

Representation of Culture in the Folk Dances of Rajasthan

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Abstract

Rajasthan, the princely state also known as 'The Lands of Kings', demonstrates India's entirely different and unique characteristics. With the verve of colour, spectacle and wild desert scenery, ancient forts formed Rajasthan as one of the most famous cultural states in the country. It is culturally rich and popular for its folk dances, music, festivals, fairs, art, palace, paintings and many more. The different nomadic desert lifestyles make it unique all over the world. It is renowned for possessing the most fascinating places in the world and is home to some of the oldest and most magnificent civilizations in terms of cultural legacy. It is currently recognised as having India's greatest regional economy. The region in its current configuration originated into subsistence as an accumulation of nineteen princely states and three chiefships, which were diverse in dimension, executive effectiveness and socio-economic progress at the time of the establishment of the state. In recent years, Rajasthan has been divided into several districts, and the folk dances of the state are specific to each district. The paper highlights the various dances that enhanced tourism and offered Rajasthan a distinct personality.

Keywords: Folk-Dance, Styles, Culture, Tradition, Dresses.

Introduction

Ethnological, Rajasthan express the wide-ranging pictures of many tribes which are encompassing here, such as the Meena, the Bhil, the Grasias, the Sehrias, the Rabaris, Sansis (the hereditary criminals), the Kamads, the Banjaras (nomads). The Gujjars or the Rathores are not tribes but are found in all parts of Rajasthan. Apart from these tribes, the agriculturists and the farmers are at varied phases of development; among them, they are in small groups such as the Khants, the Rawat, the Baoris, etc. The Bhats, the Charanas, the Dholis, the Bhavaiyas and the Merasis are found in Rajasthan. The arid environment and the hilly and great plains have formed the lives of various groups in several segments of Rajasthan. These people are resistant as they work persistently under hostile climatic situations. The robust men and women, who belong to the tribal community or rural parts, are recognized for their glorious folklore, folk dance and music. Rajasthan's graceful folk dances mirror the physio-geographical characteristics of the area, highlight the state's cultural diversity, and encompass elements of literary and artistic heritage.

The folk dances of Rajasthan originated from different folk art cultures. These dances have their meaning and consequences. The medieval past contains the presence of a princely state, which specified the support to these art forms and artists. Vivacious, exuberant and elegant, the folk dances of Rajasthan arouse its desert in all attitudes. The dances retrieved in limitless variants in

Rajasthan emphasize their desertedness, turning the area into a fertile basin of colour and creativity that manifests human emotions.

Different styles of Rajasthani folk dances

The convolution of cultures is the union of multiple civilisations that are steadfastly dedicated to their ancestors' customs. The original and local customs amalgamate with feudal sophistication and courtly manners. Tribal egalitarianism, brutal despotism, generous absolutism, business acumen, polytechnic dexterities and industrial companies have all contributed to shaping the cultural and social frame of Rajasthan.

The abundance of tribal and popular dances in this state and throughout the country is evidence of the rich diversity of Indian cultures. Rajasthan offers a wide variety of dances for every occasion and season. Over the decades' many Kings ruled over every region of the state; each region has its own culture; although they are similar due to the geographical confinements, each area expresses a different and exceptional style of their culture. The native people of Rajasthan value their culture; they still follow and live by their traditions and practices. The locals of the state are joyful and law-abiding, and they take great pleasure in their vibrant culture and magnificent festivals. The folk dances of every community are very enthralling and filled with life and vivacity. A variety of tribal ladies and other Rajasthani clans perform traditional folk dances from the era of royal Rajasthan.

The world knows Rajasthan as the exotic, cheerful state renowned for its traditional dances. The dances are a unique and significant part of life that helps to establish each community's unique identity. Each community and desert region has a special dance that both men and women do on significant occasions. The various dance forms practised by the various communities will be discussed.

