like Ghudka, Sarangi, and Devgunia are integral to these performances, symbolizing identity and tradition. The study reveals that many of these traditions are tied to religious rituals and agricultural cycles, with performances occurring during specific festivals or times of the year.*

Furthermore, the research highlights the role of these folk traditions in social functions, particularly in promoting community cohesion and facilitating courtship among youth. However, the influence of modernization, coupled with a lack of formal documentation, poses challenges to preserving these traditions. The increasing popularity of classical dance forms like Odissi in the region adds to the cultural transformation.

The discussion emphasizes the need for institutional support and more excellent documentation to preserve these folk traditions for future generations. Festivals, workshops, and financial support for folk artists are proposed as potential solutions to safeguard this intangible cultural heritage. In conclusion, while the folk music and dance of Western Odisha continue to thrive, proactive efforts are essential to protect and sustain these traditions in the face of modern challenges.

Keywords: *Folk Music, Dance Traditions, Cultural Heritage, Emotional Expression, West Odisha, Community Connections.*



1. INTRODUCTION

West Odisha boasts a rich and varied cultural heritage, highlighted by its vibrant folk traditions of songs and dances. The rhythmic dances, accompanied by diverse melodies and instruments, have consistently provided a source of merriment and joy for people across different regions and ages. In this context, West Odisha is no exception. While the exact origins of music and dance in this region remain uncertain, it is evident that each activity or ritual is associated with a specific type of folk music.

Folk songs cater to various occasions and activities, including work, games, nurturing babies, celebrations, weddings, and ceremonies. They also reflect deeper emotions, addressing themes of grief and loss during funerals. These songs can be performed solo or in groups, mirroring the communal spirit of the accompanying dances. The interplay between music and dance enhances the celebratory atmosphere of these occasions and serves as a means of preserving cultural identity and fostering social cohesion within the community.

Folk music and dance serve as vital expressions of cultural identity, reflecting a region's historical, social, and spiritual nuances. In Western Odisha, these art forms are deeply embedded in the community's traditions, rituals, and daily life, offering insights into the values and beliefs of the people. The rich tapestry of Western Odisha's folk music includes various genres, such as Dalkhai, Jhumar, and Sambalpuri, each characterized by distinct rhythms and themes that resonate with the local populace [1]. Similarly, the region's dances, such as Dalkhai and Rudra Nacha, are not merely performance arts but communal events reinforcing social bonds and cultural heritage [2].

Studies indicate that folk music and dance in Western Odisha play crucial roles in preserving cultural narratives and fostering community cohesion (Patnaik, 2021). These traditions have survived generations, often adapting to contemporary influences while maintaining their core essence. The interrelationship between music, dance, and community rituals underscores these art forms' importance in Odisha's cultural landscape [3].

This paper aims to explore the multifaceted dimensions of folk music and dance in Western Odisha, analyzing their historical significance, cultural relevance, and contemporary transformations. By examining these art forms, we seek to highlight their role in shaping and preserving the identity of the communities in Western Odisha.

Folk Songs of West Odisha

Chhua Sueiba Geeta (Lullaby Songs)

Lullabies, or Chhua Sueiba geeta, are a significant aspect of the folk music tradition in West Odisha. While lullabies can be found in nearly every region of India, the lullabies of this area possess unique characteristics. Illiterate mothers often sing these rhythmic songs while gently patting their children to induce sleep. Remarkably, no musical instruments accompany these performances; the nonsensical lyrics evoke vivid imagery, captivating the child's imagination [4]. An example of such a lullaby is:

"Kaaure nida jaaure nida jaan. Aasuthibure kokominaa, mor geleike nebu sinaare nebu sinaa..."