Terahtali Dance

It is the extraordinary folk dance of Rajasthan only performed by the Kamad community of Rajasthan. The charismatic dance form is performed by both men and women with equal interest and passion. Terahtali the word 'Terah' denotes (thirteen) cymbals or 'manjeeras' to build rhythm to which dancers can perform their actions. This dance pays tribute to Kamad community hero Baba Ramdev. It is considered the holy dance form. 'Manjeeras' (the small brass discs are tied with a long string to the body) strings are entangled on the elbows, elbows, waists, wrists, and arms of the entertainer. Men play and sing on the "Tandoora," while women do exquisite and dexterous sitting posture dances to the powerful rhythmic beats of "Manjeeras." They dance while carrying pots and lit lamps on their heads and holding a sword between their teeth. Their act of balance generates the spectators amazed. The women perform various dance steps in front of the image of Baba Ramdev; chiefly the sitting position of women does not change but women slide shift on the ground. The male sings and performs on a single-string instrument called 'Ektara'. Through the dance, women

express thirteen gestures when thirteen manjiras are tied to the body of the dancer which portrays their agricultural works and actions such as preparing ghee, cutting and removing the corn, spinning, kneading the flour, milking cows, etc. and noteworthy part is that the dance movements resemble snakes postures. The different props used by performers, such as decorative swords that are artistically supported between the teeth and pots of decorative brass and the performers cover their heads with a decorative veil.

Geedar Dance

Geedar dance is mainly performed in the Shekhawati area by the tribes. It starts before the fifteen days of Holi. Women are not allowed to perform in this dance. Men dancers formed circles around the drums. As it is, the community dance takes place at the intersection of Holi and lasts all night. The reason it's called the democratic dance is that on the wooden platform, Hindus of all castes—upper and lower—join hands around the center of Nagara. The drummers beat a stick with each nagara beat, rising in pitch from low to high, and the performers produce sound with "ghungroos" fastened to their ankles. The dance form resembles the Gher dance in various steps. The main props used by men are sticks and drums. It is an important dance because it shows how various agricultural jobs and folktales are amalgamated at different levels.

Kathputli Dance

Kathputli dance denotes the 'dance of puppets'. Rajasthan is well known for its puppet-performing art. According to the report entitled "Strings and Stories: Katha Kathputli Ki, Jaipur" submitted by the undersigned Research Team, the puppet dance in Rajasthan is a thousand years old (2). It is believed the Bhat community of the state began the custom of Kathputli as a string marionette (Smith and Foley, 72). Puppetry originated in Nagaur and the surrounding areas, and it tells the story of the Rajasthani people's way of life. The various types of puppets are made for shows which include String Puppets, Shadow Puppets, Rod Puppets, and Glove Puppets. In Rajasthan, the famous Kathputliwalla operates the sting puppets and a woman beats the dholak (drum) to create an exceptional rhythm, movement, music and sound as she narrates the tale. The two-hour show is primarily performed at night. The wood is used to make the puppets' faces; it is also used to construct the upper portion and the chest, which is either made of wood or padded fabric. As a result, the numerous puppet characters have long skirts or cloaks that draw attention to their lower limbs. Threads are intertwined to the head, necks, hands, joints of elbows and other parts of the puppet. It specifies the chances that they will manifest. The puppets' performance of a story originates from Rajasthani history and is based on stories from the Panchatantra and Ramayana as well as heroic tales like that of Prithviraj Rathore. When manipulating the threads, a skilled Kathputliwalla's sharpness is evident; the puppet dances by twisting, twirling, and falling in a beautiful way. It has become the conventional form of entertainment. The purpose of this entertainment through puppet dance is to increase the cognizance and awareness among the people.

Puppeteers travel from one village to another; thus; this is considered a travelling form of performing.

Therefore, Kathputli dance is significant in Rajasthan custom, further, several NGOs and organizations work to preserve this artistic form. Nowadays, Rajasthan puppetry is used in education and other media non-formal institutions. The Ngo 'Rupayan Sansthan' in Jodhpur and 'Bharatiya Lok Kala Mandal' in Udaipur are supporting the Kathputli dance form and construction awareness through various shows.