Chhua Bhuruta Geeta (Songs to Console the Child)

When a child becomes restless, elders sing Chhua bhuruta Geeta to soothe and divert their attention. These comforting songs reference the moon, animals, birds, demons, and spirits, providing a playful context for calming the child. Typically sung during bathing or feeding, these songs are performed solo and without musical accompaniment [5]. An example of a consolatory song is:

"Ashaare mor dhanamali, aamar kunaake ke delaa gasli, dhana rasa bahe thaali thaal."

Khela Geeta (Game Songs of Children)

For entertainment, Khela geeta, or game songs, are sung by adolescent girls in rural areas. These songs not only showcase the creativity of the singers but also foster a sense of community. This category includes popular songs such as Bandi, Chhilolai, Bahadia Camden, Kukila, Boria, Banguri, and Bangwri. In districts like Balangir, Kukila is famous, while Boria enjoys popularity in Kalahandi and Nuapada [6]. While playing games, children often form two groups, singing and reciting lines of these songs impromptu. An example of a game song is:

"Chhilolaan, aa khelmaa baai, baai galaa rusi, aago maa piusi..."

Sajani, Galara, and Duli Geeta (Songs of Young Girls)

The Sajani and Galara songs are sung in chorus and solo, allowing women to express their inner feelings and emotions. The Duli geeta (swing song) is particularly harmonious, sung without instruments while swinging, capturing the moment's joy. An example of a Duli Geeta is:

"Gaan khuli achhe dulire sajani, gaanra gauntiaa fandichhe duli, tukel dulibe balire sajani." [7]

Kandana Geeta (Mourning Songs)

Mourning songs, or Kandana geeta, are traditionally sung by brides as they leave their parental homes, with other family members, especially women, joining in the lament. These songs are also performed to mourn the loss of a family member. An example of a Kandana Geeta is:

"Manchara upare gadu gilaasa, nananda galaaboli heba usaasa bahugo." [8]

Halia Geeta (Plough Man's Song)

Halia geeta, or ploughman's songs, are primitive folk songs generally sung by men to alleviate the labour of tilling the fields. Themes in these songs often revolve around mythology, familial issues, and agricultural practices. Women frequently accompany men while transplanting saplings in the fields, and similar genres include Sagadia geeta (cartman's song) and Nauria geeta (boatman's song), all performed without musical instruments. An example of a Halia Geeta is:

"Bailuare, hala fandigale kazen ho kabaraa kasaran. halaai maarile gaan chaari taraa, thira neidebu huhulo kamala tor bhaai bhukhe malaa kaen..." [9]



Dalkhaai

Dalkhaai is a traditional song and dance of West Odisha, performed during the Durgastanu festival in the month of Dussera or Aswin. Sisters worship the goddess Durga for the long life of their brothers, accompanied by the rhythmic sounds of the dhunkel and other traditional instruments like dhol, nisan, tasa, mahuri, and jhanj. After the rituals, young girls sing Dalkhai songs and dance, often incorporating romantic and erotic themes during marriage ceremonies. An example of a Dalkhaai song is:

"Daalkhaaire, aahaare tiki chaahaani, sukhigalaa nanir muhanra chaahaani, tel haldi rakhithaa ghini kanen daalkhaaire..." [10]

Rasarkeli, Maelajada, Jaifula, Janhifula, Chapkarati, Bajasal (Songs of the Dalkhaai Group)

These songs are connected with dance and instrumental performances, often sung during social functions like weddings. They belong to the Dalkhaai variety and utilize the same instruments as the Dalkhaai songs. Chapkarati and Bajasal are popular dance forms within this group, particularly in Kalahandi and Nuapada districts. An example of a song from this group is:

"Rasar kelibo, suru suru gunchaa musha kunchi kunchi baala, atara messai ame maakhuthilun tela, dut paesaa jadaa tela baula kaaen maliphula chakaa chamki pakaa..."

Another example is:

"Tor kathaa lada badare maelaa jada, jadake nenti badagadare maelaa jada, jadara bhangijibaa haadare maelaa jada..."

And:

"Jaaiphulare, tendaa paati, labanga laathi, muin jaaithili besara baati, jaaiphulare kie hitaaila taati..." [11]

Nachania (The Dancers)

The Nachania are performers who sing and dance at weddings, accompanying the bridegroom in the barat (wedding procession) and the bride when she returns home in a palanquin. This style is known as Dulha Biha in the Gness and Padampur areas of the Bargarh district. Dancers typically sing solo in their unique style, also called Lahaki. An example of a Nachania song is:

"Khelikhiaa jhia gharu helaa baahaara, chauda bakharaa ghara kaatichhe gaarare, khelikhiaa jhia gharu helaa baahaara..." [12]

Bajania (The Drumbeaters)

The Bajania, or drum beaters, create a concert atmosphere with their folk instruments, singing typical songs in rhythm with drums and other instruments. An example of a song performed by the Bajania is:

"Kanli baaunsar paatire mor dhana, Kanli baaunsar paati ukiaa disuchhe janaka rati tor ta paase paase basithitire laal sindhiri leti..."

Traditional Dances and Songs of West Odisha

Gourbadi (The Stick of the Goudas)

The Gourbadi dance is performed by the Goud community, known for rearing cattle, who dance with bamboo sticks while singing traditional songs drawn from various scriptures. During marriages, they also perform songs accompanied by the Bhalu Baengi, a long flute made of bamboo measuring about 3 to 3.5 feet. An example of a song from this tradition is:

"Siri siri Ram ho, ainraa ta ainraare bhaai paean haandir aenraa; jaahaa bihaa hei aaichhan, kaahaarir naaina cheheraaho...."

Danda (The Stick)

In the districts of Jharsuguda and Bargarh, the Danda dance is characterized by male performers dancing with solid bamboo sticks approximately two feet long. This energetic dance is accompanied by the rhythmic beats of the mridanga or mardala, typically performed during the month of Pousa

Gopalanka Ogala (The Dance of the Cowherds)

The Gopalanka Ogala dance is performed by the Nanda Goudia community, where they sing loudly and primarily use the dhap as their musical instrument. This vibrant dance occurs during the Dola Poornima festivities and is often seen in Dhanupali Sambalpur.

Banabadi (The Painted Stick)

In the districts of Kalahandi and Nuapada, the Banabadi dance features painted sticks performed by the Mathurapuria Gouda community. The dance begins on the 25th day of Kartika and continues until the 25th day of Magha. The sticks, made from the sturdy kendu tree, are approximately ten feet long, and the performance incorporates songs accompanied by various instruments, including the flute, timkidi, chadchadi, and small dhols.

Dandari (A Typical Stick)

The Dandari dance is a traditional performance by the Bhatra tribal community of Kalahandi and Nuapada during Pousa, near the deity Metma. Musicians play instruments like the madli, thulkuda, and timtimi while dancers perform to the music.

Karma (A Dance in the Name of Goddess Karamsani)

Karma is a significant dance form performed by tribal and non-tribal communities in West Odisha, deeply intertwined with religious practices. On the 26th day of Bhadra, people collect Karma branches and worship them; dancing in slow rhythms to the mandal and jhanj tunes while singing devotional songs. Women in colourful sarees often dance in unison, celebrating Karamsani, the goddess of work and duty. An example of a Karma song is:

"Juhaar maago Karamsaani, aputrike putra daani, dayaa karithibu maago mate, sahe putra dhana debu maa. guhaalake dhana debu...."

Kalangi

Like the Karma dance, Kalangi is performed in the Bodasambar area of Padampur. This dance also features jhumer-style songs, with performers wearing a crown-like accessory

called kalangi. Instruments such as the mandal, nisan, and mahuri accompany the performance.

Madli (Music with Small Mandal)

The Madli dance, featuring a small mandal, is performed by the Gond tribal community in Kalahandi from the month of Margashir to the car festival in Asadha. The dance is dedicated to God Budharaja, during which agricultural and fishing implements are exhibited.