Fire Dance (Agni Nartya)

The Jasnathis, who represent the Bikaner and Churu regions, are known for their fire dance. The Jasnathis from these two districts are well-known throughout Rajasthan for their tantric abilities. The fire dance depicts the lifestyle of 'Jasnathis'. It is a type of devotional dance and performed during winter nights, throughout the mela (fair) held in memory of Siddh Jats. It is also performed during different occasions such as Holi, Janmashtami, etc. The dance is performed on a huge surface of charcoal and live wood. The men and boys from Jasnathis community jump onto the fire and dance over it, accompanied by drum beats. This dancing style uses the dholak, nagara, and dhol as its musical instruments. The drumbeats coming from these instruments determine the speed of the dancers. The dancers gain up speed and fling the fiery embers at others, yet their acts do no harm because they possess supernatural skills. The dancers are not burned out after thirty minutes of dancing. This dance and location are known for its enormous bed of flaming coal during performances.

Kacchi Ghodi Dance

This dancing style is popular in the eastern regions of Rajasthan. Normally, the dance is performed on the dhol and turhi (brass wind instrument) beats and a maximum of four or five dancers execute the dance to entertain the bridegroom's party.

Dancers performing a warrior act riding dummy horses are featured at the Kacchi Ghodi. They demonstrate the value of a sword and shield, perform in a moving circle, and strike each other in the air. The dancers use a horse consisting of two little bamboo twigs with two carriers attached to each end. The creative head of the horse is set on one basket and the other is a bunch of flax-fibre. In order to create a realistic effect, the dancer who is costumed as the bridegroom adjusts the horse around his waist while carrying a sword in one hand. The steps are bouncy and angular. These dancers are exclusively called to perform their art during marriage. Despite its superficiality, the Kacchi Ghodi has been secularized in modern times and the live character is the kinematic counterpart of the kshetrapal (sentinel of the area). The original association has remarkably

disappeared, but many village communities have managed to keep the form and transmit it to other social groups.

Ghoomer Dances

The Ghoomar follows the Hindi word (Pirouette). Ghoomar denotes the round 'ghoomna' or the Rajasthani women's 'ghaghra', or long skirt. It is a celebrated Rajasthani folk dance that is performed by the Bhil tribal group. The women perform the Bhil community dance on various occasions, such as fairs and festivals. The elegant meandering of the long skirt (ghaghra) demonstrates the vibrant hues as it glides with the dance moves.

The circle dance is performed in every season, with the limb movements growing more and more remarkable and skilful as the dance progresses. Ghoomer is a dance in which men and women move in half circles, with one half-circle for males and the other half-circle for women. During the performance, they follow the beat of the song while they sing and dance. The songs used in dance are based on glory, defeat and love. It is traditional to deny any synchronization with the musical instrument during the performance. There is no fixed age for women, whether old or young women can participate in it. The Ghoomer performance uses a unique style of footwork combined with simple, swinging, synchronising dancing steps to portray the essence of any given moment. There is no required time limit for the dance. At times, it continues for several hours or the entire night. The artist moves around a circle, making either clockwise or anticlockwise movements. The dancers' hands are used to dance in unison and occasionally to clap while dancing. They dance gracefully to every song's beat. The men and ladies participate in song to support the dancers as the dancing tempo intensifies.

Chari Dance

This prevalent dance is found in the Kisherigarh region of Rajasthan. Insufficient water is a known problem in many of Rajasthan's deserted areas. Women traditionally get water from a distance as part of their daily routine. These women go great distances to collect water in order to meet their daily necessities. The Chari dance is a way of expressing the act of balancing pots on the head. Women's renditions of the Chari dance use movement to express their happiness. During the dance, the performers balance the brass pots on their heads and dance on several steps using their hands to gain the perfect patterns of movements. In order to create an aesthetically pleasing performance, a variety of styles are employed. Cotton seeds are used to create flames that descend down the pot, and as a result, the dipping crowns create parts of an illuminated pattern while the dancers move gently over the floor. These dancing styles require a great deal of endurance and balance from the dancers. They display the body's numerous pliable functions while holding fiery brass pots atop their heads. It is the result of the diverse dance presentation. Thali, Dhol, and Bankia make up the orchestra. It's a joyful dance.

Ghair Dance

This is a well-known folk dance performed by the Bhil people of Rajasthan. This is a festival dance and performed on the occasion of Holi. Only men can do this dance, which is done to the sound of a large drum covered in brass plates. Dancing is an incredibly fascinating and thrilling activity because the dancers' movements quicken and they beat sticks in their hands to induce their moves to progress more rapidly.

Gher Ghemur Dance

One of the most simple dances in form as well as content among the Sansis begins with a slow movement in which men and women dance in separate lines at first, then alternatively form a circle. The tempo of the dance steadily picks up until each dancer is making both rotational motions along the edge of the circle and turning steps around their axis. The primary aspect of this dance is the hip movements. The vocal song and the instrumentation serve as a backdrop for the dancing. There is no slow dancing in these energetic movements.

Neja dance

The dance is performed by the Meena tribal community in the Kherwara and Dungarpur regions in the style of a musical dance game. Generally, it is performed on the third day after the Holi festival. The women created a huge pillar and pounded a coconut to its top, as they guarded the pillar by holding small sticks and beating the menfolk who attempted to climb on the pillar to grab the coconut. The women artists drive men away by hitting their sticks and whipping on male's backs.

Gauri Dance

In Rajasthan, the public dance drama took place during the day. It is the well-known dance of the Udaipur region's Bhil people. It is the holy and religious dance held in the month of Sravan and Bhadon. The Bhils tribe performed it to appease the Bhairavi, their Ishladeva. The folk dance, which lasts from morning to evening, is based on the life of Siva. During the monsoon or the rainy season, the community of Bhil tribal stays out of their houses for a month. It makes use of their opportunity to showcase their dancing performances, which are based on the tales of 'Bhoodhai', a Siva euphemism. The variety and colour of the Gauri dance remind us of the Kathakali dance of south India. The Bhiyanwad, Khadlia, bhoot, and tiger-boar phenomena hold great allure and influence for the Gauri community.

Bhavai Dance

It is the most difficult and remarkable dance of Rajasthan, which is performed by skilled artists only. The dance involved the veiled women dancers balancing eight or nine brass pitchers on their

heads and dancing simultaneously, pirouetting, and then turnaround with the soles making balance on their feet on the main part of the glass and sword's border.

Dancing was not given importance during the feudal system of medieval times. As a result, the talented dancers broke themselves from their respective community or caste and gradually set up a community of their own known as the Bhavai. The astounding speed and variety of acrobatic manoeuvres are the primary characteristics of the dance element of the dramatic performance Bhavai. The Bhavai learn to dance from their childhoods and rapidly become proficient professionals. Noticeably, women are not allowed to participate in it and only males play their roles. Despite their simple method, they are incredibly proficient and effective. This dance drama does not have any religious sentiments. The primary feature and themes of this dance are based on the regular life of villagers, the epic love of Dhola and Maru, and other historical events. These dancers are talented and adept in a variety of mediums, including acrobatics, dance, and music.

Valor Dance

It is the distinctive dance of the Garasia tribal community. There are two types of Garasia dance: the first is performed without music and is performed only by women. In the second, both men and women dance together in sequence with the help of beats of different forms of dhols. In this dance, the women jump more than they bend. In the second kind, the dancers in between use their facial expressions to convey the meanings of the songs. The menfolk occasionally wave swords, arrows, and bows while dancing. The dance has a calm rhythmic opening and a thrilling ending.

The dance is based on the song, which is centered around the lyrical beauty of the natural world—the massive mountains, the glistening night, the shining moon, the restless rivers, and the brilliant night—to symbolize the loving emotions. A well-selected action expresses the spirit and mood of the music. In contrast to other tribal dances, this one is very creative in that it aims to create a connection between gesture, speech, and sound. Moreover, the male's friendly and forceful movements in the desert provide space for the countryside's natural movements.

Kalbeliya Dance

The Kalbelias are known as the snake charmer community of Rajasthan; they are traditionally engaged in dance and music. Their usual dance Kalbeliya performed both single and occasionally with a partner. Kalbeliya and his wife are heavily dependent on their dance to boost their income and livelihood. As it is the snake-charmer community, their main work is catching snakes and trading snake venom. Due to this reason, their dance steps resemble the movements of a snake. Kalbeliya dance is commonly presented by a pair of two women at the center of the stage. After these women, another group of women joins them and dances in the same way. As each pair dances in a circle, their body parts swing lithely, leaving an impression on the spectator as their bodies are made of some flexible material like rubber.