Sanchar (The Dance with Trio)

Sanchar is a unique folk dance that originated during the visit of Sri Chaitanya to Orissa. It is performed by three dancers, where the mridanga player serves as the leading performer, singing, beating the drum, and dancing simultaneously. The dancers often sing songs from scriptures that focus on social themes.

Samparda (The Yatra)

Samparda is a male-oriented group dance accompanied by mridanga and karatalas. Participants sing songs in the name of Sri Krishna and dance in two lines. This dance is performed annually during various religious occasions, showcasing different styles and rhythms.

Traditional Performances in West Odisha

Sankirtan (The Devotional Dance)

Sankirtan is a vibrant dance and musical form closely associated with Krishna Leela, manifesting in two distinct styles: Uddanda Sankirtan and Rangeen Sankirtan. The Uddanda Sankirtan, rooted in the teachings of Sri Chaitanya, involves singers and dancers utilizing instruments such as the mridanga, gini, and kathia during their performance. In contrast, Rangeen Sankirtan features lighter songs, creating a more relaxed atmosphere. This form of performance emphasizes devotion and community engagement.

Danda (The Penance)

The Danda performance commences on the night of the full moon in Chaitra and continues until Maha Visuba Sankranti. This tradition originated in the Boudh district when Buddhism was prevalent over Shaivism and spread to the Sonapur (Subarnapur) area. There are two main types of Danda: Suanga Danda, associated with Shiva and based on sixteen narratives, and Leela Danda, which revolves around the tales of Krishna. Both forms utilize instruments such as the large danda, dhol, mandal, and jhanj, with the flute sometimes accompanying the songs. The Leela Danda is particularly famous in the Balangir and Sambalpur districts.

Krishnaguru (Devotional Songs on Lord Krishna)

The Krishnaguru sect's devotees perform folk songs on the full moon days of Magha, Falguna, Chaitra, and Baishakh, engaging in group singing of Krishnaguru bhajans. Participants, regardless of gender, actively join in these devotional gatherings. While singing, they utilize instruments such as the khanjani, mandal, ramtali, and kathia, although this

performance does not involve dancing. The emphasis lies on communal devotion and the celebration of faith.

Pala

Pala is a prominent performing art in Odisha, having migrated from northern regions to West Odisha, where it is associated with the worship of Satyapir Baba, representing a blend of Hindu and Muslim traditions. This art form has evolved from its origins in Badi Pala and Baithaki Pala to take the form of Thia Pala (Standing Pala). During a Pala performance, 4-5 participants, adorned in elegant costumes, use instruments like the mridanga and jhanja while singing from scriptures and literature. The performance is characterized by its dramatic nature, featuring a primary singer with 3-4 followers. Pala performances often span sixteen days and are showcased during various social occasions.

Traditional Music and Dance Forms in Odisha

Daskathia

Daskathia resembles Thia Pala, having its origins in South Odisha. This performance art incorporates subjects from mythology and social events, rendered dramatically through singing and dancing. Performers utilize a pair of wooden sticks made from sisum branches, skillfully creating rhythmic sounds by manipulating the sticks with their fingers. Additionally, they incorporate the ramtali, a percussion instrument, to enhance the musical experience.

Ghudka

Ghudka, also known as Ghubukudu, is a unique musical instrument crafted from a hollow wooden cylinder approximately one foot long, with one end covered by the skin of a monkey or iguana. A skin rope is tied to the covering, which the player holds with their left hand while using their right hand to manipulate the rope, producing rhythmic hollow sounds. This instrument is predominantly used by the Sabar community in the Sambalpur, Balangir, and Kalahandi districts, who sing songs accompanied by the ghudka beat, thereby sustaining their livelihoods.

Sarangi

The Sarangi, or Kendara, is a stringed instrument favoured by the Natha Jogis. Constructed with a bamboo stick approximately one to a half feet long, it features a hard coconut shell covered with iguana skin. When rubbed with a slight bow made of horsehair, it produces musical sounds. The Natha Jogis utilize this instrument during performances that evoke pathos and deep devotion, enhancing the emotional impact of their songs.[11]

Daka (The Call)

In the dense forests, the Kandhs use Daka music to communicate between villages and as a call to their presiding deity. The primary instrument in this performance is the Nisan, complemented by tasa, Madhuri, jhanj, and tankini. The dancers, adorned with traditional weapons, perform Daka songs during the Meia Yatra, celebrated in Pousa or Chaitra, particularly in the Balangir and Kalahandi districts.



Dhap

Dhap is a primitive musical instrument used by the Kondhs during communal dances. Young unmarried boys and girls participate together, playing both dhap and ramtali. The songs sung during these dances often focus on romantic themes, providing a platform for courtship among the youth. Notably, boys and girls from the same village or clan do not dance dhap together. This dance form is prevalent in the Balangir and Kalahandi districts.

Ghumura

Ghumura is a celebrated dance form in the Kalahandi and Nuapada districts. The ghumura instrument, resembling a minor clay pitcher, has its mouth covered with iguana skin. Dancers tie the ghumura to their waists while singing songs related to mythology, history, or social contexts. The performance, typically accompanied by instruments like mandal, Turi, jhanj, and a small Nisan, usually begins on the eighth day of Dussehra or Aswin.[5]

Leela

Leela, famous in the Bargarh and Jharsuguda districts, is akin to operas, drawing inspiration from mythological stories. Known by various names such as Sabar Leela, Ram Leela, Krishna Leela, or Laxmi Puran, the performers present these narratives on makeshift stages, utilizing costumes and makeup. The dialogues are predominantly delivered in song form, enhancing the theatrical experience. Instruments such as mandal, gini, flute, and harmonium are integral to the performance.

Devgunia

The Devgunia community, residing in Bargarh, Balangir, and Kalahandi districts, engages in door-to-door singing while playing the tal ainla veena, which consists of a three-foot-long bamboo stick attached to a dry gourd. The community's songs primarily pertain to Laxmi Puran, showcasing their rich cultural heritage.[8]

Dhunkel

Dhunkel is an instrument crafted from an earthen pot, with corrugated bamboo attached to it using a winnowing wind. This design produces a distinctive musical sound. Musicians sing songs in rhythm with the sounds generated by the dhunkel. This instrument is notably played during Dussehra and Kartik, with players narrating various stories throughout the night. The Dhunkel is particularly prominent in the Bonai Sub-Division of Sundargarh district during the famous Ghiri Ghiri Yatra.[6]

Occupational Folk Songs and Cultural Revival in West Odisha

Odisha's folk traditions, deeply intertwined with local communities and agricultural life, include vibrant occupational songs like Ghoon Ghoon Nadia, Khatli Mangla, and Sarab Mangla. These performances, often accompanied by instruments like the runju baja or rhythmic bells, showcase the region's rich cultural heritage and daily practices. The revival of Odissi classical dance has dramatically influenced the region, especially in Western Odisha, where it has gained widespread popularity among younger generations. This resurgence has helped bridge generational gaps and foster cultural identity. Despite British and native rule

influencing the region's unity, Odisha's culture continues to evolve, integrating diverse influences beyond its geographical borders.[11]

2. RELATED WORKS

Tripathy, J. P. (2021): Tripathy's comprehensive study covers Odisha's diverse performing arts, including folk and classical traditions. It highlights the historical and cultural significance of various dance forms and musical genres, with specific case studies from Western Odisha, emphasizing the role of these traditions in local communities.[6]

Kar, A. K. (2022): Kar explores the indigenous music and dance forms of Odisha, focusing on the unique traditions of Western Odisha. Using an ethnographic approach, the book documents instruments, dance forms, and performances, offering insights into how these traditions are passed down through generations.[13]