The dancing beats quicken the pace and give each dance step a fast quality. A lot of scary and annoying steps are frequently involved in dancing, which exhausts the audience. The entire dance step relies significantly on "been" and "duff" music. The Kalbeliya dance was done during the Holi celebration, and audiences enjoyed it when they get together. While the other two artists spin around to maintain their position in the middle, the artists are forced to alternate between the corners and continuously slow down their movements in order to catch their breath. The beauty of dance lies in its ability to execute at a perfectly timed speed, leaving the spectator with the impression that every dancer is the same throughout the whole performance.

Damal Dance or Daff dance

It's a collective dance done in Shekhawati during Holi. Only men can do the damal dance; large groups of men congregate in one location and sing the unique tunes of the dance while moving and forwarding. During this dance, men sing a special kind of folk song called damal. The dance features very difficult time rhythms and slow moves. There are more songs in the dance and fewer dancing performances. This communal dance is performed without any discrimination based on caste.

It is recognised as the Shekhawati region's premier dance and is remarkable in its majesty and force. There is also a well-known Daff dancing style in Haryana. Some men in female costumes switch between singing and dancing the Daff, or playing the Duff and moving to every beat of the dance.. While dancing, they adopt various postures, sit, turn, and move anti-clockwise with the instrument. The songs sung during the dancing performances are called dhamals. During the song-free interval, a flute player leads the Daff musicians.

Rasiya Dance

It is the main dance of Bharatpur, Karauli and Deeg regions, and these areas are very much influenced by Braj culture. Hence, the lives of these areas are vibrant and colourful. The Rasiya Dancers are very skilled from the Deeg area that is thirty-three miles away from Bharatpur. The Rasiya Dancers sing and dance during the month of Phagun, which falls either during or after Holi. Several people are called from different villages and they proceed to perform on the massive Dhols. While one group of Rasiya plays with sticks, another sings. Several of them perform at Thalís, which are placed over earthen pitchers.

The dancers have long decorated sticks with colourful cotton tassels attached to them. The drums' beating determines the tempo. Because of their size, these drums require two or three people to manage each one. There's also collision between sticks and metal thalis placed above the mouths of earthen pots. It is only done by men; even men who dress like women can portray a feminine role. It is mostly done in the district of Bharatpur.

Chok Chandni Dance.

This dance, which is performed in the Shekhawati region during Ganesh Chaturthi, is the favorite of the children. All the performers are children who dance in beautiful costumes and clench artistic sticks in their hands. They emerge in little processions and sing and dance on their way back to their houses. Dance is more about exercise and passion than dancing. The dance is exceptional since it is a one-of-a-kind children's group event.

Rain Dance

The Bhils of the Udaipur region dance a certain way in order to appease the God of rain. They run outside and dance gleefully till the rain starts as the clouds begin to gather. The Bhils of the Udaipur region present a particular type of dance in a certain way to appease the God of rain. They run outside and dance gleefully at the sight of gathering clouds, till the rain showers. Sometimes, the Bhil girls gather in various groups in the jungle to sing and dance, while searching for a healthy buffalo to sacrifice to Goddess Kali, who is believed to be able to provide rain and alleviate droughts.

Folk Dance-Drama of Rajasthan

The folk dance dramas of Rajasthan have their special meaning. These dance dramas have developed both traditional and professional art. Every dance-drama variety existed at the time it was developed as traditional art. Later performers, however, transformed all the forms of dance theatre into professional art and turned it into a means of both entertainment and a living. These dramas are still supported by the Chaurahas, and the villagers organize the full evening's entertainment. In Rajasthan, viewing dance dramas is still very frequent.

Turra-Kalangi: It began to develop in the Udaipur region around sixty years ago. It was an intense demonstrating act where the folk poet employed philosophical themes like Shiva and Shakti. Gasain Tukhrangir and Fakir Shah Ali were the main promoters of this professional performance. 'Turra' denotes the symbol of Shiva and 'Kalangi' represents Shakti. Eventually, a dramatic form replaced the competitive poetic presentation style. In initial stages, only plays about Shiva and Shakti were composed and performed. However, following that, some historical and mythological tales were started, and contests were organized. The Turra Kalangi playhouse is constructed with wooden planks and embellished with zari work and multicoloured fabric. There are towers built along the edges of the main stage. There is a side designed for male characters and a side designed for feminine characters. With singing and dancing, these artists move to the main stage to join other artists there. The Turra Kalangi group sits on the main stage and another group assembles nearby, playing Naggara and Shehnai. During the performance of this theatrical drama, songs and poetry are prioritized over dance. The costume is also fascinating since the Turra performers wear Turra as their turban, and the Kalangi reciters wear Kolagi turbans.

Rasdhari: It was widespread over the entire state of Rajasthan. Approximately twenty years ago, the Rasdhari of Marwars gained popularity. However, the act is almost non-existent now. In the modern period, this form has once again gained complete recognition in the Mewar region. The style of this performance is different from the styles of other dance- dramas. The act of Rasdhari is performed on the ground without using any kind of stage. The most popular Rasdhari is based on the life of Ram. Dholak and Sarangi are utilised to assist with background song performance. All the characters appear to be singing and dancing while holding lances in their hands. This Rasdhari's conversation focuses mostly on the dance tunes. The roles of a female are played. The depiction of the scenes and story scenarios is made easier by the explanations.

Kuchamani Khyal:It almost exactly adheres to the Rasdhari style pattern. It is considered that the late Lachchi Ram of Kuchman was the producer of this dance-drama form. In this Khyal, the use of theatrical components is prevalent. The songs of Khyal have a lot of attraction and look a little more contemporary. During the Kyal performance, the dance acts are, more or less, like some of the Rasdhari. Some of the Kuchamani Khyal are 'Jiramangal', 'Chand Milagiri' and 'Ridmal'.

Khyals of Chirawa and Shekhavati: These Khyals are also known as 'Takhtator Nach' because of the supremacy of athletic actions. Both of the above-mentioned Khyals have a special place among the Rajasthani Khyals. These Khyals are thought to have originated a few years ago by the late Nanu. He performed it with great skill as well. Both of these types of Khyal are danced on a wooden platform, usually by one individual or alone. These folk plays, which are modelled after the Naggada plays, are comparable to Uttar Pradesh's Nautanki. It is a challenging and spirited dance. The vocalists of both Khyals project their voice so far that it may be heard miles away. The descriptive passages take precedence over the storyline in these dance dramas. Unlike the other folk plays, these dance dramas have a greater amount of singing and dancing. These are professional khyals, and only the Rajasthani "Mirasis" and "Dhobis" perform them.

The Rammate of Bikaner and Jaisalmer: Once more, it is a primary style of Khyals. However, neither Bikaner nor Jaisalmer's Rammates have grown professionally. These khyals are done in the well-known and traditional style. Mainly, they are for personal enjoyment. These dance dramas frequently have an acting-heavy cast. All the characters, fully makeup, sit on the stage together. When each performer has finished speaking in turn, they return and take their positions. These Rammate songs have a different "Rangat" than those of the other Khyals.

The Dance- Drama of Gandharva: These days, it is all but extinct. In Jain temples, the folk play is presented. It was an expression of devotion and a religious act. The performers regarded it as a spiritual act and were restricted to the Gandharv race. With little variations, the dramatic style was similar to that of the Khyal. The play "Maina Sundari" was the primary drama.

In conclusion, all these folk dances demonstrate the culture and life of common people and further, all dance-drama successfully portrays the social lives of people residing in various parts of

Rajasthan. Folk dancers are passionate about what they do and have a good understanding of the traditions. Folk dances work as a remedy because they have a positive effect on every performer, whereas adults, young people, and children can easily demonstrate their thoughts and feelings through an array of dances. Thus, the paper covered folk dances which are the inner element of Rajasthani culture and every form of dance endeavours to preserve the customs and distinctive cultural identity. Rajasthan's folk dances are a part of the nation's legacy and draw tourists from all over the world. Folk dances contribute to socio-cultural development and offer diverse perspectives to the nation at the global level. Its distinct culture and attractiveness draw tourists and preserve Rajasthan's individuality.

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