Pattnaik, M. S. (2018): Pattnaik's book examines Odisha's folklore, particularly the folk music and dance of Western Odisha. It discusses their origins, development, and cultural roles in storytelling, religious expression, and community life, providing valuable context for understanding these traditions.[14]

Barik, B. C. (2020): Barik's study delves into the rural arts of Odisha, with a focus on folk traditions like Danda, Ghumura, and Dhap. It analyzes their musical and choreographic structures and examines how these traditions have adapted to modernization, offering insights into their dynamic nature.[15]

Choudhury, S. K. (2021): Choudhury's work examines the relationship between Odisha's festival songs and rituals, focusing on how music and dance are integral to religious and festive contexts. It highlights how these traditions are preserved and celebrated during festivals, offering a ritualistic perspective on Western Odisha's cultural heritage.[16]

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This qualitative study uses ethnographic and comparative methods to explore the cultural significance, historical development, and performance practices of folk music and dance in Western Odisha, utilizing primary and secondary data sources such as interviews, observations, archival research, and literature review.

Data Collection Methods:

- **Fieldwork:** Ethnographic observations during festivals and performances in Western Odisha (e.g., Danda, Ghumura) to study instruments, choreography, and practices.
- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews with local artists and scholars on folk traditions' historical and cultural significance.
- **Archival Research:** Analysis of historical records to trace the evolution of these traditions.



Sampling Strategy:

- Purposive Sampling: Folk artists and sites were selected for in-depth interviews and case studies, focusing on specific communities and festivals.
- Case Study Approach: Detailed examination of critical folk traditions like Danda and Ghumura.

Comparative Analysis: Folk traditions of Western Odisha were compared with those of coastal regions, especially Odissi dance, to explore regional variations in music, instruments, and themes.

Data Analysis:

- Thematic Analysis: Identification of themes such as ritual significance, cultural identity, and adaptation to modernity.
- Descriptive and Analytical Tools: Documentation of folk traditions' instruments, costumes, and symbolic meanings.

Validation of Data:

- Triangulation: Cross-referencing data from interviews, fieldwork, archives, and literature to ensure reliability.
- Peer Review: Consultation with experts and cultural practitioners for validation of findings.

Ethical Considerations:

- Informed Consent: Participants were informed about the research and assured confidentiality.
- Cultural Respect: Care was taken to respect the traditions and avoid misrepresenting or exploiting the folk artists.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Diversity and Richness of Folk Traditions

The research uncovered the extensive variety of Western Odisha folk music and dance traditions. From dances like Ghumura, Danda, Leela, and Dhap to unique musical instruments such as Ghudka, Sarangi, and Devgunia, the study highlighted how these art forms serve as both entertainment and a means of preserving cultural heritage. The distinctiveness of these traditions, especially their association with specific communities, festivals, and rituals, emphasizes the region's unique cultural landscape.

Key Findings:

- The folk traditions in Western Odisha are deeply connected to the socio-religious life of the communities. For instance, Danda, performed during Chaitra, has roots in Shaivism and Buddhism, reflecting the region's historical religious influences.
- Instruments like Ghudka, made from hollow wood covered with animal skin, and Ghumura, made from clay and animal hide, are not just musical tools but cultural symbols tied to the identity of the communities.

Ritualistic and Spiritual Significance

The study revealed that many of these folk performances are integral to the religious and spiritual life of the people. Performances like Danda, Karma, and Sankirtan are closely tied to religious observances and are performed to appease deities, celebrate the seasons, or mark agricultural cycles. The spiritual significance is seen in dances like Karma, dedicated to the goddess Karamsani, and Sankirtan, associated with Lord Krishna.

Key Discussion Points:

- The cyclical nature of performances, tied to agricultural and seasonal changes, reflects the rural roots of the communities. Rituals like worshipping Karma branches during Karma dance symbolize a deep respect for nature and fertility.
- Many performances involve invoking deities, highlighting the spiritual connection between the performers, the art form, and the divine. For example, Leela's performances of Krishna and Ram are more than just entertainment; they are enactments of devotion.

Transmission of Cultural Knowledge

A significant theme identified was the role of these folk traditions in transmitting cultural knowledge and values across generations. The stories, myths, and values embedded in performances such as Leela, Ghumura, and Daskathia serve as oral histories, preserving the region's cultural heritage. These performances are often passed down through generations, preserving the community's ancestral practices and beliefs.

Key Findings:

- Performances like Leela and Daskathia retell mythological stories and historical events, allowing for the transmission of moral and ethical lessons to younger generations. The performance of these narratives serves both as education and entertainment.
- The use of traditional instruments and costumes, as seen in Ghumura and Danda, is a crucial method for maintaining the identity of these folk traditions. This also underscores the importance of community participation in preserving their heritage.

Folk Music and Dance as Social Functions

The research also identified the social functions of these traditions, especially their role in community bonding, courtship, and celebration. For example, dances like Dhap, performed by unmarried boys and girls, serve as a medium for courtship. These performances help reinforce social bonds and facilitate community cohesion.

Discussion Points:

- The social aspect of folk performances is particularly evident in dances like Dhap, where boys and girls from different clans engage in courtship rituals. This fosters social interaction and aids in the continuity of cultural practices.
- The group performances, like Sankirtan and Samparda, involve collective participation, promoting unity and social harmony within the community.

Impact of Modernization

The blending of folk traditions with classical forms like Odissi enriches cultural diversity but also risks diluting the authenticity of traditional practices.

Key Findings:



- The rising popularity of Odissi in Western Odisha shows how classical forms can coexist with folk traditions. Still, it also raises questions about the sustainability of indigenous practices as younger generations gravitate towards more formalized, popular forms of dance.
- Modern instruments and performance spaces are slowly replacing traditional ones, which may lead to a loss of authenticity in some folk traditions.

Challenges in Preservation

The study identified several challenges in preserving these folk traditions, such as lacking formal documentation, dwindling community participation, and economic factors. As many folk artists earn a living through their performances, financial instability often hinders their ability to continue practicing and transmitting these traditions.

Discussion:

- There is a need for more excellent institutional support and documentation efforts to ensure these folk traditions are preserved for future generations. Local cultural institutions and government bodies must invest in safeguarding these intangible cultural heritages.
- Efforts like organizing festivals, competitions, and workshops could help revive interest among younger generations and provide economic support to folk artists.

Cultural Identity and Regional Pride

Finally, the study highlighted the deep connection between these folk traditions and the regional identity of Western Odisha. The region's unique cultural practices, music, and dance distinguish it from other parts of Odisha and form an essential part of the people's pride in their heritage.

5. CONCLUSION

The research concludes that the folk music and dance traditions of Western Odisha are deeply intertwined with the region's social, religious, and cultural fabric. These traditions serve multiple purposes, from spiritual devotion to community bonding and cultural preservation. However, the influence of modernization and the lack of institutional support present significant challenges to their continued existence. To safeguard this cultural heritage, comprehensive efforts in documentation, financial support, and community engagement are necessary. The folk music and dance traditions of West Odisha reflect the rich cultural identity of the region, embodying the daily lives, beliefs, and values of its communities. From expressive songs like Sajani and Galara to poignant Kandana geeta and vibrant Dalkhai, these performances serve as vital forms of emotional expression and social connection. Occupational songs, such as Ghoon Ghoon Nadia and Janughanta Parsuram, highlight the link between cultural practices and local livelihoods. The revival of classical dance forms, especially Odissi, indicates a resurgence of cultural pride among the youth, bridging generational gaps and enriching traditional arts. This dynamic interplay between folk and classical elements showcases the fluidity of culture and the region's resilience. Ultimately, the cultural identity of West Odisha thrives on its vibrant folk music and dance, which preserve historical narratives and adapt to contemporary contexts.



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